Foresight West Midlands (2000 –2004)

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www.foresightwm.co.uk

Foresight Defined

- Systematic, participatory, future intelligence gathering and vision building process aimed at present day decisions and mobilising joint actions (Foren Network, 2001).

- Thinking, Debating and Shaping the future, DG Research

- Regional Foresight is the implementation of anticipation, participation, networking, vision and action at a reduced territorial scale. (Foren Network, 2001)

Foresight in Practice

- Science and Technology – Technology Development and Market Need

- Social – Human Development

- Regional Vision – "Regional Development"

- Economic Development – Enterprise Clusters / SME Networks / Industry Associations

About the West Midlands

- **At the heart of the United Kingdom**
  - Rural West and Urban East with a total population of 5.3 Million.
  - Only land locked region in the UK

- **A cosmopolitan region**
  - Multi ethnic and multi faith communities.
  - Synonymous with innovation and change

- **Manufacturing and Agricultural Heartland**
  - Ceramics, jewellery, metal production and fabrication, automotive industry, telecommunications.
  - Manufacturing accounts for 30% of GDP and employs 27% of the regions workforce.

Why Regional Foresight ?

- The West Midlands Case

- Regional Innovation Strategy
  – Published in June 1999
  – Enhancing Innovation culture, spreading best practice and improving regional innovation capability

- The Regional Economic Strategy
  – Supporting the development of a diverse and dynamic business base by planning for the future, through scenario planning
  – Agenda for Action published spring 2001 – encouraging foresight in SMEs
  – Supports the development of the regions economic clusters

How did it start ?

- The Programme
  - Partnership between the RDA and Coventry University Enterprises
  - RDA funding + CUE + ERDF Objective 2

- The Timescales
  - Approved in September 1999
  - First stage programme concluded December 2001

- Vision

"The programme will create a mechanism to implement the work of the national Foresight programme in the West Midlands region and provide a new structure which can offer tremendous benefits to the industrial and business communities of the region"

The focus of the programme:

- Supporting the development of the region's economic clusters:
    - Information and Communications technologies
    - Medical technology
    - Transport Technologies
    - Building Technologies
    - Professional services
    - Environmental technologies
    - Interactive media

- Supports Innovation in SMEs (Hands on)
    - Access to information
    - Access to advice / guidance
    - Networking

The focus of the programme

- Delivered large scale events
- Delivered seminars and workshops for business groups
  - E.g. ICT, Ethnic Minority, E-commerce

- Delivered assistance to SME networks
  - Individual companies to think about their future (SWOT & STEEP, VISION)
  - Networks to think about how they can work together

- Provided relevant tools:
  - SME Toolkit
  - Access to reports + information

Delivering the programme

- Arranged events with national panel members and regional visionaries
- *ICT and e-commerce
- Other events on Manufacturing, Financial services, Construction, Materials, Retail
- Supported national material with regional research

- Established strong links with regional actors:
  - Universities
  - Business support agencies
  - *Business groups and trade associations*
  - Delivering seminars and workshops on future trend and driver information to business groups

Positioning Foresight

- With a plethora of regional business support programmes how do you get SMEs to <u>engage</u>?
  - Easy to access
    - Delivered seminars locally through chambers of commerce and business groups
    - Positioned foresight alongside other strategic issues; accessing new markets, new product development, marketing (SWOT, STEEP and visioning)
  - Relevant
    - Delivered relevant subject material.
  - Output driven
    - Everyone comes out with something that could improve their business
    - Technique or business idea
  - Engaged with SME business groups
    - Go2West Midlands (ICT), Shropshire manufacturing group.

Positioning Foresight

- We recognised the fundamental issues regarding SME engagement:
  - What about my bottom line (profit) ?
  - Does it work ? (need for case studies)
  - What does it cost ?
  - We base our work on where the company is now (not a theoretical model)

- Participating companies:
  - Business start-ups
  - Young businesses (less than 2 or 3 years old)
  - Well established businesses
  - Succession planning

The Future Model

- Foresight is seen as an agent for business growth and an integral part of our innovation and cluster development policy.

- As a result of the programme we are now better placed to maximise the benefits of a foresight approach:

    – SMEs & Business groups
        - Innovation networks (tried and tested approach)

    – Regional Development Agency
        - Engagement mechanism for business and a tool for developing policy and strategy

    – National Foresight –
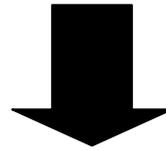   - Established dissemination route

Regional Foresight Programme
(2003 – 2005)
&
The Creativity Lab

A Foresight Model for Economic Development in Regions
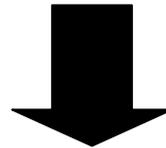
3 Phase Approach

1. Identification of long term trends and drivers for regional cluster groups

2. Themed Workshops for key cluster groups

3. Development of SME networks to take advantage of acquired knowledge

The Creativity Lab : Background

- Coventry University Enterprises
- Advantage West Midlands

- Foresight
- CW2000

- BT
- ICM

Overview

- Founded on the principles of the UK Department of Trade and Industry Future Focus facility (futurefocusdti.org.uk),

  and…

- Flexible Space
- Accessible to a regional market
- 2nd level innovation
- Supporting regional innovation and ICT projects

Resources

- **Envisioning Centre –**
  - Full audio/visual solution, connect
- **Technology demonstrator**
  - facilitate.com, wireless & bluetooth enabled, full projection capability – 12 seats
- **Training room**
  - 12 seats, Full audio/visual solution
- **Facilitation Expertise**
  - Team of 4 experienced facilitators