
“Advancing the Bioeconomy in Ohio’s northwest counties”

(Defiance, Fulton, Hancock, Henry, Lucas, Putnam, Williams and Wood with inclusion of Paulding County.)

Task 1: Identify and analyze business opportunities.

DELIVERABLE: a comprehensive database that will identify, document and analyze business opportunities that will utilize local rural materials and human resources.

Description: Essentially, the deliverable will be an extensive database that will identify (1) biomass available for conversion to fuel, commodities, products or power; (2) suppliers and service providers that can support the industry; (3) sources of capital; and (4) availability and sources of training for the skill sets needed.

Specific components include:

- (1) **Biomass:** Document every source of biomass in the region. As one example, the number of animals on individual farms and in the aggregate, and the contact information for the owners. Other biomass sources include but are not limited to animal production operations, crop residues, bioenergy crops, storm and/or fire-generated woody biomass, municipal wastes, food waste, and sewer sludge. This data on available biomass is essential to assisting a startup company, relocating a company into the region, or expanding existing services such as transport and depo facilities. Every company with whom we have spoken has invariably first asked about the availability, quantity, and sources of available biomass for conversion to electricity, commodities, etc.
- (2) **Suppliers & Service Providers:** Know where the suppliers and service providers are that can and will support this industry. One of the largest companies planning to locate to the region will need to obtain numerous tanker trucks and drivers to collect and transport animal manure from animal production farms to a regional processing facility.
- (3) **Capital:** In addition to USDA loan guarantees, working with banks in the region to assist with identification of resources. Equally, JobsOhio will be provided information in order to explore funding, tax incentives, and other opportunities for capital investment. This element is particularly important for smaller companies.
- (4) **Workforce Training:** Companies also invariably ask about the availability of a local workforce. We will be working with the community colleges and the local workforce groups that serve the region to aid in the assessment of bioeconomy business needs to assist in organizing regional bioindustry leaders and workforce, education and economic development partners as identified by CIFT. The Northwest State Community College, based in Fulton Co has an agricultural curriculum that could engage students in the initiative to further encourage career pathways towards the bioeconomy.

Task 2: Identify, train, and provide technical assistance.

DELIVERABLE: Develop capability of economic development organizations to provide technical assistance

Description: Working through the ATIP Foundation, technical assistance will be provided to the managers and staffs of the Chambers of Commerce and Economic Development Corporations in the region, the goal being to enable their staffs to provide technical assistance to entrepreneurs and managers, relative to the bioeconomy.

Training will be available to their management teams, providing information and data to them, in order to establish their capability to provide the same direct technical assistance to companies in their service areas as the ATIP Foundation is providing currently in the Texas initiative.

Task 3: Assist in the creation of new rural businesses.

DELIVERABLE: A list of companies that were established or recruited, the number of jobs created, and the amount of capital investment made as a result of our efforts in the region, as well as companies we are assisting that are not yet open for business.

Description: Work with local Economic Development Corporations, Chambers of Commerce, and Industry Associations to directly assist their efforts to establish entrepreneurial programs, support start up business enterprises, and recruit companies into the region, thereby creating wealth generation and jobs.

Task 4: Conduct Local Community or multi-County Economic Development Planning;

DELIVERABLE: A strategic plan for the development of the bioeconomy in conjunction with economic development corporations.

Description: The initial meeting of the Regional Steering Committee in Texas demonstrated that the Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Corporations, and City and County Governments did not know what “Biochar” or the “Bioeconomy” was, in any literal sense. They were certainly not sufficiently knowledgeable to develop a strategic plan to develop the industry or advance the bioeconomy. As a result of the first year’s efforts, they are now ready and committed to work in a collective, collaborative manner to develop a true strategic plan for the growth of the Bioeconomy as a primary industrial sector in the region. It is anticipated that education will be the first phase in Ohio as well and lead to increased attention towards the strategic approach for advancement.

Task 5: Establish centers for Training, Technology and Trade.

DELIVERABLE: Investigation into the establishment of a center for training & technical assistance.

Description: Identify a Center supporting the training and technical assistance needed to assist local economic development organizations, chambers of commerce, and industry associations in advancing the bioeconomy.

In addition to The Ohio State University, an assessment will be conducted to determine the training needs and the entity that is best suited to accommodate. This may include training assistance at community colleges, career tech centers, or newly developed programming through any of the collaborating partners supporting this initiative. Working with the Steering Committee to be established in Ohio, the location and scope of a Center for Training and Technical Assistance will be explored for the region.