

Program Description:

(300 word max)

Agenda 360 is a regional action plan focused on the transformation of Cincinnati USA which includes four counties in Southwest Ohio. It is the result of a collaborative effort of over 40 civic, business, government, educational and non-profit entities committed to create an aligned framework for tackling tough issues facing the region and positioning Cincinnati USA for sustained progress and success.

The Rallying Cry for Agenda 360 was “To transform Cincinnati USA, by the year 2020, into a leading metropolitan region for talent, jobs and economic opportunity for all who call our region home.”

The project was started in late 2006 and completed in early 2009 and was a comprehensive and inclusive process. In addition to the direct involvement of more than 1,000 volunteers on action teams and in community engagement sessions, 7,000 citizens contributed their voices to the planning process through participation in an online survey.

The outcome is a comprehensive plan focused on action. It is not encased in a plastic binder to sit on a shelf collecting dust. Instead, Agenda 360 is a plan in plain language about Cincinnati USA: our citizens, our region and the place we call home. It outlines the things that are good but also about how it can be better. It is designed to be understandable, do-able, and action oriented.

The six imperatives identified for transforming the community are: Quality Place, Business Growth, Qualified Workforce, Transportation, Inclusion and Government collaboration.

Agenda 360 explains what each imperative means and why it is important for transformation. It focuses on a short list of priorities which will be our regional ‘to-do’ list for the next 12 years. We believe that our region can be one that models success and that Agenda 360 will be our blueprint for combined and aligned action.



2009 Alliance for Regional Stewardship – Organizational Champion Awards

Agenda 360 – A Regional Action Plan---Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber

1. Program Description: See application Cover Sheet.

Background: In the fall of 2006, approximately 50 regional stewards (i.e. business, civic and educational leaders) from Cincinnati USA took a benchmarking trip to Boston to look at how their local leaders had come together to create a shared list of priorities for the city. From that trip came the harsh realization that Cincinnati lacked a unified vision for the future and that this could dramatically slow our progress. This was the catalyst for the creation of a regional plan ultimately known as Agenda 360.

In early 2007, these regional stewards and an expanded group of stakeholder groups from across Cincinnati USA committed to address complex issues across the four counties of Southwest Ohio, including a declining urban core, competing governance spanning many jurisdictions, educational challenges, the need for equity and inclusion, and economic growth.

The goal was an action-oriented plan identifying a short list of priorities that would be embraced across the region and become a blueprint for progress. As a framework for Agenda 360 and a foundation for measuring long-term progress, we created the following Rallying Cry:

“To transform Cincinnati USA by the year 2020, into a leading metropolitan region for talent, jobs and economic opportunity for all who call our region home.”

Key components in creating for the plan included a detailed assessment of past regional plans for valuable recommendations and ideas that could be leveraged; extensive community dialogue sessions touching more than 1,500 residents; detailed research and analysis of best practices and current opportunities and gaps in Cincinnati USA; and a citizen survey completed by 7,000 individuals.

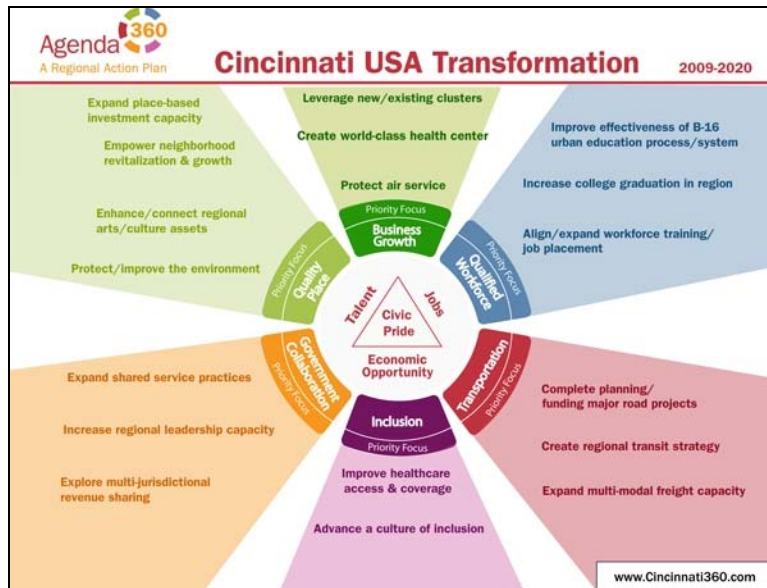
The result was Agenda 360. This is a unified comprehensive plan for Cincinnati USA; a regional consensus for progress and an action-oriented road map for transformation and sustainable change.

