



Allegheny Conference on Community Development

Overview

The Allegheny Conference on Community Development was founded in 1943 as a private, nonprofit organization to convene corporate, government and community leaders to frame, discuss and implement civic initiatives. The Conference develops strategies that are regional (building on the assets of all ten counties in southwestern PA, and improving the economic status and quality of life for citizens in every county); inclusive (promoting opportunities for women, minorities and the international community in the regional economy); collaborative (working in partnership with other civic organizations, supporting the leadership efforts of public officials at the local, state and federal levels and involving the general public as appropriate); and cost-effective (helping to make southwestern PA a competitive region for businesses, workers and visitors).

At its 1991 Annual Meeting, the Allegheny Conference outlined a new agenda, committing itself to forge new partnerships in four major areas: education and workforce development, regional development, civic organization and public governance. During 2000, the Conference's Board engaged in an agenda-setting process, outlining priorities for the coming years in order to fulfill the Conference's mission of improving the regional product. Also during the year, a new strategic affiliation was created with the Conference, Pennsylvania Economy League (Western Division), Pittsburgh Regional Alliance and the Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce in which all of the organizations share one executive.

Regional Priorities

The Allegheny Conference on Community Development has developed a comprehensive set of regional strategies. One of its leading strategies is to develop a strong regional economy. The Conference has specifically focused on leading the effort to transition the regional economy from one that was not very diversified and relied primarily on basic industries to a regional economy that is diversified and has a strong presence of technology-based companies and advanced manufacturing firms.

ORGANIZATIONAL SNAPSHOT

Type of Organization

Exclusively business-led

Unit of Membership:

Individuals and companies
(equal representation of both types)

Number of Members

2003: 206
1998: N/A

Membership by Company Size

Small Companies: 40%
Mid-sized Companies: 45%
Large Companies: 15%

Dues Determined by

Company revenue

Annual Dues Paid by

Largest Member Companies: ~\$125,000
Smallest Member Companies: ~\$5,000

Annual Operating Budget

2003: \$5 million or more
1998: N/A

Staff Members (FTE)

2003: 76
1998: N/A

Board Members

2003: 40

Organizational Priorities

Investment in Infrastructure;
Public Governance; Education;
Developing the Regional Economy

In order to support this transition, the Conference has decided to make major investments in the region's physical infrastructure. For example, the Conference organized a 10-county region to set priorities for project investments in areas such as industrial sites, water, sewer and transportation. This multi-year investment strategy has already led to the opening of a new convention center. The Conference has also organized target areas for investment such as the airport and Oakland areas. It has even organized an Oakland Area Committee to oversee project investments.

Perhaps the Conference's most significant contribution to the greater Pittsburgh region was its ability to foster regional cooperation among various organizations. The Conference spearheaded the effort in the fall of 2000 to create a legal cooperative relationship among the Pittsburgh Regional Alliance, Pennsylvania Economy League (Western Division) and the Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce. Each organization maintains its own Board and independence but share a Chief Executive and a few staff and administrative functions.

The leadership of the Allegheny Conference on Community Development is not only concerned about the economic conditions of the region, but concerned about the social infrastructure as well. As a result, the Conference has established a goal to ensure that all children in the region can read, write and compute by the age of 10. They have created a committee that is chaired by a Conference Board member. The belief is that if children are proficient in the aforementioned areas by age 10, they will then be able to learn by themselves. To be able to gauge the effectiveness of the initiative, the Conference is focusing on measurements and accountability.

Structure and Operations

The Allegheny Conference on Community Development is an exclusively business-led organization. Recently, the Conference has strived to be more inclusive in its membership and leadership. For example, the organization has expanded the number of Board members from 26 to 40 in order to better reflect the diversity of the region. In addition, the Conference has expanded its membership base to include more industries, such as healthcare and technology companies. To date, the Conference has approximately 206 members represented equally between individual members and companies. It is operated by a staff of 76 and has an annual operating budget over \$5 million, making it one of the larger business-led civic organizations in North America.