



Asset Based Planning:

Leveraging Assets for Economic Growth



Capstone Report Presented by:
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I. INTRODUCTION

Many reasons account for rural communities not experiencing the same growth and prosperity as the more urban areas: Declining population, limited employment opportunities, lack of broadband and other infrastructure, geographic remoteness, drug abuse, closure of healthcare facilities, low educational attainment....and the list goes on. The traditional needs-based economic development strategy, or top down approach, focuses on identifying the gaps and deficiencies of a community and attracting new investment or industries to fill those gaps.ⁱ While it is important for a community to address issues it can control, placing a focus on what a community does not have can foster negativity and a loss of hope of ever reaching sustainable economic growth.

There is another strategy that is not new but has gained momentum and has demonstrated success in rural communities – asset-based economic development. It is a very positive, community-driven approach that focuses on the unique assets a community possesses and capitalizes on the potential of those assets. The ICMA Center for Sustainable Communities describes asset-based economic development as *a bottom up approach to economic development that builds on existing local resources to strengthen local and regional economics.*ⁱⁱ

The Appalachian Regional Commission’s October 2004 report, “Appalachia: Turning Assets into Opportunities,” defines asset-based economic development as *a strategy that builds on existing resources – natural, cultural and structural – to create valued products and services that can be sustained for local benefit.*ⁱⁱⁱ

This paper will describe an initiative borne out of the Tennessee Governor’s Rural Task Force called Asset Based Planning. The planning process applies asset-based economic development

principles and addresses the following need identified in the 2016 Task Force Report:^{iv}

Communities need assistance understanding their strategic assets and developing goals and action steps to achieving those. Funding and other resources are more effective for communities when they are utilized strategically.

Asset Based Planning helps communities identify their unique assets and develop goals to leverage those assets for sustained economic development. This paper will review the strategies, challenges and benefits, and describe how Asset Based Planning builds community capacity, strengthens partnerships and brings resources to those communities that participate.

II. BACKGROUND

While Tennessee has seen record growth in the last several years, leadership recognized the lack of economic growth in the rural counties of Tennessee. The Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development determines the economic status of counties based on the Appalachian Regional Commission's (ARC) standards as compared to the national average.^v

These factors include:

- Three-Year Average Unemployment Rate
- Per Capita Market Income
- Poverty Rate (calculated over a five-year period)

Based on these indicators, counties ranking in the bottom 10%, as compared to the nation, are considered "distressed." Counties that rank between the bottom 10% and 25% in the nation are considered "at-risk."

In 2015, more than half of the 95 counties in Tennessee were considered distressed or at-risk based on the ARC standards as compared to the national average. Governor Haslam announced the creation of the Governor's Rural Task Force comprised of leaders from 18 different agencies

with statewide reach to identify solutions for rural communities. The Task Force adopted the following principles to guide its work as stated in the report:^{vi}

Mission: *To build a stronger rural Tennessee by driving local, state and federal partnerships and stakeholders to continuously improve education, health, entrepreneurial opportunities, economic and workforce development, and digital infrastructure.*

Charge: *Our engagement will align public and private resources and offer new strategic initiatives to create transformative, holistic solutions in asset-based economic activities across rural Tennessee.*

Long-Term Objective: *Implement statewide policies and programs that improve the economy in all rural communities so that fewer counties are at risk and zero counties are distressed.*

Over a year's time, the Task Force led a grassroots effort to convene statewide experts and resources and hold input sessions from local communities across Tennessee. Two themes emerged as needs for rural communities: capacity building and placemaking. According to the report, *Capacity building speaks to the process of increasing the community's ability to take advantage of resources and achieve its goals. Placemaking deals with the planning and design of community places to promote the overall wellbeing of an area.*^{vii}

Six focus committees were formed comprised of over 120 individuals, including many local stakeholders such as mayors, educators, non-profit organization leaders, healthcare professionals, business owners and economic development practitioners. They were tasked to build upon the ideas proposed during the input sessions and to provide solutions and recommendations.

As cited in the report's Executive Summary, "*These recommendations will serve as a menu of options for legislative and budget proposals at the state level and for implementation by individual communities to address their local needs.*"^{viii} To-date, many if not most of the recommendations have been implemented or are in the process of implementation. To read the full report go to: <https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/ruraltaskforce/documents/rtf-report.pdf>

University of Tennessee's Role:

Representatives from the University of Tennessee, including the Institute for Public Service and UT Extension, participated on the Rural Task Force. To move Task Force recommendations forward, the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development (TNECD) reached out to UT Center for Industrial Services (UT CIS) – an agency of UT Institute for Public Service – to develop and implement an initiative that would assist rural counties in developing goals that capitalize on their economic development assets.

