

5

Key Takeaways from the January 31, 2025 Economic Development Merger Committee meeting

Subcommittee Meetings Underway

There have been three subcommittees established; **Communications**, **Finance and Budget**, and **Organizational and Board Structure**. The subcommittees all met during the week of January 27. A high-level list of takeaways from those meeting is outlined below.

Communications | Met on Monday, January 27, 2025

1. Members will develop a unique domain and landing page to share information with the public. The page will include ongoing updates related to the merger committee, including: the post-meeting takeaways documents, updated timelines and defined milestones, and findings from the peer community analysis.
2. The subcommittee also discussed public events and/or townhalls both for staff and interested community members as the plan matures.
3. Members of the committee will begin meeting with staff in 2:1 settings. These meetings will be designed to answer staff member questions, gather feedback, and keep them updated on the process.
4. A smaller subset of the committee will also begin meeting with the directors.

Finance and Budget | Met on Friday, January 31, 2025

1. Committee members discussed the budget documents provided by the organizations and budget trends in the ecosystem as a whole.
2. The committee also considered the important role of members and stakeholders in the overall financial well-being of some of the existing organizations and a future merged organization.

Organizational and Board Structure | Met on Tuesday, January 28, 2025

1. The committee reviewed the existing organizational structures provided by each of the organizations and discussed committees that currently operate in the ecosystem.
2. The majority of the committee discussion was focused on the peer community analysis. The initial analysis will include interviews with five communities that have gone through some type of merger in their economic development ecosystem. Those communities include: Laramie, Mankato, Rapid City, Tulsa, and Yankton.
3. The subcommittee drafted an initial set of questions and topics to discuss with each community and shared the draft with the full merger committee. The list now includes 25 questions and topics that will guide the conversation with the peer community organizations. The committee agreed that it will be helpful to get feedback from other stakeholders in the peer communities, not just the perspective of leadership from the merged organizations.
4. Peer community interviews will be conducted between now and February 10th, with an initial report shared with the full merger committee during the February 14th meeting.

Subcommittee meetings will occur on an as-needed basis as the work of the full merger committee continues.



The takeaways identified in this document were reviewed by the committee at the close of the January 31st meeting. This document is designed for public consumption and can be shared.

Feedback from BEDC and Downtown Received

Both the **Brookings Economic Development Corporation** and **Downtown Brookings** provided letters from their directors and boards. The letters included opportunities presented through the merger effort, but also highlighted concerns shared by staff, boards, and members.

The opportunities identified include an even greater impact and positive outcomes for the Brookings region. Concerns included a loss of focus on the unique mission of each existing organization and a loss of representation for the regional partners.

In general, the letters were constructive and will impact future topics considered by the merger committee and conversations with staff and other stakeholders.

Refining Expectations

The committee discussed the importance of **clearly defining its work** and **identifying intended milestones** between now and early summer. The consensus of the conversation was that impacted staff and stakeholders are seeking clarity on what will be included in the mid-April version of the implementation plan and what details are likely to be determined in the months after April.

Tom and Nick committed to working on an updated list of key milestones and timelines for the committee to consider at the next meeting in mid-February. The committee has gathered relevant materials from the existing organizations and is in the midst of preparing for and conducting conversations with staff and peer communities. This information will help to populate the implementation plan and intended timeline.

Public Engagement Considerations

A variety of ideas were discussed, both by the communications subcommittee and the full merger committee. Ideas and considerations related to public engagement include:

- Townhall style presentations and discussions (for staff and the general public).
- Information presented to the City Council should occur in a study session with no action and in multiple meetings.
- A recorded presentation with slides and additional information that's easily sharable could be a method to update interested individuals.
- As events/meetings are scheduled, holding at least one in a community outside Brookings would ensure regional partners are engaged.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for **Friday, February 14, 2025 at 7:00am**. Discussion topics will include a report from the peer community interviews, existing board structure and relationships, and bylaws/policies/procedures.

Meeting Attendance

Committee members in attendance at this meeting were Wayne Avery, Angela Boersma, Tom Fishback, Paul Gilk, Marcus Heemstra, Jamison Lamp, Jacob Meshke, Daniel Scholl, Michael Schulte, Laci Thompson, Mike Turnwall, and Nick Wendell.

Questions or Comments?

If you have any **questions or comments**, please reach out to committee co-chairs, **Nick** (wendellnick@gmail.com, 605-830-5446) or **Tom** (tom.fishback@bankeasy.com, 605-695-2585).