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Brownfields One-Stop Shop Forum: A Test Strategy for Inter-Agency Cooperation in Northeast Ohio

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A Proposal for the Structure of the
Brownfields One-Stop Shop Forum:
A Test Strategy for Inter-Agency Cooperation in Northeast Ohio

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Introduction

The Brownfields One Stop Shop (BOSS) is the culmination of a process created over a year ago that brought together several federal and local public agencies to address the complexities of applying resources to support brownfields redevelopment. The idea was originally developed by the United States Environmental Protection Agency's Region 5 brownfields Project Manager, Edwin Smith, and by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development's Cleveland Office Community Builder, Paul Diegelman. Together, they developed an initial concept for a collaborative introductory meeting, and presented the idea to the Cleveland Federal Executive Board members. The project was accepted as a natural outgrowth of the broad federal outreach effort of the Federal Interagency Working Group on Brownfields. The BOSS is a locally based initiative, and the introductory meeting was held May 10, 2000. The federal agencies and state/local partners represented at that meeting included the following:

- Department of Agriculture (USDA), Urban Conservation, as part of the Summit Soil & Water Conservation District
- Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA)
- Army Corps of Engineers, Buffalo District
- Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration (FTA)
- Department of Justice (DOJ)
- National Park Service, Cuyahoga American Heritage River
- Small Business Administration (SBA)
- Federal Home Loan Bank (FHLB)
- Ohio EPA (OhEPA)
- Ohio Department of Development (ODOD)
- Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT)
- Ohio Water Development Authority (OWDA)
- Great Lakes Environmental Finance Center

In addition to the federal and state partners, several local participants were present and remain part of the BOSS. They include representatives from Cuyahoga County, the City of Cleveland, the City of Akron, and the City of Toledo.

Last year, the GLEFC published a report of the interview process with all of the major BOSS partners, and in that report (published July, 2001) identified all of the financial and technical resources that were available from each agency for brownfields redevelopment. Two major areas of collaboration were specifically recommended for the BOSS to focus, and the following excerpts that recommendation:

“After a review of each agency’s role in brownfields redevelopment, there are two programmatic themes that surface as providing an opportunity for establishing a multi-agency cooperative working relationship that may be of benefit to any particular project. These two themes are:

- Projects that have **watershed-related** planning and restoration as a component
- Projects that have as a goal **economic development** and/or revitalization.

These two themes cross several agencies, and as projects are identified and reviewed, the two components of watershed-relationship and economic development provide the most opportunity for multi-agency cooperation. The following lists those agencies that can provide technical assistance or direct financial resources, or both, to projects that qualify under each of the two themes:

Watershed-related projects, i.e. Those that incorporate either a revitalization project along the Great Lakes shoreline, watersheds; river or streambed restoration; and those projects that have a water quality issue attached, such as drinking water or other ground water environmental issue.

- Natural Resources Conversation Service
- Army Corps of Engineers
- Cuyahoga American Heritage Rivers
- Ohio EPA
- Ohio Water Development Authority

- **Economic development projects**, i.e. those that incorporate an economic revitalization component in an economically distressed area.
 - Ohio Department of Development

- Economic Development Administration
- Cuyahoga American Heritage Rivers
- US EPA
- Ohio EPA”¹

It is important to note that while these two themes present opportunities for the greatest number of BOSS agencies to become involved in any one single applicable project, other agency collaborations can offer resources for appropriate projects as well.

In 2001, the BOSS met again to develop a vision for what the organization can do to facilitate brownfields redevelopment in the region. The Great Lakes Environmental Finance Center (GLEFC), as facilitator for the group, also interviewed additional prospective partners and stakeholders to further determine the feasibility of the BOSS as a viable group capable of bringing resources to redevelopment in the region. Specifically, additional discussions were held with private sector stakeholders, such as Hemisphere Corporation and C.B. Richard Ellis, Inc. Brokerage Services, and public sector partners such as the Ohio Department of Development, the Army Corps of Engineers, and HUD.

