



April 2, 2010

Rip Rapson, CEO & President
The Kresge Foundation
3215 W. Big Beaver Road
Troy, MI 48084-2818

Re: Letter of Inquiry

Dear Mr. Rapson:

Northeast Ohio is poised for development as an economic anchor for the Great Lakes region. Our core assets are comprised of our world-class medical facilities, outstanding cultural resources, and a well-run engine of innovative energy that has captured world-wide attention. Recently the Brookings Institution identified three regions in America that will be the focus of a study on the benefits of regional collaboration: Seattle, Minneapolis/St. Paul and Northeast Ohio. A factor that contributed to their decision in choosing Northeast Ohio was the *Regional Prosperity Initiative*. Brookings recognized that over the past three years, RPI has done the research, engaged public support, and constructed a well-crafted framework that can produce a regional collaborative structure to create an economy and quality of life that will be an example for other regions.

One of RPI's primary objectives is to build an increased understanding of the critical need for collaboration in order to compete in a changing world economy. Interestingly, the report, "Restoring Prosperity" issued by the Brookings Institution and Greater Ohio Policy Center for 2010, states, "There is no U.S., German, or Chinese, or Ohio economy, but rather a network of sophisticated, hyperlinked, and globally-connected metropolitan economies...Ohio exemplifies the power of metropolitan regions. In fact, its 21st century metropolitan regions are the successors to the cities and small towns that drove the state's 20th century economy, and are the places that are incubating the state's *next* economy." The Regional Prosperity Initiative's working group is proud to have garnered the attention of such a prestigious organization as the Brookings Institution.

How has the the Regional Prosperity Initiative established credibility?

Credibility for RPI is found in the caliber of the people committed to this project and the quality of the work that they have accomplished thus far. RPI has solely been an effort of volunteers who believe in the mission and are willing to offer their time, money and talent to persuade pertinent stakeholders and governmental authorities to endorse the initiative. Three years worth of dedicated time in weekly planning sessions, advisory committee meetings, drill down team workshops, etc. has been generously donated along with in-kind contributions. Administrative costs and other expenses such as travel to meetings in Columbus and Washington D.C. to convene with legislators to go over the laws to make government tax sharing explicitly permissive have also been contributed.

The Steering Committee is co-chaired by Mayor Bruce H. Akers of the City of Pepper Pike, Mayor William A. Currin of the City of Hudson and Mayor Michael K. Lyons of the Village of Richfield. They have given their time and expertise to spearhead the project because they believe that Northeast Ohio is well-positioned to demonstrate that regional collaboration is the catalyst that will ignite economic growth in Northeast Ohio. The rest of the committee is comprised of representatives from government, academia, economic development, education and business to ensure a comprehensive perspective that will produce an equitable plan.

What we've accomplished so far

Because the volunteers for RPI have been so determined to help Northeast Ohio pull together to advance the region, their combined energies have resulted in a noticeable level of progress. Well over 7,000 community leaders, government officials, public school administrators, and principals of local businesses and universities have had the opportunity to hear about the Regional Prosperity Initiative. The response has been very encouraging. Chester Jourdan's comment at the Ohio Commission on Local Government Reform and Collaboration, is typical, "On behalf of the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, I can share that we are very impressed with the Regional Prosperity Initiative and we are watching you and your progress."

We have completed Phase I which entailed the research and economic modeling for specific steps toward coordinating a region-wide land-use planning and revenue sharing program. Phase II will enumerate the requirements to enable the collaboration. Formulas will be refined for equitable revenue sharing. Clarification of state laws regarding tax base sharing and land-use policy will be determined. Public engagement will be expanded to reach a broader consensus. Existing community and government organizations who have identified housing, economic development, transportation, and environmental issues and have already performed studies and created models for regional use will be incorporated into the RPI effort. Support from the Kresge Foundation will allow us to move forward toward implementation. We are at the point in our progress where our need to build capacity is critical.

What we need to do next

The Regional Prosperity Initiative has opened a conduit for conversation about the need for government collaboration in Northeast Ohio. Just recently, in one of these conversations, a community leader stated that "it would be nice to have a hub for information to flow through" for this project. RPI would like to address that need by building our capacity as that conduit. In order to do that we need support for the following:

- *nuts and bolts*, i.e., administrative personnel, legal consulting, and marketing expertise
- increased public engagement via an *interactive web portal* where people can easily post public comments, engage in discussions, find information tailored specifically for their concerns, and empower them to participate in the process - this portal will serve RPI by allowing us to capture much-needed information from citizens and enable us to measure the impact of this initiative

Total cost for the above will be approximately \$195,000 to take us through these necessary steps. We are asking for \$50,000 from the Kresge Foundation to help meet these expenditures.

Conclusion

The need is greater than ever during this Great Recession to pull together as a region to regain the prosperity that is the legacy of America. Every segment of our society is faced with critical challenges to get through these times. Individual affluence is contingent upon a community's ability to sustain a quality of life that holds out promise for everyone.

RPI is aligned with the Kresge Foundation's focus as outlined on your website under "How We are Changing". The comment regarding "globalism, technological innovation, economic restructuring, the ever-widening gap between the rich and poor, climate change, and other forces..." as respecting the challenges that are reaching into all of our lives, all over the world, was poignant and meaningful to our endeavors. We read with interest about your foundation's deep commitment to environmental conservation reflected in the very buildings that you occupy. RPI is working hard to bring Northeast Ohio toward a sensible and mutually rewarding land-use plan, one that could be replicated for other regions. We would love to have an opportunity to tell you about our progress toward this goal.

A full proposal with all the details of our plan is available for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact us with your questions.

Sincerely,

Mayor William A. Currin, Hudson, Ohio

Co-Chair, Regional Prosperity Initiative

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