III. PROJECT DESCRIPTION – Purpose, Desired Outcomes, Approach and Timeline:

UT CIS took the lead to implement the program because of its statewide mission and reach, the ability to develop and deploy a uniformed and unbiased approach, and staff with economic development expertise. UT CIS also has a long history of experience in community capacity building, such as the Tennessee Certified Economic Developer (TCED) Program.

Applying the general principles of asset-based economic development, a process was developed and deployed across the state of Tennessee engaging state, regional and local partners in the process. There were many details in each element for developing and implementing a program of this magnitude; however, for the purposes of this paper, the following outline will serve as a summary of the purpose, desired outcomes, approach and timeline of the initiative:

Purpose:

- Engage a broad base of community stakeholders in a discussion of community strengths, assets, and opportunities.
- Build on existing programs and strategies.
- Identify ways to leverage community assets to drive economic development.
- Identify short- and long-term goals that build on local strengths and capitalize on assets.
- Extend state and partner resources to help communities implement goals.
- Identify common needs/trends/opportunities to guide program and policy development.

Desired Outcomes for each County:

- Create an inventory for each county listing assets that can drive economic development.
- Identify 1 or 2 long term goals that will improve the economy (reduce unemployment, increase incomes, reduce poverty).
- Identify 2 or 3 short term, action-oriented goals that will leverage assets and can be accomplished over a 12-month period.
- Capture other goals, needs, and opportunities identified in the forum.

Approach:

- Develop a process and approach that is replicable across all counties.
- Work through community contacts designated by TNECD
- Review existing plans, data, and information about each county; develop presentations for each county to frame the discussion.
- Facilitate 2-hour community forums in each county to identify assets and develop goals to leverage those assets.
- Develop individual county reports outlining the results of each forum – results will be used to engage partners to work collaboratively with the community to achieve its goals.

Timeline:

- Phase 1 (2016) – Development of the Asset Based Planning process and implementation of the program targeting 23 distressed counties across the state of Tennessee.

- Phase 2 (2017) – Implementation of Asset Based Planning targeting 21 at-risk counties across the state of Tennessee.
- Phase 3 (2018) – Development and implementation of goal status review meetings in the initial 23 distressed counties to identify priorities and short-term actions to continue moving the county’s goals forward.
- Phase 4 (2019) – Asset Based Planning (ABP) was incorporated into the TNECD ThreeStar Program.^{ix} ThreeStar was created in 1980 to assist in community development efforts to ensure that communities can compete at a higher level through enhancing and improving community assets. Slight modifications were made to the ABP process to be utilized in any of the 95 counties in TN and to align with the ThreeStar certification requirements. UT CIS provided TNECD representatives with training and the materials to facilitate the program. In partnership, UT CIS facilitated forums in 50 counties and TNECD facilitated forums in 25 counties.

IV. LAUNCHING THE PROGRAM:

The program launched in the Fall of 2016 targeting 23 distressed counties. In order to encourage participation, a detailed communications plan was developed. Beth Phillips, Program Manager with UT CIS, who led the charge to develop and implement the Asset Based Planning (APB) initiative, conveyed the key elements that set the stage for the program’s successful launch, “Strong partnerships and a coordinated communication plan among the partners and the counties were essential to obtain buy-in from the communities. TNECD’s commitment to connect the communities with resources and work with them to achieve their goals was also key.”

1) **Partnerships** – The strong partnership between TNECD and UT CIS included continuous communication between the two entities during the planning process, implementation, and follow up. Weekly meetings were held throughout the initial planning phases of the project and continued throughout the implementation on an as needed basis as well as debriefing meetings after each phase. UT CIS also collaborated with UT Extension and the state’s nine Development

Districts as integral partners throughout the program. Both entities are engrained in the local communities and bring valuable insight and resources to the table during and after the forums. And most importantly, the participating county's leadership and stakeholders were engaged throughout the initiative.

2) **Communication** – A coordinated communications plan was devised in order to gain participation and support from the counties. First, a letter was sent to the County Mayors from Randy Boyd, then Commissioner of TNECD, to announce the program's purpose and commitment from TNECD to connect the communities with resources to achieve their goals. Second, Amy New, Assistant Commissioner of TNECD Rural Development followed up with an email to every County Mayor to reinforce the message. And finally, UT CIS leadership placed a personal phone call and made a visit to each of the 23 County Mayors to not only explain the purpose and the process of the community forums, but importantly, to gain an understanding of the county's assets and priorities and convey that this was a partnership between the County, TNECD, UT CIS and other resource partners.

