

AEDC 2005: Shaping a Strategy for The 21st Century

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How AEDC might look in the future as a result of an expanded mission and market is addressed in this article. Critical issues facing the organization are reviewed, some potential performance indicators are presented, a strategic market analysis is described, and the present and especially future products and services of the Council are discussed. The purpose of the Preeminence Task Force, under whose direction a report is being prepared and this article was written, is to create a consensus among the Board of Directors, governance committees, and members of AEDC on the preferred vision of the organization in the 21st century.

OVERVIEW

The American Economic Development Council (AEDC) recently appointed a Preeminence Task Force to review its corporate strategy for the 21st century. Task force members include the following representatives of AEDC:

Rick Weddle - Toledo Regional Growth Partnership - Toledo, Ohio (Chair)
Pete Alday - E.D., Cartersville - Cartersville, Georgia
Ed Bee - MetroVision E.D. - New Orleans, Louisiana
Steve Buttress - Community Networking Institute - Kearney, Nebraska
Jim Devine - E.D., Glendale - Glendale, Arizona
Harry Foden - A.D. Little - Winchester, Massachusetts
Don Iannone - E.D., Cleveland State - Cleveland, Ohio
Dan Lynch - High Point E.D. - High Point, North Carolina
Mike McCarthy - Suddes Group - Louisville, Colorado
Beth Neu - Fort Wayne E.D. - Fort Wayne, Indiana
Ken Oilschlager - Kentucky Chamber of Commerce - Frankfort, Kentucky
Bill McDermott - GTE - Irving, Texas
Wayne Sterling - E.D. Virginia - Richmond, Virginia
Rick Thrasher - W/SE Partnership for Growth, Wichita, Kansas
Mark Waterhouse - Garnet Consulting - Pleasant Valley, Connecticut

Jim Ahr - AEDC - Rosemont, Illinois

On March 2 and 3, 1995, members of the AEDC Preeminence Task Force participated in a Preeminence Strategy Development Process facilitated by David Ramey of Strategic Leadership Associates. The Preeminence Strategy Development Process was intended to gain consensus on the major priorities for the future of AEDC in the 21st century.

The strategy presented in this article is the result of planning by the AEDC Preeminence Task Force members during this Preeminence Strategy Development Process. The Preeminence Strategy Development Process included the following elements:

- AEDC Critical Issues Analysis
- AEDC Strategic Market Analysis
- AEDC Future Performance Indicators
- Critical Events and Trends for the 21st Century
- AEDC Scenario Building
- AEDC Strategic Vision Development
- AEDC Core Strategies

A Preeminence Strategy is an attempt to identify and refine major concepts that should shape the future direction of an organization in a preferred future timeframe. The purpose of the *AEDC 2005: Preeminence Strategy* is to create consensus among members of the Board of Directors, key governance committees and the members of AEDC on the future direction of the organization.

CRITICAL ISSUES ANALYSIS

The participants in the Preeminence Strategy Development Process were asked to identify the critical issues that AEDC will face in the future in order to advance its Preeminence Strategy. The following five critical issues present a consolidation of the major challenges facing AEDC in the 21st century:

- AEDC will need to provide a technological network which links professionals, including members, economic development experts, government, and business, nationally and internationally.
- AEDC will need to streamline its organizational processes to provide a quick response to economic development issues as they emerge nationally and internationally.
- AEDC will need to become strategy and mission driven with a major output of research, information, and public policy strategies which enhance the profession of economic development.
- AEDC will need to provide intellectual leadership and research in the field of economic development involving economic development practitioners, as well as politicians, business leaders, and community organizations.
- AEDC will need to develop an authoritative identity through a communication plan which advances economic development in the marketplace.

A discussion among Preeminence Task Force members led to the following analysis between the prevailing paradigm and a preferred preeminence paradigm for AEDC in the future:

Task force members were led through a series of discussions to map out the major re-direction of emphasis which the emerging paradigm may require of AEDC for its vision, mission, and core strategies. The following proposed vision, mission, and core strategies will be recommended to AEDC for consideration in shaping its international economic development role in the 21st century:

Proposed Strategic Vision

By the year 2005, the American Economic Development Council will be known internationally as the knowledge and value center for economic development professionals through information, public policy, research, education, and services.

Proposed Mission

The American Economic Development Council will become the authoritative voice on economic development and related public policy in the Americas. We will provide information and analysis through research to strengthen public policy decisions and advance business and community development for our major stakeholders.

- We enhance the status, credibility, welfare, and capacity of economic development professionals internationally.
- We educate our membership and the public on economic development trends nationally and globally which integrate business and community development.
- We respond to national, regional, and global issues of economic development through technical research and state-of-the-art communications strategies which inform local, regional, and national policy.
- We serve economic development practitioners, government, and business as the knowledge and value center for economic

development information, public policy, research, education, and resources in the Americas for the 21st century.