2. Principles of Regional Stewardship: The Agenda 360 plan identifies six imperatives for transforming our community which exemplify the Principles of Regional Stewardship:

- **Quality Place:** Ensuring Cincinnati is a strong, attractive, functional place to live, work, journey, visit and play.

- **Business Growth:** Leveraging regional strengths to retain, attract and create businesses and jobs.
- **Qualified Workforce:** Providing young people and workers with skills necessary to get good jobs now and in the future.
- **Transportation:** Expanding options for moving people and freight across the region.
- **Inclusion:** Creating a welcoming community where all people are embraced and differences are the foundation for the community's successes.
- **Government Collaboration:** Helping the region's many cities, counties and townships work together toward common goals.

The visual depiction of the outcome of the plan and the final Agenda 360 framework is as follows:



At the heart of the plans success are the elements of the Agenda 360 Rallying Cry: **Talent, Jobs and Economic Opportunity for all who call our region home.** Over-arching goals for the year 2020 have been set in all three areas and will be measured annually to assess progress.

In order for the plan to achieve the Rallying Cry goals, six priorities (determined by the inclusive community engagement process and work of the action teams discussed in previous sections), are shown around the inner circle. In each one of the priority areas, a few targeted strategies are identified as essential for transformation. While it was challenging to limit the number of strategies for the plan, it was determined that focusing on a limited number of deliverables was essential for alignment and success.

3. Context: Southwest Ohio is a patchwork of 130 political jurisdictions: four counties with 80 cities and villages, 50 townships, plus scores of individual neighborhoods. While these many entities make for unique communities with strong identities; this autonomy has been a significant hurdle when it comes to working together. In addition, there is a 'city of Cincinnati vs. suburb' mentality that exists, further complicating collaboration and cooperation across jurisdictional boundaries. When improvement plans have been developed by the

business and/or civic communities, scope has been limited and implementation inconsistent.

4. Innovation and Excellence: Candidly, the overwhelming success and support for the first phase of Agenda 360 across the entire region has exceeded previous efforts and far exceeded leadership expectations. There were three key elements that made Agenda 360 unique and contributed significantly to the success and acceptance of the recommendations: Inclusion, Intergenerational Leadership and Community Engagement.

INCLUSION: In the two-year process, nearly 1,000 volunteers were involved in Agenda 360. A wide and diverse group of individuals from business, civic, government, and educational entities from all four counties, representing hundreds of stakeholders in the region were on teams and committees that had direct input and a voice in the process, priorities and final recommendations.



The chart above depicts the leadership framework of for Agenda 360. Key differentiating factors of this effort vs. previous planning initiatives in the region were the transparency of the work and the inclusive nature of the teams. Agenda 360 embraced input from diverse groups of stakeholders that had previously not had a voice. Specific examples of regional inclusion on the teams include: business leaders from all size companies, University Presidents, labor unions, Hispanic, African American, Asian representatives, elected officials from all counties, cities and townships, religious representation, United Way, advocates for the poor and traditionally under-represented populations, Community Foundations/ Funders, Police chiefs, Young Professional organizations, Community activists/ grass roots organizers, lobbyists, and many, many more.

