

# **Understanding Wind Initiative**

*Education and Technical Assistance about Wind Energy  
for Residents, Communities, Businesses and Others in Benzie and Manistee Counties*

## **Leadership Team**

Representatives from:

Arcadia Township  
Bear Lake Township  
Blaine Township  
Joyfield Township  
Onekama Township  
Pleasanton Township

## **Facilitator**

Alliance for Economic Success

## **Advisor**

Michigan Association of Planning

## **Stakeholders**

Benzie Conservation District  
Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy  
Michigan Land Use Institute  
Citizen's for Responsible Wind

Any Other Government, Business, Nonprofit, Individual or Other Entity

(Contact the Alliance for Economic Success at 231-723-4325 or [jami@allianceforeconomicsuccess.com](mailto:jami@allianceforeconomicsuccess.com) to be a project collaborator)

**February 1, 2011**

## Background

The Understanding Wind Initiative encompasses townships in Manistee and Benzie counties that are located in a region identified in the 2009 Final Report of the Michigan Wind Energy Resource Zone Board as holding “the highest wind energy harvest potential.” That report was prepared recognizing that “the electrical industry is in a period of major flux and is transitioning from a nearly exclusive reliance on nonrenewable resources to the rapid increase in the commercial development of wind energy and other renewable energy resources spurred by state and federal policies and market forces. Michigan is among a group of states expected to experience significant commercial wind energy development and is ranked 14<sup>th</sup> among the 50 states in its wind power capacity potential.”

That report also noted that “the transition toward increased wind energy development in Michigan will depend on a number of factors, such as state and federal policies and incentives, community acceptance, wind resources, land availability and economic considerations.”

There has not been a concerted, collaborative effort involving the high wind harvest townships in Manistee or Benzie counties to objectively and fully inform and educate community interests about wind energy options, opportunities, issues, implications and other factors involving wind energy alternatives so that community decisions, local plans and ordinances are based upon informed choices. In late 2010, Duke Energy proposed a wind energy farm that would be located in portions of Manistee and Benzie Counties. The proposed development has further stimulated support among the Townships for an effort to objectively inform and educate all interests about wind energy alternatives and to develop community wind energy goals and objectives that can be reflected in local plans and ordinances -- the broad goals of the Understanding Wind Initiative.

## Purposes

The purpose of the “Understanding Wind Initiative” is to provide all interests with:

- Objective information and answers to questions about wind energy.
- Resources and information that will be useful to townships in assessing and defining preferred options for wind energy developments, including technical assistance to review and modify local ordinances and plans so that community goals and objectives involving wind energy can be effectively achieved.

## Guiding Principles

The guiding principles of the Understanding Wind Initiative are:

- **Equal Access.** Everyone, regardless of their opinions, positions, place of work or residence can participate.
- **Neutral Facilitation.** The project will be facilitated in a neutral manner to ensure objectivity.
- **Objective, Fact Based Results.** The project leadership team, facilitator and advisor will ensure that information, education, technical assistance and other resources developed as a result of the Initiative are fact-based and provided by expert firms and/or individuals who are objective.

## Leadership Team

A leadership team consisting of Township representatives has been formed to:

- **Scope of Work.** Ensure that the scope of work responds to the purposes of the Initiative.
- **Participation.** To actively encourage all interests to participate.
- **Objectivity.** To ensure that the project is facilitated in a neutral manner and that the information, education and various forms of assistance provided through this project are objective, fact-based and unbiased.
- **Expertise.** To help ensure that the project responds to community questions by enlisting the support and consultation of individuals and/or organizations that: a) reflect excellence within their areas of concentration; and b) are neutral and objective.

The leadership team will not:

- Influence or impact the information, education or other assistance that will be provided by expert consultants involved with the project.
- Screen or influence questions that are asked by those who participate in the process.
- Direct or steer the process toward any pre-conceived results or conclusions.
- In the event that a leadership team member has opinions about wind energy or wind energy proposals, those opinions are not to be discussed or included in the deliberations of the leadership team.

Leadership Team members include:

Arcadia Township, Brad Hopwood, Planning Commission Chair

Bear Lake Township, Jeanette May (Ms. May's participation is pending Township approval)

Blaine Township, Glenn Mensching, Trustee

Gilmore Township (Participation not yet confirmed)

OnkamaTownship, TBD

Pleasanton Township, Tony Merrill, Supervisor

Joyfield Township, Betsy Evans (appointed to serve by Joyfield Township Board of Trustees)

In addition, Gilmore Township in Benzie County has expressed an interest in the Initiative but their participation has not been confirmed as of the date of this grant application.

## Facilitator

At the request of the Leadership Team, the Alliance for Economic Success (AES) will facilitate and coordinate the Initiative. The AES is a 501 (c ) (3) organizations and is the economic development organization for Manistee County. It is involved with several initiatives involving Benzie County, including expansion of the Benzie/Manistee Farm to School Program, the development and implementation of a Revitalization Strategy for the Village of Honor, and the development of a system to support entrepreneurial businesses. One mission of the AES is to serve as a neutral convener to support the development and implementation of strategies that enhance economic well-being and quality of life. Another mission is to identify, seek and manage funding from public and private sources to support the strategies of governments, nonprofits and businesses. The AES has managed grants from multiple sources including:

Kellogg Foundation, Oleson Foundation, Manistee County Community Foundation, Great Lakes Fishery Trust, Michigan Economic Development Corporation, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, USDA Rural Development and others. More information about the AES is available at [www.allianceforeconomicsuccess.com](http://www.allianceforeconomicsuccess.com).

