

Issues of the Delta Revitalization Task Force

➤ Institutional Processes Issues

Institutional processes deal with the legalities (rules, regulations, policies, laws, structure and framework) of how economic and community development and business development is practiced, and how decisions are made.

1. There is a need to develop better (and perhaps more) grant writers for Delta related programs and projects.
2. Require all public school superintendents to be appointed. (also posted under Educational Issues.)
3. Conduct a review of existing state laws that affect and relate to the interaction and relationships between city and county government.
4. Revise to improve state laws regarding the employment of ex-felons so that they can become productive contributors to the economy of the Delta.
5. Educate the public and leaders to provide a better understanding of the interaction of public policy, economic development and education and that the actions and decisions in each area affect the other two areas.
6. Define and separate the long-term vision opportunities of the Delta from issues that relate to its past social and economic problems.
7. Identify model social and economic programs that are working in other areas that have issues similar to the Delta region.
8. Study the (Federal) Community Investment Act to see if it is working in the Delta.
9. Conduct a strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis of the Delta.
10. Conduct a review of USDA rules and regulations that affect or limit actions that could improve citizens lives. (Example was of housing regulations on where certain kinds of house could be built.)
11. Address how cultural differences affect access and opportunities to improve quality of life for individuals, families and communities.
12. Improve access to banking, home ownership, and business ownership.

➤ Health Issues

The obstacles faced by health care providers and patients in rural areas are vastly different than those in urban areas. Rural Americans face a unique combination of factors that create disparities in health care not found in urban areas. Economic status, cultural and social differences, educational levels, lack of recognition by legislators and the sheer isolation of living in remote rural areas all conspire to impede rural Americans in their struggle to lead a normal, healthy life. Some of these factors, and their effects, are listed below. (Source: National Rural Health Association)

1. Break the cycle of single mother families and teenage single mothers.
2. Improve health care in the Delta.
3. Develop a stronger rural health care network and better accessibility for Delta citizens.
4. Develop alternative transportation systems for citizens to healthcare facilities.
5. Provide safer drinking water for smaller communities.
6. Develop better programs for drug rehabilitation.

➤ **Educational Issues**

Clearly, economic achievement and educational achievement are intertwined. For that reason, education is at the heart of efforts to promote equal opportunity for all Americans. (Source: Roger W. Ferguson, U.S. Federal Reserve Board)

1. Modification of the public educational system to meet the needs of students who do not learn in the traditional classroom process.
2. Require all public school superintendents to be appointed. (also posted under Institutional Processes.)
3. Develop an early childhood educational system that continues through third grade.
4. Develop innovative ways to find, recruit and retain good teachers.
5. Reduce the number of students in each classroom and provide more intensive teaching.
6. Ensure as a minimum, a high school education for all people in the workforce.
7. Form regional (high school) education centers with specific focuses (i.e. health, construction, etc.) that would compliment the existing educational process.

➤ **Development Issues: Regional, Community, and Consolidation of Efforts**

Economic development is typically measured in terms of jobs and income, but it also includes improvements in human development, education, health, choice, and environmental sustainability. Business and economic developers in the US are increasingly recognizing the importance of quality of life, which includes, environmental, recreational amenities, and physical infrastructure, as well as social infrastructure in attracting and retaining businesses in a community. (Source: Cornell University Department of City and Regional Planning)

1. Explore and consider greater regional economic development efforts.
2. Develop a regional “coordinating council” that would bring the various and many public and non-profit programs and projects into greater harmony and purpose.
3. Develop educational programs for elected officials on the benefits of regional economic development.
4. Improve the use of existing talent in the Delta (educational, financial, technical, etc.) in helping solve Delta problems.
5. Move the MSU Stennis Institute to the Delta.
6. Promote greater appreciation for community based economic development practices.
7. Consolidation of major institutional processes within the Delta (i.e. governments, education, workforce development, etc.)
8. Develop better highways and infrastructure to help attract industry.
9. Improve incentives for business development in the Delta.
10. Improve appearances of communities to attract industry (also posted in Cultural, Attitudinal, and Mindsets Issues.)

➤ **Cultural, Attitudinal, and Mindset Issues**

People learn culture. Culture, as a body of learned behaviors common to a given human society, acts like a template shaping behavior and consciousness within a human society from generation to generation. So culture resides in all learned behavior. (Source: Adapted from Washington State University, Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology)

1. Develop character educational programs that teach self respect, respect for others, punctuality, perseverance, tolerance and other traits that would help develop a better workforce.
2. Attack ignorance about racial issues.
3. Develop a leadership organization for elected officials (city, county and legislative) that would keep them informed of efforts and accomplishments in the Delta.
4. Improve the looks of the Delta communities (i.e. cleanup, modernize, etc.)
5. Change the mindset of professional (educated citizens) to respect and value their clients and citizens being served (example of healthcare professionals relations to lower-income patients.)
6. Change the mindset of Delta citizens to respect all people regardless of socioeconomic backgrounds (address the racism issue.)
7. Start a renaissance in thinking that would change the attitudes and mindsets of Delta citizens about racism.

➤ **Social Issues**

Social issues are matters that can be explained only by factors outside an individual's control and immediate social environment. They usually concern more than a single individual and affect many individuals in a society. Common social issues include poverty, violence, justice, human rights (suppression of), equality (or discrimination), crimes, and usually revolve around conflicting viewpoints and tensions between people who take different stances. (Source: Wikipedia)

1. Develop programs for people who do not have access to credit and banking so that homeownership and business ownership could be increased.
2. Protect people from losing the assets they have acquired (i.e. paycheck cashing practices).
3. Develop parenting programs, including emphasis on fathers.
4. Focus on helping teen single mothers get back on track and staying on track.
5. Develop societal re-entry programs for incarcerated persons.
6. Develop more effective community based programs that help people become productive members of society.
7. Examine law enforcement practices for reasons of enforcement (is there a racial motive in certain enforcements?)
8. Examine historical and social factors that leave people in a cycle of bad credit and explore ways to help people break bad credit records.