INTERGENERATIONAL LEADERSHIP: Another unique approach to enhance the success of Agenda 360 was the positioning of intergenerational leadership at the helm of the overall Agenda 360 initiative and as co-leaders on each one of the Action and Support Teams. Since Agenda 360 is a plan for the future, it was determined that the input and involvement of young professionals was essential

to the overall success of the project. Thus, the involvement and participation of young leaders was embraced. They were paired with experienced professionals to lead the action and support teams of Agenda 360. The presence of young professionals added an invaluable perspective to the work as well as providing a tangible presence of YP ideas and priorities. In combination with the inclusive nature of the Leadership Team, word spread across the region that this work was different and thus gained grass root support of traditionally under represented groups and young people who had not been asked to participate in previous efforts.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: More than 7,000 regional citizens contributed their voices to Agenda 360 through a comprehensive community outreach program involving dialogues in face to face meetings and an online survey. In order to obtain a representative sample of the region's population, Agenda 360 held over 30 meetings in every corner of Southwest Ohio. At each meeting, participants were given 10 "million-dollar" bills and asked to invest the money in issues they thought were the most important for sustainable growth, quality of life and economic prosperity for all. The themes and priorities that emerged from the sessions were then compiled into an online survey where respondents ranked ideas. These results were essential in setting the final Agenda 360 priorities and strategies for transformation and enabled individuals to see their input in the final plan.

In summary, these three elements combined made the results of Agenda 360 credible, comprehensive and compelling for the citizens of Southwest Ohio as they embrace, engage and own the transformation process.

5. Performance: Agenda 360 understands the importance of setting goals, measuring performance and communicating results. The success and the performance of the overall project and individual initiatives will be the essence of the activity as implementation begins. As building blocks for that approach, the following activities of Agenda 369 show progress:

Regional capacity of Southwest Ohio has been significantly increased by Agenda 360 to achieve success in the following ways:

1. Having a large number of stakeholders at the 'table' and involved in the process to develop solutions and ideas that go beyond traditional boundaries and focus on success for the region and the proactive solicitation of community input has increased the breadth and depth of Agenda 360 and the community will at all levels to make the plan a reality. The Agenda 360 survey results showed that 95% of the respondents are ready for regional approaches that provide benefits to many by leveraging efficiencies that can be gained through collaboration.
2. Broadly distributing the plan across SW Ohio. Through a partnership with the local daily newspaper, more than 150,000 copies of the report were put in the Feb. 13 edition of the paper. A community launch was held a regional landmark with hundreds of citizens from across the region in attendance.

3. **Creating a network of partnerships (both public and private) to implement the strategies through tangible initiatives.** Civic, business and educational organizations have stepped up to assist Agenda 360 leaders in addressing community problems and transformational growth. The goal of Agenda 360 was not to create a whole new set of initiatives and projects, rather it was to leverage a few projects that were successful and provide additional resources and focus to expand the impact across the region.

In the area of Tangible results, Agenda 360 has significant early wins.

1. **The Government Cooperation and Efficiency (GCEP) project** was advanced through Agenda 360 involvement. Both the city of Cincinnati and Hamilton County and twenty local jurisdictions have saved over \$1.5M in costs through joint purchasing and collaboration. Key examples include: fuel purchases, and integration of fire-hydrant maintenance. In addition, with the assistance of business and civic leaders from Agenda 360, over \$125,000 in funds have been received through a Regional Collaboration Grant program to study additional ways to increase efficiency through collaboration.
2. **Greater Cincinnati Workforce Network** is a partnership between philanthropic organizations, local and state government agencies, educational institutions, service providers and workforce investment boards in the region. It was created as a direct result of the need identified by Agenda 360 to help employers meet their need for a skilled workforce while expanding job opportunities for low-skilled individuals. The Network, formed by the Greater Cincinnati Foundation (an Agenda 360 partner) aims to connect the dots among all organizations that impact workforce quality. It recently received a three year grant from the National Fund for Workforce Solutions.
3. **Inter-City Rail Initiative**: Government collaboration and improved transportation options are two of the six essential priorities identified by Agenda 360 for regional progress. The recognition of this focus by local leaders drove regional collaboration to pursue federal stimulus dollars for Cincinnati USA as a Midwest location for funding. Two elements from the Agenda 360 plan were drivers for this success: survey data from citizens outlining expectations of government leaders and the identification of transportation as a transformational priority.

