



The Columbus Partnership

Overview

The Columbus Partnership brings together CEO-level business leaders to work on “big picture” issues to promote the region. The newly created group operates in a region traditionally lacking collaboration among local CEOs. More than 80 percent of the Partnership’s 23 members are large companies. The Partnership has 23 Board members and three full-time staff members.

The Partnership’s strategy under its first Executive Director, Robert Milbourne, is to start with a small, cohesive membership that will broaden over time. Because of its high-powered membership, one challenge will be to quickly show tangible results to convince CEO-level members that participation in the Partnership is worth their time.

The Partnership’s regional priorities are to establish an identity that is regional, not just city-based; encourage collaboration among regional leadership groups; secure federal funding for regional projects; and support downtown revitalization.

Regional Priorities

The Partnership has tried to persuade local CEO-level business leaders that collaboration is more effective than independent action in promoting the region’s economic development. It has sought to boost the region’s regional identity, persuading people to think about Columbus as a region, not a city.

The Partnership has also tried to get more federal funding for a series of environmental and transportation-related projects, and has sought to boost economic development around the industry clusters of life sciences, advanced logistics, and creative services.

The Partnership, along with the Columbus Downtown Development Corporation, has played a key role in energizing business leaders to try and revitalize downtown Columbus. The downtown revitalization includes a project known as RiverSouth, a 20-acre area in downtown Columbus that will integrate cultural venues, sports facilities, retail, offices and housing. Specific downtown projects will be identified to try and leverage money from the state.

ORGANIZATIONAL SNAPSHOT

Type of Organization

Exclusively led by companies or employers

Unit of Membership

Company/organization

Number of Members

2003: 23
1998: N/A

Membership by Company Size

Small Companies: 0%
Mid-sized Companies: 17%
Large Companies: 83%

Dues Determined by

Flat fees or dues

Annual Dues Paid by

Largest Member Companies: N/A
Smallest Member Companies: N/A

Annual Operating Budget

2003: N/A
1998: N/A

Staff Members (FTE)

2003: 3
1998: N/A

Board Members

2003: 23

Regional Priorities

Regional Collaboration, Regional Identity, Federal Funding for Projects, Downtown Revitalization

One of the Partnership's recent efforts is to bring its members to a common understanding about issues facing the region. The Partnership recently had MBA students write papers on topics including business' role in education, arts, regional and downtown economic development, health and human services, and philanthropy. Partnership members will discuss the papers once they are completed and then outline next steps.

Structure and Operations

The Partnership has 23 members, 83 percent of whom represent large companies. Having started with a membership of 12, the Partnership hopes to build to 30 members, with a single dues level of \$50,000 per member. The Partnership has 23 Board members and three full-time staff members. On typical projects, staff members will conduct most of the work and find a Board member to champion the project.

The Partnership has applied for new market tax credits, as a tool for economic development and as a way to generate operating funds. Up to 15% of capital for new market tax credits can go to administrative costs.

A challenge for the Partnership will be to define its relationship with the Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce. In general, the Partnership focuses on incubating ideas and spinning off projects while the Chamber carries out the operations part of projects. The two groups have had conversations about how they can better integrate their functions, but no decision has been reached.