Where the BOSS is Today:

Two significant opportunities have emerged since the BOSS’ last meeting that will help to spur momentum for the BOSS to take action in a collaborative effort for brownfields redevelopment. These two opportunities are: 1) the creation and implementation of the **Clean Ohio Fund**, a \$200 million brownfields revitalization grant fund to provide moneys for cleanup of contaminated sites in Ohio over the next four years; and 2) the creation of the federal legislation known as the **Small Business Liability Relief and Brownfields Revitalization Act**, signed into law by President Bush January 11, 2002. This fund provides \$250 million per year through 2006 for assessment *and* cleanup, including for petroleum, as well as providing enhanced liability protection (amending CERCLA) for innocent property owners who are cleaning up brownfield sites under their state voluntary action programs. These two significant enhancements are particularly timely for the BOSS to act in a collaborative effort in our region.

¹ “BOSS Task Force Participant Scan”, July 17, 2001

The Purpose of this Report

The following recommends a simple and straightforward proposal for the BOSS to act in 2002 and for approximately one year beyond as a test of its effectiveness in inter-agency collaboration. As one stakeholder mentioned, “the BOSS is a great concept, but if it can’t put money and resources on the table, then it’s not worth our time...” With the emergence of Ohio’s major funding opportunity in the Clean Ohio Fund, (which will provide an opportunity for applications in October, 2002 for the second round of funding,) and the new federal legislation to be administered by US EPA, now is the time for the BOSS to act. The following outlines actions needed for success.

The BOSS in 2002

The **purpose** of the BOSS is the following:

- To engage the inter-agency participation of those public entities providing resources, either financial or technical, for brownfields redevelopment;
- To provide a forum for self-education on the complexities of brownfields redevelopment, especially for communities that may lack resources and/or capacity; and
- To provide a forum for communities to present specific projects that may lead to specific assistance and/or deal-making.

The GLEFC proposes the following actions in 2002:

- I. Create a physical entity in the BOSS, meaning a staffed position that will coordinate communication and resources of all the agencies and stakeholders involved in the BOSS. Web usage would also be utilized to enhance communication and collaboration. The position would be jointly-funded by US EPA and the GLEFC at Cleveland State University. The function would be housed within the GLEFC, utilizing a graduate-level, Ph.D. candidate. *(This position has been filled by John O. Storey, a joint Juris Doctor-Master of Planning, Design & Development candidate.)*

2. Convene the BOSS in July to review the proposed structure and for projects to be invited to present for which funding and technical assistance would be considered. Minimum thresholds for projects to be considered for assistance by the BOSS Forum are:
 - There must be a public entity partnership (any political subdivision)
 - Some private equity already pledged, either in actual costs incurred, or time or talent expended
 - Phase I completed
 - Pro Forma: sources & uses of funds identifying areas of specific need;
 - Preference will be given to those projects that contain one of the following elements: watershed-related location or issue, and /or economic development potential

3. Establish a communications matrix of participating partners defining their role and responsibilities as a BOSS member so that expectations are clear as to each agency's commitment for collaboration. To be defined/proposed at the July meeting.

4. Establish criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of the BOSS. Examine such measurements as, for example: number of inquiries, number of deals coordinated, number of deals completed, number of partners engaged, and plans for a survey of projects after a two-year period. To be proposed after the July meeting.

5. Secure commitment for funding the BOSS in a second year, based upon the success in year one of the project.

Next Steps

The GLEFC will continue in its role as facilitator, and lead the above actions to prepare for the July 24, 2002 meeting. BOSS member agencies will be asked to commit time and where applicable, resources, to make the BOSS a viable collaboration. In this year of new funding opportunities and a greater federal policy emphasis on brownfields redevelopment, the time is right for the BOSS to take action.

BOSS partners and stakeholders are encouraged to comment on this proposal to Kirstin Toth, GLEFC Project Manager, at kstoth@raex.com