Realistic expectations and outcomes of the initiative were communicated. It was emphasized that the purpose was not to replace or duplicate any strategic plans or initiatives the county may already have in place, but to complement and build on current plans and priorities for the county.

TNECD provided a key single point of contact for each county which was essential for communication, planning and managing the logistics of the community forums. Typically, this would be the County Mayor and or the ThreeStar Contact that could identify the key community stakeholders and encourage them to attend the forum.

3) **TNECD's Commitment** – In order to ensure that the communities had the resources to accomplish the goals that were identified in the Asset Based Planning sessions, the Asset Enhancement Grant was created and provided through the Governor's Rural Task Force and the Tennessee Rural Economic Opportunity Act. In addition, TNECD and other partners such as the Development Districts and UT Extension worked with communities to identify other funding opportunities, technical assistance or resources for projects to ensure completion of short-term goals within 12 months.

Challenges and Modifications:

During development and throughout the implementation of the Asset Based Planning Initiative, the following desired outcomes and potential challenges were considered, and the program was modified as needed during each phase based on observations and input from partners and participants:

1.) Obtain buy-in from the communities to ensure participation. Communities can be weary of yet “another planning meeting” that may or may not go anywhere. The coordinated communications plan described earlier was essential for buy-in from the communities to understand the purpose and desired outcomes of the initiative and the fact that TNECD was investing resources into the program. It was communicated that the intent was not to develop a comprehensive strategic plan, but to build on and complement any plans they had in place. County leaders responded very favorably to the invitation to participate in the program and saw it as an opportunity for their communities. UT CIS worked very closely with the counties to coordinate the logistics and potential participants of the forums. For ease and to maintain a uniformed message, an invitation template was developed for the counties to utilize to invite participants.

2.) Ensure that a broad base of community stakeholders, and the right stakeholders, are at the forum. There is a tendency, especially in rural communities without a lot of capacity, to bring the same people to the table to make all the decisions. For this program to be impactful and successful, there needed to be a broad base of community stakeholders to give input at the forums. Doing so opens the door to new ideas and gives the local leadership an opportunity to identify new champions and build the needed capacity to accomplish the goals the community identifies.

After Phase 1, it was determined that the makeup of stakeholders at many of the county forums needed improvement. Rena Purdy, Executive Director of Wayne County JECDB, expressed, *“Priorities were biased depending on who was in the room. People often have their own agendas and have trouble seeing beyond what they or their specific constituents want rather than focus on a project or goal that is good for the entire county or region. I learned from the sessions to include more stakeholders outside of local government if I want a clear understanding of the needs of our communities.”*

From the observations and feedback, the suggested targeted invitee list was expanded to include participants beyond the essential elected officials and economic and community development representatives. This list included representatives from a broad range of community positions and organizations such as education, workforce development, health, business and industry, agriculture, young professionals, civic and non-profit. Diversity of the participants during the next phases of the initiative did increase. Some participants expressed they had never been invited to a community planning meeting and were grateful to be included.

3.) Maintain consistency across the state. Each forum required a minimum of two facilitators: one facilitator to lead the forum and one co-facilitator to assist with exercises and capture the conversation during the forum used to develop the reports provided to the county and TNECD. During Phase 1, there were 12 facilitators and 11 co-facilitators comprised of representatives from UT IPS Agencies and UT Extension. Facilitator training sessions were deployed, a facilitator guide was developed as well as standardized county materials and presentations were created. Even so, it was a challenge to maintain consistency in facilitation and reporting as well as difficult to logistically manage the program. In order to ensure the program remained consistent, streamlined and replicable moving forward, a few modifications were made. First, a designated program coordinator was brought on board by UT CIS to help manage all aspects of the project. Secondly, the number of lead facilitators was reduced to six UT CIS team members and finally, UT CIS contracted with the Tennessee Development District Association to assist with data research, forum logistics and co-facilitation. The Development Districts are engrained in the communities they serve which created a sense of familiarity among the stakeholders. These modifications led to continuity in scheduling and more consistency in facilitation and reporting. Because each community is unique, however, it is impossible to have total consistency across all forums; facilitators must be flexible and use their judgement while maintaining the general purpose and desired outcomes.