Proposed Core Strategies

By the year 2005, the American Economic Development Council will:

- Gain consensus among economic development practitioners on its role as the knowledge and value center for economic development resources in the Americas.
- Develop and communicate its public image as the knowledge and value center of economic development to practitioners, government officials, corporate leaders, and business associations, nationally and internationally.
- Expand its capacity and skills in research, professional development, business development, technology, and marketing through a delivery system which meets the economic development needs of the profession and the communities they serve.
- Develop a comprehensive, multi-year financial plan to secure necessary resources

which impact public policy on community and economic development, nationally and internationally.

- Realign the board, staff and membership structure to become the preeminent knowledge and value resource in the profession of economic development.
- Develop effective strategic partnerships with business, government, education, and economic development organizations to provide an authoritative voice on economic community development issues.

Future Performance Indicators

Members of the Preeminence Task Force were asked to identify the key performance indicators to be used as benchmarks for the success of AEDC in the 21st century. Performance indicators were identified as those criteria the organization would use to report its progress to members and various constituencies. Upon endorsement of the Preeminence Strategy, a comprehensive strategic plan will be needed to add numeric values which quantify progress on each indicator. Key performance indicators for AEDC in the 21st century include the following:

- Increased membership and member segments among the following constituents:
 - economic development practitioners
 - government and public policy decision makers
 - business leaders, trade associations, and organizations.
- Increased public recognition in the media and government as the leading knowledge and value center for economic development information, public policy, research, education and service.
- The quantity and quality of research products with a national demand and distribution system.
- A dramatic increase in the certification of economic development individuals and organizations.
- Strategic alliances between AEDC and professional, business, trade, and governmental associations sponsoring research and influencing public policy.
- Growth in annual net income and financial reserves.
- Increase in the number of divisions/affinity group sections based upon strategic issues in economic development.
- Improved job recognition of economic development practitioners through planned

<p>Prevailing Paradigm</p> <p>Mission: To provide educational resources to the economic development professional</p> <p>Market:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Economic Development Practitioner <p>Product Lines: Courses, publications, conferences, certification programs</p> <p>Process: Consensus on projects by member-driven committees</p> <p>Impact: Member satisfaction among limited market share of those needing economic development resources</p>	<p>Preeminence Paradigm</p> <p>Mission: To be the leading, international, authoritative voice for economic development within the profession, industry, and government</p> <p>Market:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Economic Development Practitioner ● Business Leaders and Business Associations ● Government and Political Organizations ● Economic Development Organizations <p>Product Lines: The knowledge and value center of economic development in the Americas</p> <p>Process: Economic Development research and networking of skills and knowledge among economic development practitioners, government leaders, business leaders, and business associations</p> <p>Impact: Improved public policy on business and economic development, nationally and internationally</p>
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advancement in the field and reduced career disruptions.

Increased average of economic development professional compensation nationally based upon value-added factors provided by AEDC.

Creation of the industry-standard model for evaluating economic development projects based upon a return on investment.

Creation of the industry-accepted model for documenting the value-added benefit and return on investment of an economic development professional within a community.

Expanded base of subscribers and functions on an AEDC computer network which includes:

- inventory of economic development expertise
- economic development market linkages
- economic development labor supply information for corporations
- directory of worker retraining resources nationally.

Regular congressional testimony by AEDC as a key national source for economic development public policy.

Expanded menu of products and services of AEDC which includes:

- topical economic development research
- continuing education by affinity groups or sections
- print and electronic communications
- expanded value-added member benefits.

Wide acceptance of an economic development professional ethics policy.

STRATEGIC MARKET ANALYSIS

After consensus was reached among Preeminence Task Force members on the preferred preeminence paradigm for the future, they participated in a strategic market analysis to evaluate possible growth in mission and membership of AEDC. Currently, AEDC primarily serves individual, professional economic development practitioners in the United States. The following expansion of the markets was discussed in light of the preferred preeminence paradigm of AEDC in the 21st century. Possible markets for AEDC could include:

Economic Development Professionals in the United States'

- professional economic developers
- economic development councils and organizations
- individual economic development volunteers

Allied Economic Development Professionals:

- tourism professionals
- urban planners
- town and city managers
- state, regional, and local public administrators

Public Policy Leaders in Government and Education:

- public officials from cities, counties, and states
- universities
- higher education professionals

Business and Trade Associations

- chambers of commerce
- industry specific trade associations.

As a result of reviewing these four potential market categories, members of the AEDC Preeminence Task Force consolidated these to three primary markets:

- Economic Development Practitioners and Organizations
- Government and Elected Officials
- Business Leaders and Trade Associations.

PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

Members of the task force were asked to define the major product lines or services of AEDC that would benefit its expanded membership and mission in the 21st century. The following is a description of the major product lines and their purposes for AEDC. A comprehensive strategic plan would be necessary to identify how AEDC would develop these product lines and their eventual acceptability in the marketplace.

Research

AEDC will require the capability to analyze and recommend appropriate economic development policies, economic development strategies, and a public policy response to issues on a national, regional, or local level. AEDC could become the research center in the nation for economic development priorities. Tailored research to meet the needs of the economic development practitioner will be a primary emphasis of AEDC. AEDC would need to establish its capability in forecasting and analysis of trends and issues in public policy as

a result of economic development initiatives. AEDC could provide national economic development market research to business leaders, government, trade organizations, and associations fulfilling their public policy needs with timely economic development resources.

