



WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNER

Lindsey Cannon, Director, Quest Site Solutions

Featured in *Area Development* – Q1 2019

<http://www.areadevelopment.com/consultant-insights/Q1-2019/successfully-engage-economic-development-organizations-lindsey-cannon.shtml>

Whether you are just in the beginning phase of a new development or are ready for its final announcement, it is important to understand the characteristics of a successful EDO partnership.

As technology continues to drive a wave of disruption across the site selection industry and economic headwinds loom on the horizon, it has become more important than ever for corporates to engage economic development organizations (EDOs) that have a firm understanding of the businesses, local governments and communities that they represent.

But the key question then becomes: how do you know if you are working with the right EDO?

From setting initial project parameters to preparing the memorandum of understanding and administering the final announcement, following are the key things to be on the lookout to ensure you are working with the right economic development partner.

Defining the Project

Just as with any business relationship, the relationship between your company and an economic development organization must be built on trust. After your company has accomplished the critical first step of defining the project and setting out the parameters of its wants and needs, you should bring EDOs in the prospective locations into the fold and trust that they will dutifully study and understand the ins-and-outs of your project.

In turn, successful EDOs will submit proposals that snugly fit within your project's predefined parameters and will even employ informative and accurate visuals to bring these proposals to life before you set foot on the site. A well-prepared EDO will also have a deep understanding of the capacity and capabilities of their community's workforce, and have ideas as to how their skills will align with your business' current and future needs.

If an EDO accomplishes these objectives in the first phase, you will be well on your way toward a successful project.

Evaluating your Options

Site selection and economic development is very much a team sport and everybody on the team has a role to play. Whether the topic is utilities, workforce, transportation or other vital community partners and resources, it is imperative for EDOs to leverage the knowledge and expertise of specialized experts and have the support of the full economic development team behind them.

But just because the whole team has showed up to play doesn't mean you should let your guard down. When dealing with an EDO, beware of vague, nondescript answers that can be the first sign of



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a lack of transparency and sincerity. When an EDO says, “Don’t worry, that won’t be a problem,” have the EDO prove how they will resolve the issue. Honest answers that acknowledge an issue or challenge, and offer evidence that the team is doing everything within its power to find and implement a solution, is much more reassuring.

While evaluating site proposals, be sure that an EDO prioritizes community support and is always being forthright and transparent when answering your questions.

Negotiations to Final Announcement

The negotiation phase is vital because that is where corporates can compare the incentives offered by other locations and examine the nitty gritty details of the project’s pro-forma.

In today’s economic climate, financial incentives are not always the end game in negotiations. Feeling like a part of the greater community is also a major factor. Creative EDOs will implement innovative solutions to help integrate your business into the community, such as offering a designated liaison to serve as the go-to person for all of your business’ community-related needs.

These EDOs may also provide a training program and/or community college curriculum that will deliver a sustainable stream of qualified workers into your labor pool. Whatever the solution may be, you must always be sure that these incentives are documented to guarantee successful implementation.

Final Thoughts

Whether you are just in the beginning phase of a new development or are ready for its final announcement, it is important to understand the characteristics of a successful EDO partnership. Identifying and teaming up with the right economic development partner can be the difference between the timely, accurate completion of a project and one that never gets off the ground.