

NIAGARA ERIE REGIONAL COALITION

Why We Do This:

The Organization

NERC is an ad hoc subcommittee of the Niagara and Erie County Legislatures, in partnership with multiple levels of government and other private and non-profit agencies. Further, it is a non-hierarchical collaborative network.

Mission Statement

The Niagara Erie Regional Coalition is a non-traditional regional collaborative forum for linking multiple organizations and initiatives, and also serves as a catalyst to identify and pursue opportunities to grow the region.

NERC's Positive Core

- Non-traditional regional collaborative model of civic engagement
- Broad range of participants in a collaborative environment leading to diversity (of geography and interests)
- Demonstrated success in diverse models of engagements with specific projects
- Finding members to meet emerging issues
- A forum for addressing future issues

Our ability to play multiple roles as a clearinghouse, advocate, forum, coordinator, incubator, project manager, implementer, catalyst, supporter, and advisor

Current Topic Areas:

Context: The Coalition concentrates its efforts on four main topic areas, organized into three subcommittees:

- Economic Development / Transportation
- Government Affairs
- Tourism & Culture

Within these subcommittees, multiple efforts and projects are undertaken.

Proposal: Retain the focus on these four topic areas, organized into two subcommittees:

- Economic Development / Tourism & Culture
- Government Affairs / Transportation

Possible Topic Areas:

Context: There are a number of additional important topics in the region, including:

- Binational
- Education
- Environmental / "Green"
- Equity Issues
- Globalization
- Housing
- Neighborhood Revitalization
- Planning
- Sports Tourism & Promotion
- State or Federal Advocacy
- Waterfront Development
- *Others?*

It is possible that the Coalition may want to focus some of its efforts on new topics beyond our "traditional" four.

Proposal: Each of the topics listed above should be considered by the appropriate subcommittee, and for each the subcommittee would recommend one of the following options:

- NERC should not be involved in this topic.
- NERC should be involved, and the topic will be integrated into our current structure.
- NERC should be involved, and the topic warrants its own subcommittee.

Included in the recommendations should be suggestions for any appropriate new member agencies to help us work on the topic.

Current Projects/Ideas:

Context: The Coalition has been involved in several projects over the past few years, including:

- Air Travel Survey
- Cultural Data / Research
- Framework for Regional Growth
- Local Governments Education Series
- Regional Economic Development Strategy
- Small Business Assistance Website
- Smart Permitting

These efforts are at various stages of development, and the Coalition plays different roles in various efforts (project manager, advocate, participant, etc.). In some cases, worthy projects have been stalled due to lack of resources.

Proposal: Each of the projects listed above should be considered by the appropriate subcommittee, and for each the subcommittee would answer the following questions:

- Should we remain involved?
- If so, in what role?
- If funding is needed, who (which agency) will be the champion of raising the dollars needed to complete the project?

Structure:

Context: NERC is currently an ad hoc subcommittee of the Erie and Niagara County Legislatures. It has no “formal” structure beyond that. Staff (one half-time independent consultant) is housed at the ECIDA, and the ECIDA acts as the group’s fiscal agent – a situation the ECIDA has indicated it cannot continue. General meetings are traditionally held on a quarterly basis on a Friday. Subcommittee meetings happen on various days of the week. All meetings begin at 8:30 a.m. Funding is provided by both legislatures and by some of the member organizations.

Proposal: The NERC Co-Chairs, with input from the group, needs to determine the following:

- If we retain our current structure, is there an agency willing to become our fiscal agent?
- Do we go to the model previously used when our staff was employed at a member agency with NERC funding the position and NERC staff being available for use by that agency?
- Or, do we become something more formal, like a not-for-profit corporation?

Proposal: The organization as a whole should decide:

- Should we keep the alternating-location schedule of meetings?
- Should we try a different day for general meetings?
- Should we try a different time for subcommittee and/or general meetings?
- Should we revise our funding structure?
- Should we revise our membership structure?
- How do we gain new members (through revised topic areas, “each one reach one”, etc.)?