Electronic Communications

AEDC has already developed the concept of a network for electronic communications. This network could be expanded in the future to provide an information highway of economic development resources. Similar efforts are currently being conducted internationally in such fields as commercial real estate. AEDC could establish a national and international database and network for communication on economic development issues. This network could link practitioners and other allied professionals exchanging information and resources by affinity groups or interest areas. In addition, this electronic communications network could provide standard economic development models which could be employed locally by an economic development practitioner or community to evaluate the return on investment of an economic development project or even the hiring of an economic development professional. AEDC could strengthen its role as an international knowledge base in the profession by publishing white papers, theses, and public policy recommendations on economic development issues which it places on the network for exchange in the international and national marketplace.

Print Communications and Publications

While electronic communications may provide a value-added benefit for the future, it is anticipated that print communications and publications will still be a major priority for the economic development practitioner in related fields, such as government and business. AEDC could expand its economic development publications, perhaps working jointly with other professional trade associations and publishers. Their various formats for AEDC publications, however, will expand based on the needs of members to include professional journals, books, research publications, information on CD Rom, and computer disk formats.

Professional Development Resources

AEDC has provided workshops and seminars in the field of economic development for economic development practitio-

ners. It is anticipated that this educational mission for professional development may expand in the future. It may be that by the 21st century AEDC will have separate tracks of continuing education, focusing on the economic development professional, government leaders, and business leaders, as three major markets for its educational resources.

The professional development educational resources of AEDC will require diversification in their delivery system. By the 21st century, AEDC may experiment with additional on-site courses provided to local jurisdictions, interactive video and point-to-point teleconferences, and electronic self-study on the communication network. In addition, AEDC could provide professional resources to the field which would advance professionalism by assisting communities and economic development entities do a more thorough job of evaluating economic development impact on public policy and community quality of life.

As an example, AEDC could develop a computer modeling package to evaluate the return on investment of hiring an economic development professional. A similar project could be the development of a computer modeling tool to evaluate the return on investment for economic development projects. This could be used by businesses and economic development organizations, as well as by political jurisdictions.

Credentialing and Professional Standards Resources

AEDC will enhance the profession through credentialing and standards. This will include the continual improvement of the CED program and growth of accredited economic development organizations (AEDO program).

AEDC will continue to provide models and standards for the compensation and benefits of the economic development profession. AEDC may also offer affiliate credentialing programs assuring the knowledge of business and government leaders in various credentials related to their role in economic development efforts for their organizations. AEDC may also seek to establish an effective ethics policy which is adopted by economic development practitioners and organizations.

Member Professional Services

In order to maintain its strength in serving the economic development professional, AEDC will be called upon to provide professional services for its members. This could include a national employment service assisting economic development professionals in career transitions. It could also provide short-term economic development professionals to assist local communities in their transition to hiring a full-time economic development leader.

AEDC may be called upon to develop more comprehensive, portable and flexible benefits programs that could be offered as a value-added benefit to economic development professionals and their corporations. For example, AEDC could offer national pension, health, life, and disability programs that could be purchased by an economic development organization for its economic development professional. The professional would also have the advantage of the portability of this program as he/she may change jobs. AEDC could also provide standardized models for employment contracts that could be used by various municipalities and economic development organizations to strengthen the professionalism of their hiring practices in working with economic development professionals.

Economic Development Consulting Network

A new service area for AEDC in the future could include an economic development consulting network, nationally and internationally. This economic development consulting network could assist economic development professionals in the start-up of economic development organizations throughout the United States. It could assist local economic development organizations and professionals in various crisis situations, such as the relocation or closure of a major industry. It could also assist local communities with economic development priorities and planning during natural disaster.

AEDC could be an industry leader in assisting government agencies in creating separate, non-profit corporations to privatize economic development functions. Rather than compete with current AEDC members who are consultants, AEDC could position itself as a convener and resource bank to utilize professional economic development leaders in a consulting role to

target larger economic development projects they may not be able to reach through their own marketing and promotion efforts. The critical question for AEDC in the advancement of this service area will be to clearly establish itself in the marketplace as serving the national and international needs of economic development, as well as the economic development professional.

SUMMARY

The *AEDC 2005: Preeminence Strategy* represents a comprehensive overview of how the organization may look in the future as a result of an expanded mission and market. The goal of the Preeminence Strategy is to create consensus among the Board of Directors, governance committees, and members of AEDC on the preferred vision of the organization in the 21st century. After consensus on the vision and strategy is reached, it is anticipated that the *AEDC 2005: Preeminence Strategy* may be a key driving force for the long-range strategic plan.

The *AEDC 2005: Preeminence Strategy* does not deal with the tactics, goals, objectives, and operational action plans for the future. Rather, the process is intended to focus on the major concepts that should shape the future of the organization as it achieves the preferred mission and vision in the 21st century.

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