

## Final Report to the USDA Rural Development 2015 RBDG REAP Strategic Planning

Submitted by: Shirley Brentrup, Executive Director REAP Investment Fund Inc.

The REAP Investment Fund, Inc. contracted with consultant Kathleen Tweeten to conduct the strategic planning for all three REAP entities. Tweeten had conducted planning for the zone in the past.

Prior to the planning meetings, the boards and interested parties were asked to complete a survey, the Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory. This is an on-line survey of 20 success factors for small groups developed by the Amherst Wilder Foundation (Mattessich, P., Murray-Close, M., & Monsey, B. (2001). *Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory*. St. Paul, MN: Wilder Research.).

At each zone planning meeting, participants were given the day's agenda, Wilder survey results for their group, Zone data profiles, a copy of their last strategic planning document and a budget and loan overview.

These items and the complete approved strategic plans are available on the <http://www.reapmatters.org> website under the Planning tab for each zone. In addition, the website also lists the working groups and the individuals committed to continue work in those groups and report back.

### REAP Zone Planning Meetings

CONAC Zone – Feb.10

SW REAP Zone – Feb. 3

REAP Investment Fund – March 23

### Final Adoption of Plan

May 11, 2016

June 1, 2016

April 21, 2016

### Condensed version of the Wilder Survey Results:

#### SW REAP Wilder Surveys

*Strengths **not** needing attention:* Members indicated strengths with a history of working together and collaboration. They respect one another and represent a cross section of people who have a stake in what we are trying to accomplish. Most felt their organization will benefit from this collaboration and want REAP to succeed. They indicated there is a clear process for decisions and could communicate openly with one another.

*Those items that **should be discussed** included:* Surveys indicated not all organizations the need to be part of the group are members of the group. The responses indicated a moderate score as to whether those involved were investing the right amount of time. The same was indicated for having enough time to confer with colleagues about decisions.

*Concerns respondents indicated **should be addressed**:* Whether the group has adequate funds to do what it wants to accomplish and whether the group have a clear sense of their roles and responsibilities.

## **CONAC Wilder Surveys**

*Strengths **not** needing attention:* Members indicated what they were trying to accomplish would be difficult for any single organization to accomplish. They respect one another and felt informed by good leadership through formal and informal communications. They felt there is a lot of flexibility in decision making and that people were open to different options and communicated openly with one another.

*Those items that **should be discussed** included:* The survey indicated discussions may be needed about concrete, attainable goals and objectives; whether there is a favorable political and social climate for their collaborative; and was the collaborative group seen as a legitimate leader in the community.

*Concerns respondents indicated **should be addressed**:* Whether there is sufficient funds, staff, materials and time and whether they had the appropriate cross section of members and organizations in the group.

## **REAP Investment Fund Wilder Surveys**

*Strengths **not** needing attention:* Surveys indicated a history of collaboration or cooperation, mutual respect, understanding, trust and having skilled leadership.

*Those items that **should be discussed** included:* This included multiple layers of decision-making, development of clear roles and policy guidelines and the organization's adaptability.

*Concerns respondents indicated **should be addressed**:* Sufficient funds, staff, materials and time.

## **Condensed Versions of the Adopted Zone Plans**

### **CONAC Final Plan**

1. Sustain the Work of CONAC
2. Assist CONAC communities with efforts to enhance their quality of life through infrastructure development
3. Increase the diversity and quality of economic opportunities.
4. Enhance networks with partnering organizations

### **SW REAP Final Plan Objectives**

1. Increase Job & Business Opportunities
2. Strengthen Members
3. Marketing (Internal and External)
4. Sustainability of REAP

### **REAP Investment Fund, Inc. Final Plan Strategies**

1. Create jobs or increase wealth to stimulate local economy
2. Attain new funds and partners, leverage resources and realize investment returns to provide program funds and create self-sustainability within the project areas

3. Advance community leadership, advocate for rural communities and support workforce training
4. Foster social and economic improvements with special emphasis on housing, child care, health care, elderly, youth and community resiliency issues
5. Support local food initiatives
6. Support community facilities

### **Summary of the Project**

There was a good deal of participation in the strategic planning activities by the zone board members and interested parties. Interested parties included the regional development organizations and the regional and state USDA Rural Development Staff.

The plans reflect the initial concerns found in the Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory plus group knowledge of area needs. Each identified sufficient funding as a problem that needed to be addressed. Both REAP Zones indicated a need to expand input from members and other interested parties.

Each of the three entities expressed the need and their willingness to participate in discussions about the sustainability of their zone and the sustainability of the groups as a whole. The REAP Investment Board is committed in their plan to leading those initial discussion on sustainability.

There will need to be a concerted effort to see that the committees continue to meet and to work towards their recommendations. The consultant will contact each entity this fall for progress reports and to encourage implementation. She will also meet with each entity next spring to facilitate annual updates to their plans if requested.

The final budget is found on the next page.

**RDBG PROJECT BUDGET REPORT**

PROJECT: REAP Strategic Planning

DATE: Sept. 2015 to June 2016

	<b>Original Budget</b>	<b>Total Earned to Date</b>	<b>Balance to Finish</b>
<b>Administrative</b>	\$2,202.00	\$2,202.00	\$0.00
<b>Travel</b>		\$0.00	\$0.00
<b>Planning</b>		\$0.00	\$0.00
<b>Contractual</b>	\$22,020.00	\$22,020.00	\$0.00
<b>Real Estate</b>		\$0.00	\$0.00
<b>Supplies</b>		\$0.00	\$0.00
<b>Legal</b>		\$0.00	\$0.00
<b>Equipment</b>		\$0.00	\$0.00
<b>Contingency</b>		\$0.00	\$0.00
<b><u>Total</u></b>	<b><u>\$24,222.00</u></b>	<b><u>\$24,222.00</u></b>	<b><u>\$0.00</u></b>

**FUNDING SOURCES**

<b>Rural Development</b>	\$24,222.00	\$24,222.00	\$0.00
<b>Loan</b>		\$0.00	\$0.00
<b>Grant</b>		\$0.00	\$0.00
<b>State</b>		\$0.00	\$0.00
<b>Ultimate Recipient/Other</b>		\$0.00	\$0.00
<b>CDBG</b>		\$0.00	\$0.00
<b><u>Total</u></b>	<b><u>\$24,222.00</u></b>	<b><u>\$24,222.00</u></b>	<b><u>\$0.00</u></b>