

## **Introduction**

A year ago the Greater Owensboro Economic Development Corp. released *A Strategic Plan for the Development of the Life Sciences in Greater Owensboro*, suggesting a new economic development approach focusing on high technology sector developments in the life sciences. The report contains nine major recommendations for building competitive advantage for the Owensboro region in the life sciences. During the year considerable progress has been made toward implementing the recommendations.

### **Recommendation 1:**

Leverage the Kentucky Bioprocessing facilities to become a world leader in Plant Made Pharmaceuticals and Natural Products

#### Accomplishments:

- GO-EDC supported the efforts of KBP by regularly meeting with customers, collaborating and presenting information about doing business in Owensboro.
- EDC further supported KBP through the creation of the Owensboro Venture Club. KBP collaborators and potential customers have presented or are considered likely future presenters to club members.
- Hosted KBP customers at BIO Conference. EDC continues to assist in connecting with companies working in the PMP industry.
- EDC is supporting KBP in its current discussions with four separate biotech companies regarding possible Owensboro locations.

### **Recommendation 2:**

Better coordination of efforts- It is critical that community leaders who are involved with economic development be aware of the respective efforts of their counterparts.

#### Accomplishments:

- GO-EDC created a Life Science Roundtable/Partnership to help coordinate efforts among companies, postsecondary institutions, research and development, agriculture and economic development.

### **Recommendation 3:**

Better define the leadership role of the Owensboro Biotechnology Alliance (OBA) in life science efforts.

#### Accomplishments:

- GO-EDC continues to provide in-kind staff support to OBA and has offered some matching funds to help secure a grant from the Agriculture Development Board.
- The EDC recommends that OBA become more regional in scope to establish a broader base of financial support for its activities.

**Recommendation 4:**

Assume a leadership role at the state level.

Accomplishments:

- The GO-EDC established a relationship with the Department of Commercialization and Innovation (DCI) at Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development.
- Worked with DCI to create an Owensboro Office of the Central Region Innovation and Commercialization Center with an expected opening in the fall. The ICC office will assist with the development of high technology life science companies as well as link to seed capital and venture capital funds around the Commonwealth.
- EDC and OBA staffed and supported DCI at the Kentucky booth at the Biotechnology Industry Organization Conference (BIO) in 2006 and 2007.
- Sponsored of the Governor's Reception at BIO 2007.

**Recommendation 5:**

Establish relationships with key companies through a designated community representative.

Accomplishments:

- The EDC regularly interacts with the business development staff of KBP to share information and resource contacts.
- A new EDC staff person will have responsibilities for nurturing entrepreneurial start-ups and high technology companies, such as those in the life sciences. This person will work through the Owensboro Office of the ICC.

**Recommendation 6:**

Build upon the existing assets in the community, including OMHS, the KBP facility, and the post secondary institutions.

Accomplishments:

- Life Science Roundtable has coordinated with KBP, OMHS and the postsecondary institutions to develop assets supporting a life science strategy.
- EDC worked with OCTC on the \$800,000 Department of Labor grant to assist in preparing the workforce for future growth in the life sciences. The grant will enable the college to recruit high school students and link the two-year degree program to the bachelor's degree program at Western Kentucky University.
- EDC partnered with WKU on expanding program opportunities in agriculture, biotechnology and the sciences in Owensboro.
- EDC is working closely with WKU on the expansion of biotechnology applied research program to interface with KBP and the OMHS/ U of L Cancer Research program.
- EDC, OMHS, OCTC and KWC are in the development stage of organizing incubator space equipped with a scientific wet lab and animal facilities for life science companies.

**Recommendation 7:**

Develop a plan to communicate the long term benefits of this new economic development approach to the citizenry.

Accomplishments:

- The EDC is working to change the tenor of conversation in the community about economic development to include entrepreneurship, high technology start-up companies and life sciences as future growth opportunities for the region.
- This communication plan was initially implemented with state leadership through meetings with the Governor, Cabinet for Economic Development officials and leadership of the Kentucky Biotech Alliance. The plan also targets locally elected officials and the community at-large.

**Recommendation 8:**

Establish a position that has clear responsibility for executing the strategy outlined in this report.

Accomplishments:

- ICC staff person will be working directly with the implementation of the life science strategy in conjunction with the EDC President/CEO.

**Recommendation 9:**

Most fundamentally, an effort should be made to analyze the entire life cycle of a typical life sciences company. With this analysis the community should align its efforts to create programs or opportunities addressing every possible stage to enhance its potential for growing, attracting and retaining these firms.

Accomplishments:

- Based on this analysis, the two primary needs are angel and/or venture capital and laboratory incubator space for companies to utilize during the production stage. Both assets would establish a closer connection to the community and allow companies to establish a presence in Owensboro rather than just utilizing the KBP facility.
- Met with potential investor groups and organized the Greater Owensboro Venture Club as a network of potential angel investors.
- Owensboro ICC program will help meet the needs of the companies working with KBP. The EDC has also worked with private developers, OMHS, KWC, and OCTC on the use of lab space for life science company use. OCTC through the newly constructed Advanced Technology Center Phase II is adding additional space to serve the needs of life science companies. The new OMHS development also creates an opportunity to meet these needs at the present Cancer Center site or as part of the new hospital development.

## Implementation Steps for the Future:

1. **Asset Assessment-** The EDC and Life Science Roundtable will conduct a thorough assessment of community infrastructure assets valued by high technology start-ups, particularly life science companies, these include:
  - Laboratory space for company use for incubation
  - Facilities to house small animals for use in research and a significant factor in attracting research and development funding for projects in the community.
  - Developments built specifically for high technology and research activities.
2. **R & D Consortium-** Work with partners to explore the development of a research and development consortium to promote innovation based economic development, create synergy among R & D industries; connect to resources at the federal and university level, identify technology transfer opportunities, and leverage intellectual property for the development and growth of start-up companies.
3. **Entrepreneurial Development-** The EDC will embark on an effort to improve the entrepreneurial climate of the region and promote the development of quality of life amenities to assist in the recruitment of young entrepreneurs. A suggested goal will be to establish seed funds to recruit 25 high-tech-oriented entrepreneurs in five years.
4. **Green River High Tech Alliance-** Create a partnership with regional economic development agencies to expand the scope and area of OBA to include other counties in the Green River region focusing on high tech development in the life sciences and include developments in alternative energy, with emphasis on the word “Green.” Such a structure would enable the region to better compete for funding and enlarge the political support for the efforts of this plan at the state and national levels.
5. **Communications Plan-** Enhance the communications plan to involve meetings and gatherings with the state legislative delegation and the public at-large.
6. **Explore Other Life Science Areas-** Through the expansion of OMHS, efforts should be made to explore other areas in the life sciences for potential economic growth and development in the Owensboro region, developments to explore include: bioinformatics, medical devices, and alternative energy.
7. **Build Support and Seek State Funding** for the expansion of programs to support life science and entrepreneurial development in the Owensboro area and statewide.

## Conclusion

Promoting and supporting work in the life sciences allows the Owensboro area to capitalize on its natural assets while expanding its share of high tech businesses. The significant accomplishments of the past year position the community to become even more successful at recruiting, retaining, and nurturing the development of the life sciences companies.