

Mecklenburg Livable Communities

Economic Competitiveness Think Tank: Meeting 1

Developing Partnership Alliance (DPA) and Tone Setting

1. What type of atmosphere would you like?
 - a. Engaging
 - b. Respectful
 - c. Everything can be discussed
 - d. Listening
 - e. Productive
 - f. Fact-based
 - g. Questioning
2. What can you count on from each other?
 - a. Honesty
 - b. Open-minded
 - c. Participation
 - d. Active listening
 - e. Flexibility
3. How do you want to be when things get difficult?
 - a. Respectful
 - b. Honor diversity of opinion
 - c. Consider the big picture
 - d. Listen
4. What does success look like?
 - a. There are more advanced manufacturing companies active in the community: measured in volume and/or revenue
 - b. Better transportation infrastructure for business
 - c. "Some dollar measure"
 - d. Leverage technology
 - e. Wealth creation
 - f. Average wage of a Mecklenburg County resident exceed some standard threshold
 - g. Bridge the economic gap in the community
 - h. Rise in the establishment of new businesses
 - i. Rise in a measure of success for businesses
 - j. Decrease in the percentage of businesses that fail
 - k. Creating a culture of entrepreneurship in Charlotte
 - l. Increase in access to capital for startups
 - m. Improvement in Quality of Life indexes

Represented Partners & Their Current Initiatives Report-Outs

Central Piedmont Community College

- Have a Corporate and Continuing Education Department
- Apprenticeship Charlotte Program: 6 companies, 44 apprentices; focus on manufacturing and construction, but also includes other industries such as a law

- Goal to make Mecklenburg County a global hub of commerce.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Food Policy Council

- Goal to be a clearinghouse for people and organizations interested in policy related to food— from small scale to large scale
- Farm Hands Charlotte event: crowd source platform for farmers; interested in getting into communities with fewer entrepreneurial opportunities to provide resources
- Food Corp service members working in Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools
- Looking for more survey information from Charlotte suburbs: CharlotteFoodPolicy.org

Charlotte Mecklenburg Library

- Startup classes every other month; in joint with SCORE; available in many branches throughout the County
- Non-profit support and education
- Have initiative to improve service models at branches throughout the County
- Financial literacy programs at branches throughout the County
- If any organization has a topic that would be valuable to the County, the Library is available to provide space and marketing
- Outreach Services: offer many online courses: Lynda.com and Reference USA.

Ventureprise Inc.

- Charlotte Venture Challenge: Business plan competition that attracts startups from throughout the Southeast Region; goal is to provide startups with resources and networking opportunities and to build Charlotte's image as a entrepreneurial hub.
- Charlotte Entrepreneur Growth Report: a study sponsored by City of Charlotte to be published in September; funded by money that aims to promote the ecosystem for high-growth startups.
- Ventureprise Charlotte Launch: funded by national Science Foundation aimed at accelerating commercialization of university-originated research. Focused on science, math, and technology. Will be inviting teams from local colleges and universities to participate.
- PORTAL: Business incubation program for startups at newly built facility at UNC Charlotte.

PIES

- STEM-related business plan competition for secondary students with sustainability-related business ideas
- Working with CPCC to develop internship-discovery program for Green-based jobs

Charlotte Mecklenburg Housing Partnership

- Goal is to create economic development with commercial development opportunities
- Can support small businesses or incubators looking for space
- Focused on areas in the County that currently lack quality commercial development

NC Sustainable Energy Association

Looking for opportunities to integrate sustainable energy into development (i.e. currently has a partnership with Habitat for Humanity).

E4 Carolinas

- Energy Foreign Trade: advisory board that supports collaboration around energy and makes it easier to discover energy business opportunities in the Carolinas.
- Work Force Development Task Force: working on a project to launch in 2016; looking to create an awareness for employment opportunities in energy through an online tool
- Innovation and Capital Task Force: 2016 Launch of a program that deals with energy business commercialization. In the Carolinas, there is the largest concentration of higher education institutions involved with energy research; need a tool to help find and connect these sources of intellectual capital around energy

City Startup Lab

Target black millennial men interested in entrepreneurship. Center of excellence with two tracks: entrepreneurial and intra-preneurial (bringing the entrepreneur mindset to existing organizations).

Gaps & Root Cause Discussion

What gaps exist?

- Knowledge-gap of what resources exist in the business and entrepreneurship eco-system
- Networking opportunities for high-growth entrepreneurs
- Culture gap: gig business career vs. entrepreneurship
- Gap in attracting entrepreneurial talent
- Limited resources (fiscal)
- Talent and workforce training
- Poor transit
- Physical space (i.e. co-working spaces and spaces for really small businesses)
- Not a clearly articulated alternative model to the Silicon Valley model
- Lack of awareness of best practices of other markets
- Gap of large scale Idea generation (i.e. extensive research & development)
- Lack of incentives to allow companies that are born in Charlotte to grow to a global scale
- Awareness gap

Why do these gaps exist?

- Major college and universities in the area don't have strong global mindset
- Have plenty of training opportunities but lack of infrastructure
- Need to encourage a culture of curiosity and idea-creation
- Idea creation not well connected to commercial activity
- Banking community is naturally risk-adverse

Ideas for New Collaborative Initiatives

Initiative: Partnership between Central Piedmont Community College and E4 Carolinas to increase availability of energy-based training and employment

Initiative: Awareness campaign around our community's economic competitiveness aimed at K-12 students

Initiative: Culture change initiative aimed at addressing the risk-adverse business and economic culture of Charlotte

Ideas for Expanding Current Initiatives

Current Initiative: PORTAL Incubator at UNC Charlotte

Current Initiative Owner: Ventureprise

Collaboration Opportunity: Chamber of Commerce, City of Charlotte Economic Development Office, Packard Place, Queen City Forward

Current Initiative: Charlotte Venture Challenge

Current Initiative Owner: Ventureprise

Collaboration Opportunity: Chamber of Commerce, City of Charlotte Economic Development Office, Packard Place, Queen City Forward

Current Initiative: Apprenticeship Opportunities

Current Initiative Owner: Central Piedmont Community College

Collaboration Opportunity: Chamber of Commerce, City of Charlotte Economic Development Office, Packard Place, Queen City Forward

Current Initiative: Green Idea Factory

Current Initiative Owner: PiES

Collaboration Opportunity: Chamber of Commerce, City of Charlotte Economic Development Office, Packard Place, Queen City Forward

Current Initiative: City Startup Lab Academy

Current Initiative Owner: City Startup Lab

Collaboration Opportunity: Chamber of Commerce, City of Charlotte Economic Development Office, Packard Place, Queen City Forward, Charlotte Regional Partnership

Current Initiative: Financial Literacy & Entrepreneurship Programs

Current Initiative Owner: Junior Achievement

Collaboration Opportunity: Ventureprise

Current Initiative: PORTAL Incubator at UNC Charlotte

Current Initiative Owner: Ventureprise

Collaboration Opportunity: Chamber of Commerce, City of Charlotte Economic Development Office, Packard Place, Queen City Forward

Current Initiative: Entrepreneurship Training

Current Initiative Owner: Central Piedmont Community College

Collaboration Opportunity: Ventureprise