

Hampton Roads Partnership Regional Successes

Recent discussions point to a need to identify regional successes that give the Hampton Roads Partnership value in the public eye. Many of our board members express the dire need for the Partnership even with the termination of funding from the Regional Competitiveness Program. Our members continue to demonstrate their commitment to the Partnership through their financial support, attendance at meetings, and interest in our new committee structure. A few members desire to “see more” in the way of Partnership successes to further demonstrate our effectiveness and value. We can point to past successes and look at future opportunities that clearly demonstrate our worth.

Much of what the Partnership does lays a foundation for regional successes for which we rarely claim direct responsibility. The value and benefit of bringing the region’s leaders to the table to discuss regional collaboration and cooperation is not always easy to measure. While we have worked hard to leverage RCP funds with other resources to advance initiatives of the regional strategic plan begun in 1998, it is also important to consider the regional successes that come about as a result of the relationships formed and strengthened through the work of our organization. These relationships extend beyond our board members. Some suggest that the groundwork laid by the Partnership culminated in the successful merger of TRT and PENTRAN into HRT as well as merging the two economic development alliances currently in process. Possibly some statements from the organizations mentioned above could help to demonstrate the Partnership’s value in changing our thinking and action with regard to successful regional cooperation.

In reviewing the history of the Partnership, there are many good things that have been accomplished that translate into successes for Hampton Roads. It is also fair to say that many of these things may not have occurred without the Hampton Roads Partnership. The following summarizes where the Hampton Roads Partnership has made a difference:

Transportation

- Mobilized twenty-four local and regional stakeholder groups to advocate for better transportation.
- Advocated for successful passage of legislation establishing a state commission to study unfunded transportation needs of the region and eventually legislation allowing for a regional transportation referendum.
- Developed and published educational materials used during the referendum campaign.
- Appropriated funds toward efforts to bring High Speed Rail to both sides of Hampton Roads
- Established the Hampton Roads Airport System Study Advisory Committee to look at the governing structure of the current two-airport

system. An outcome was an on-going work group established by the airport Executive Directors formed to improve communications between the airports and promote joint marketing opportunities.

Technology-based Economic Development

- Brought together major government and higher education users of bandwidth to develop a Hampton Roads “grid” that would support sharing of computer resources
- Funded a study to develop a Hampton Roads Network Access Point
- Established Hampton Roads Smart Region, which partnered with WHRO to initiate a pilot program for sharing resources across school boundaries, called Smart Learning
- Contracted with the Research Triangle Institute to develop a plan to foster more effective commercialization of intellectual property assets at the region’s universities and labs
- Founded and funded the Hampton Roads Technology Incubator
- Facilitated establishment of Envest Entrepreneurial Investments venture capital fund.
- Established, funded, and guided the Hampton Roads Technology Council to strengthen technology businesses through networking, communication, education and advocacy
- Provided funds to the NASA Aeronautics Support Team
- Through Smart Region HR played a role in locating US Navy NETWARCOM to Hampton Roads
- Funded Route 199 Crossroads Development Study leading to the establishment of a technology and business center at the College of William and Mary, the luring of INCOGEN to settle in Crossroads’ New Town, establishment of a center for Excellence in Aging and Geriatric Health development of a partnership between TNCC and W & M to set up *the Discovery Center of Greater Williamsburg*, and a new campus of TNCC in James City County.
- Formed and funded the Hampton Roads Research Partnership to increase the region’s research capabilities by encouraging more comprehensive and uniform collaboration among the region’s colleges and universities and the federal labs
- Funded studies to identify areas where the region has a distinct competitive advantage (marine sciences, modeling and simulation, and economic development structure and programs)

Ports

- Funded a port ombudsman who was successful in advancing major port growth issues as channel dredging and advancing the plan to develop Craney Island, advocating for transportation connections into and away from the port facilities. Additionally, the port ombudsman was successful in lobbying for enactment of state statutes needed to increase assistance to port host cities to offset negative impacts.

- Funded joint economic development visits involving HREDA, PAED and VPA to Los Angeles and Detroit, focused on recruitment of current port-users and prospects
- Financially supported the Elizabeth River Project's "River Stars" program, a grassroots effort to involve the business sector in a community-wide effort to restore the environmental health of the Elizabeth River.

Workforce Development

- Facilitated formation of Opportunity, Inc.
- Provided leadership and funds for a regional workforce survey (ERISS) of 10,000 employers to define the region's workforce needs
- Launched *Square One* early childhood initiative, responsible for monitoring the region's progress on early childhood issues, enhancing skills of the region's municipal early childhood service staff and local childcare professionals, raising awareness of early childhood issues (especially reading), and securing a \$804,000 ELOA grant to assist local governments in literacy efforts.
- Funded Hampton Roads Community Learning Center Network, bringing access to computer technology and training to underserved individuals.
- Developed a model to focus on skill certification in the school system.

Regionalism and Regional Cooperation

- Raised awareness and visibility of regional issues – through public polling, regionalism-focused work group meetings with local elected officials, funding of Regionalism Studies Institute at ODU, forum featuring Dr. Ted Hershberg, and special programming with WHRO (Hampton Roads, Inc.) to obtain public input on regional strategic issues
- Delivered numerous presentations focused on the benefits of regionalism to local councils, civic organizations, professional associations and leadership development classes throughout the region
- Met individually with eight members of print and broadcast media regarding opportunities to spark public awareness and interest in matters of regional consequence
- Periodically convened representatives from local government regarding MAPS, workforce development, economic development, transportation, and ways to enhance regional cooperation.

Plight of the Cities

- Enhanced public awareness of the strength and importance of cities and served as an advocate for change in state policy as it relates to localities

Tourism

- Provided funding to Art of Glass exhibit, Virginia Arts Festival, and OpSail 2000
- Facilitated creation of a regional sports commission to attract amateur and non major league professional sporting events to the region.

- Funded studies and promoted benefits of attracting a major league sports franchise to the region
- Funded study quantifying economic impacts of expanding the existing Virginia Marine Science Museum
- Pursued attraction of a major tourism “icon” to the region
- Provided funding for the Aviation Worlds Fair
- Developed and launched a regional tourism website
- Conducted an assessment of tourism-related signage throughout the region

Military Partnering

- Funded a study to convert St. Juliens Creek Naval Base to civilian use as a regional business/industrial park

Metropolitan Area Projects Strategies

- Initiated a unique vehicle for all of the municipalities of Hampton Roads to benefit from infrastructure that they would be unable to afford individually.

In looking ahead, which is possibly where our energy should be focused, there are many opportunities to educate all of our elected leaders as well as the general public on the benefits of regional cooperation. We have developed a “to do” list that outlines some ideas, many of which can turn into regional successes in the short term, further demonstrating the value of the Hampton Roads Partnership.