For the Understanding Wind initiative, the AES will:

- Implement this work plan in partnership with the advisor and stakeholders
- Ensure that the project principles are adhered to
- Serve as the focal point for questions or inquiries about the project
- Contract with recommended outside experts and organizations to support the completion of the project
- Issue periodic communications to keep all interests informed about the project and process
- Ensure open, proactive communications throughout the project

### **Advisor**

The Michigan Association of Planning (MAP) will serve as advisor to the Initiative. MAP exists so that Michigan will consist of healthy, safe, attractive and successful communities built on quality community planning. They support public policy and practices that encourage broad-based citizen participation in community planning and decision-making focused on long-term sustainability. MAP is recognized as a State focal point for information and resources to assist community planning. In 2009, the MAP Board of Directors adopted a wind energy policy and identified model wind energy ordinances and resources in Michigan that could be considered by communities where wind energy holds potential for development. MAP supports the development of wind energy systems. MAP also recognizes that: "Local government should conduct a thorough assessment and analysis of the suitability of sites within their community to ascertain the true wind generation opportunities and potential as part of a visioning and master planning process. Not all communities in Michigan are appropriate, or could reasonably expect to benefit, from the construction of wind energy facilities." MAP has no position, policy or financial interest or bias toward any form of wind energy or provider of wind or other energy alternatives. They do serve to provide policy advice to state, regional and local planning authorities on the best currently available scientific information related to wind energy and community planning.

Accordingly, they are uniquely suited to identify and recommend expert firms and/or organizations that will be contracted with as part of the Initiative to:

- Respond to questions from all interests about wind energy
- Prepare a final report on questions posed and responses to those questions, including references to literature and published articles
- Review and assist participating townships with reviewing and modifying ordinances and plans, as appropriate for the individual townships.

Prior to entering into contractual agreements for services with the AES, all expert firms and/or organizations recommended by MAP will be approved by the Leadership Team.

### **Stakeholders**

Any governmental unit, nonprofit organization, business, individual or other interest may serve as a stakeholder. The role of a stakeholder is to:

- Support the purposes and guiding principles of the Understanding Wind Initiative regardless of the position, opinion or position of the collaborator on specific wind energy issues or developments.
- Assist in outreach efforts to encourage participation by all interests, including the development and submission of questions that will be address through the Initiative.
- Develop and submit questions, review the final report and participate in community forums and meetings that are held as part of the Initiative.

Stakeholders as of January 19, 2011 included:

Benzie County Conservation District  
Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy  
Michigan Land Use Institute

Entities may become stakeholders by contacting the AES.

### **Understanding Wind Initiative Work Plan Phases**

The Initiative will encompass the following phases:

#### **Questions About Wind Energy**

The AES will work with the Leadership Team to request that all interests develop and submit questions about wind energy that will be answered through the Initiative. The request will specify that any and all questions about wind energy are requested and that the questions may be submitted in any number or form through a number of channels to the AES. A number of approaches will be used to solicit wind energy questions, including:

- News releases
- Direct mailings
- Community forums
- Posting of information and questionnaires at public places

#### **Obtaining Answers About Wind Energy**

Based on questions received, the Michigan Association of Planning (MAP) will identify and recommend firms and/or individuals that are bonafide experts that can respond to all questions in an objective, unbiased and fact-based manner. Those recommended firms and/or individuals will be reviewed and approved by the Leadership Team and contracted with by the AES as project consultants.

#### **Reporting the Answers**

The firms and/or organizations (the consultants) will develop a written report that contains the questions and answers, including references to specific research and/or published articles. The report will also be presented in at least two open community forums. The report will also be sent as a PDF file to all interests that participate in the process and provide email addresses. The report will also be made available in public places, including all township offices, libraries and others. This results of this effort will form the basis for community decision making about wind energy, including revision and modification of local plans and ordinances in keeping with local goals and objectives.

## Technical Assistance

The MAP will also recommend consultants with appropriate expertise to:

- Review existing ordinances and related local governmental plans, regulations, guidelines or standards within the townships.
- Identify and provide examples of best practices for the townships to consider in formulating local ordinances and strategies for wind energy.
- Assist townships in developing plans and ordinances to reflect community goals and objectives related to wind energy.

As noted earlier the Leadership Team will review the consultants recommended prior to the development of contracts between the consultants and the AES.

## Project Evaluation

The AES will contract with a qualified firm or organization to complete an evaluation of the Initiative that will:

- Provide evaluative information to guide decision making in similar projects
- Determine the impacts of the Initiative
- Define best practices used during the course of the Initiative that can be transferred

The evaluation will be guided by the purposes, principles and goals of this work plan. A results-oriented approach to evaluation will be used, with both formative and evaluation components. Both quantitative and qualitative data will be collected. The evaluation will focus on assessing and illuminating the connection between Initiative goals and objectives and actions taken to attain those goals and objectives and how the project achieved desired outcomes.

### Estimated Timetable

<u>Milestone</u>	<u>Estimated Date</u>
Completion of Work Plan	February
Request for wind energy questions	February
Submission of Questions to AES	Three weeks
Recommended Expert Firms and/or Individuals	March
Development of responses to questions and project report	March/April
Delivery/presentation of project report and Community forums	April
Recommended Experts – Zoning/Planning consultants	March
Review/development of plans and ordinances with Expert consultant	April – July
Completion of project evaluation and Process documentation	October

