

4 TOWN REGIONAL ECONOMIC VITALITY PLAN
STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING
MEETING NOTES – OCTOBER 27, 2021, 2PM – 3PM

In attendance: Eric Trott, Patrice Carson, Ryan Aylesworth, Cara Workman, Tim Liptrap, David Corcoran, Cynthia van Zelm, Richard White

Guest: Gregory Lewis with the CT Small Business Development Center, Diane Nadeau with Windham Arts

1) Discussion with Gregory Lewis from the CT Small Business Development Center

Greg said the mission of the CT Small Business Development Center (CTSBDC) is to help small businesses get started or expand.

Greg noted that SCORE and the Women's Business Development Center are all funded by SBA.

CTSBDC can help with applications for grants including EIDL, and PPP (as part of COVID-19 relief).

Greg said they encourage people to work with regional banks, and not large banks.

Greg mentioned the Industrious CFO tool that takes a business's financial information and compares it across the particular industry to see the best way to improve the business.

Greg said there is a marketing tool called Invasworld? that UConn also uses to check the marketing landscape for a business' industry.

Growth Wheel is also used for companies in transition or companies looking to start a new product.

Eric asked about how to leverage research at UConn and ECSU? Greg said he has been working for some time on how to assist startup companies that evolve out of research initiatives. He said the group Verge Consulting are UConn graduate students that consult with small businesses.

Greg also said that the UConn Engineering Senior Design Program is available to any companies that need engineering services.

He said that UConn has agreed in principle with CTNext to develop a portal to connect small businesses with resources. The portal is mainly robotic.

Greg likes our regional approach.

Eric asked if Greg hears a disconnect with how the permitting process works for businesses. Greg said there is a responsibility to protect environmental resources AND help businesses. He does not hear as many concerns about the permitting process as he did 10 years ago.

CTSBDC can help with alternatives to assist businesses.

Community colleges are set up to train workers and are the best resource for businesses.

Eric asked how do we maintain local, growing businesses. Greg said CTSBDC is re-assessing skills that start-ups need. It is helpful to give a checklist to businesses of ways to get to the next level to make it easier for them to expand.

Diane said they have a contract to do business visitations in Hebron. She suggested that ARPA money be used to train employees. Diane also suggested that more goods and services be purchased locally to address the supply chain issue.

Eric agreed that business visitation is essential. Best way is for business owners to visit business owners.

Greg mentioned NERAC's XCellR8 program where businesses can practice their pitches for money.

Tim Liptrap asked how people can link up with that program. Greg said you can go to NERAC and request counseling.

Tim asked if the CTSBDC can tell us who we should recruit using their data? Greg said this is worth exploring with CTSBDC.

Greg said it is ok to reach out to him directly for assistance.