Potential for Sustainability: Agenda 360 will deliver sustainable outcomes through its focus on accountability and by creating a framework aligning current and future initiatives with the regional priorities. The Agenda 360 Rallying Cry goals are at the heart of measuring progress.

- **Talent**: Success is defined as adding 150,000 additional 20-34 year-olds in the region's workforce by the year 2020. This would increase by 50 percent the number of workers in that age range in the region today.
- **Jobs**: Success is 200,000 net new jobs in the region. This is an aggressive goal but essential for progress. It represents a more than 50% increase in the historic job growth rate in the region.
- **Economic Opportunity**: Success is economic self-sufficiency for all who call the region home. Agenda 360 has adopted the United Way financial

sustainability goal of income at a minimum of 250 percent above the federal poverty level for all households in our region.

The achievement of these lofty metrics goes beyond the efforts of elected officials or a small group of stakeholders. The aligned, collaborative commitment of citizens, educators, business, civic, non profit and government leaders is the ONLY way the region will win. A collaborative leadership structure was the intent of Agenda 360, and will continue in the future.

6. Cohesiveness: Agenda 360 is all about linking with other regional objectives and strategies. When Agenda 360 was kicked off, organizers met with the leaders of Vision 2015 who developed Northern Kentucky's plan as a way to closely align both efforts once Agenda 360 was complete. In addition, Agenda 360 has worked with the Brookings Institution around the metro nation concept and partnered with the State of Ohio to bring in experts as resources. Most importantly, Agenda 360 will be the steward for regional progress through the implementation of Council 360 which will be a diverse group of regional leaders to make sure that priorities remain aligned, stakeholders are on board and regional partners work together for the transformation of the region. As implementation begins, Agenda 360 has signed partnership agreements in place with community organizations and partners who will own individual initiatives and take a lead role in accountability for ground level success.

7. Replicability: It is the distinct hope of Agenda 360 that the work has been done in Southwest Ohio can benefit others, just as we have been the beneficiary of ideas shared with us. Working with executives of Vision 2015 in Northern Kentucky was extremely helpful to the Agenda 360. In addition, in the formative stages of the project, Agenda 360 worked with representatives from the Alliance for Regional Stewardship to design and develop a process framework for success.

We believe that ARS is a tremendous resource for regional planning expertise, experience and ideas. To that end, the executive director of Agenda 360 is currently participating in the Regional Sustainability Development Cohort sponsored by the Ford Foundation and will use that forum as an opportunity to share ideas with other participants in addition to gathering ideas, best practices and innovative approaches from the speakers and participants in each session.

Networking with other regions has already taken place. Agenda 360 has been in contact with the Itasca project in Minneapolis/St. Paul to learn and share. Specifically, Agenda 360 has had extensive discussions to share our experience with the community engagement sessions and the online survey.

Through the Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber's association with ACCE, we hope that Agenda 360 learnings can be available for other Chambers. The fact that Agenda 360 is applying for this award is another mechanism for putting this initiative out for broader understanding and discussion.

We believe that the experience we had in Agenda 360 can potentially be helpful to other regions in understanding potential pitfalls and opportunities for success. We are anxious to provide support and insights to others.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to share the Agenda 360 story through this application process. To paraphrase Winston Churchill, this report is not the beginning of the end, but the end of the beginning....so we hope to continue to learn and grow as we move forward in the next step of our mission: “To transform Cincinnati USA, by the year 2020, into a leading metropolitan region for talent, jobs and economic opportunity for all who call our region home.” A copy of the complete report can be found at: www.cincinnati360.com.