4.) Keep the focus of the conversation positive. The premise of asset-based economic development is to focus on the positive aspects of the community. Many rural communities get bogged down with what they don't have, and the conversation can easily go sideways. The facilitators were reminded to keep the discussion positive by highlighting the unique

assets the counties do possess. As forum participants listed and discussed their county's assets, they showed a deep sense of pride acknowledging, "Our county does have a wealth of assets." Sometimes expressing astonishment, "Wow, we really do have a lot going on in our community!"

5.) Engage all participants during the forum. Because the goals belong to the community, the facilitator's role was to encourage participation from all participants and to guide the conversation, not control it. Utilizing third party facilitators that can stay neutral and unbiased to personalities and opposing agendas in the room is important in accomplishing this. For example, while brainstorming the facilitator was trained to stay neutral and not indicate whether they thought an idea was good or bad. Indicating a preference could squelch ideas or discourage participation. The facilitator must also be cognizant of dominating personalities and diplomatically reel in the conversation, so everyone is heard. It was reinforced to the participants that every idea and goal was valuable and, although it may not have been selected as one of the priority goals, it will be captured in the report for later consideration.

6.) Integrate the asset-based plans into a community's existing strategic plans and priorities. For the program to be well received, it was essential that the process built upon what the communities were already doing. It was stated during the presentation that the purpose of the forum was not to develop a new plan but to build on their current plans. During the forums, facilitators reviewed the existing plans and led a brief discussion of the community's existing goals and priorities. If the goals were still relevant, they were considered during the voting process along with new ideas. The Development Districts assist many of the communities in developing strategic plans and/or have staff members that serve

on the local planning commissions which made them a great partner during facilitation as well as during follow up after the forums.

7.) Align goals with resources.

In many of the distressed and at-risk counties, the economic development efforts are primarily driven by grants. Community leaders can lose sight of thinking outside the box and coming up with innovative ways and seeking out new resources to accomplish their economic development pursuits. Participants were encouraged during the goal setting process to think about realistic goals and to consider what could be accomplished with the resources available, or resources that could be easily obtained.

To support the ABP Initiative, TNECD created an Asset Enhancement Grant (AEG) to help fund projects that were identified from the goals of the asset-based plans. To keep the focus away from what may or may not be funded by the AEG during the goal setting process, a representative from TNECD was allotted time at the end of the forum to discuss the grant opportunity. Resource partners were present at the forums and provided valuable information of other potential resources or partners that could be of assistance in moving goals forward. After the forums, TNECD followed up with the counties as well as the Development Districts to further assist in matching resources to the goals identified at the forum.

8.) Create S.M.A.R.T. goals during the forum.

The TNECD ThreeStar program currently requires a county to submit three asset-based S.M.A.R.T. goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timebound) as part of the ThreeStar certification. The premise of a S.M.A.R.T. goal was explained at the forum and reinforced as the participants identified priorities and short-term action-oriented goals.

The facilitators attempted to assist the communities in refining the goals during the forum however, two challenges arose. First, it is difficult to develop a goal to the level of detail required to qualify as a S.M.A.R.T. goal in two hours, especially if the group is large. Second, a stakeholder(s) who is key in carrying out the goal may not be at the forum. For example, in one community the participants identified a top goal to *Remodel downtown store fronts and sidewalks*. When working with the participants to refine the goal into a S.M.A.R.T. goal during the forum, the facilitator discovered that a representative from that municipality was not present and it could not be determined by the participants who the responsible party would be. The goal was still important and included in the report, however; additional meetings would need to take place with other stakeholders to iron out the details of this goal if it was to move forward.

A worksheet was devised to guide the county through the S.M.A.R.T. goal formulation process and participants were encouraged to meet in smaller stakeholder groups to refine the goals and identify who will be accountable for each goal. Refining priorities into S.M.A.R.T. goals remain a challenge and will require additional follow up and training following the forums as the program moves forward as part of the TNECD ThreeStar program.

9.) Ensure there will be follow through from the community once the plans are complete.

Ultimately, the community is responsible to accomplish the goals they identify. The follow up from TNECD, the Development Districts and other resource partners played a key role in making the program a success. TNECD required a monthly status report of the goals and projects that were identified. As in any successful plan, follow up and accountability are key.

During Phase 3, goal review meetings were conducted in the initial 23 distressed counties to check their progress and set goals for the following year. A sense of pride and positive

conversation celebrating the county's accomplishments continued the positive tone of the Asset Based Planning process. As one community leader from Scott County stated, *“reviewing our goals made us realize we really have accomplished a lot.”* This sentiment was shared by most if not all the counties visited. Including a broad base of stakeholders will increase the chances that the goals will be accomplished as community champions are identified through the process, thus building community capacity. When a community embraces and takes ownership of the goals that they created, the likelihood that they will be accomplished increases.

V. OUTCOMES:

Seventy-five counties across Tennessee have participated in an Asset-Based Planning (ABP) forum. Those counties now have an asset inventory and specific goals that, when achieved, can leverage those assets for economic and community development.

TNECD reported that in the initial 44 distressed and at-risk counties that participated, 47 asset-based projects were funded in 38 of the counties directly through the Asset Enhancement Grant (AEG) funding for a total of \$2,154,161. All 44 of the initial counties have moved one or more goals forward using the AEG or other resources. In 2019, TNECD reported that \$2,400,000 in ThreeStar Grants were awarded to 58 counties for projects based on their asset-based goals.

Investments in the community via grants is one quantitative way to measure the economic impact. Other quantitative ways are increased jobs and sales tax revenue, positive impacts to unemployment, per capita market income and poverty levels. When the program began in FY 2016/2017, there were 23 distressed counties. In FY 2018/2019, that number had dropped to 15 counties and remains so in FY2020.^x Asset based Planning was one of several TNECD rural initiatives that contributed to this reduction of distressed counties.

While more difficult to measure and subjective in nature, qualitative measurements can also be used to evaluate the success of the program. This includes such things as improved quality of life, enhanced community assets, a renewed sense of community pride, improved collaboration among leaders, new champions identified, new resources discovered, and new partnerships cultivated. As Lawrence County Executive, T.R. Williams intuitively stated after participating in the initiative, “It is strong partnerships like this that makes us all successful.”

TNECD Three Star Director, Jody Sliger, was asked what she felt was the most valuable benefit Asset Based Planning provides to the communities, “*Community conversation – hands down.*” She went on to say, “*In two hours, the process of Asset Based Planning with prescribed local stakeholders, allows communities to actually accomplish tangible items: 1) Listen to what others are doing / working on 2) Discover opportunities for under-developed partnerships and 3) Create some goals to move the needle.*”

Feedback from participating communities.....

“It was great for us to gather that many stakeholders across the county - very positive and productive.” – Joseph G. Butler – Carroll County Mayor

“Both of our Asset Based Planning Sessions were very helpful in setting a direction and action items we could implement short and long-term. The three goals we identified this year helped determine our JECDB’s FY2020 work plan. Partnering with UT created a stronger local partnership with our UT Extension Office as well! These sessions brought key players together and gave us a better understanding of what each community and the county as a whole was interested in pursuing.” Rena Purdy, Executive Director, Wayne County JECDB

“The process got all of us on the same page. It also helped us gain insight into the state priorities-i.e. workforce. The participants LOVED LOVED LOVED being able to have input on state priorities and enact change locally.” Ryan Egly, President & CEO Lawrence County Chamber

“It was a great activity for our community and will serve as a strategic plan. We came up with ideas that we should do or need to be doing – short and long-term.” Greg Lowe, Director of Economic Development City of Lewisburg

Examples of Community Successes

All counties have made progress towards goals identified during the Asset Based Planning (ABP) forums. As mentioned earlier, to ensure that the communities had the resources to accomplish its goals, the Asset Enhancement Grant (AEG) was established to fund projects that could be completed in 12-18 months, make an economic impact in the county and move the county's goals forward. Following are a few examples of projects in which communities utilized TNECD AEG funding and successfully leveraged their assets for economic development. More success stories and details can be found on the TNECD website:

<https://www.tn.gov/ruraltaskforce/best-practices.html>

Claiborne County – Tourism and Community Development

Claiborne County was blessed with the Powell River, a beautiful natural asset with great economic potential. Unfortunately, this important asset has been underutilized because of the lack of safe access. During the 2016 ABP forum, community stakeholders acknowledged the Powell River's potential and set a long-term goal to: *Capitalize on the tourism potential of the Powell River*. Three corresponding short-term goals: *1) Develop on-line and hard copy maps highlighting access to rivers/lakes and create signage on the Powell River to identify various locations. 2) Engage TDOT to obtain access to the 25E bridge. 3) Improve public access points to the Powell River (114 miles from TN to VA state line)*. The county's Powell River Tourism Committee completed a comprehensive Powell River Blueway Trail Action Plan and was awarded a \$50K AEG to help fund the project. To-date the county has completed or in the process of completing each of these goals.^{xi}

Economic and Community Impact:

Because of the increase of safe access and signage to the river, the community has not only seen an increase of use by tourists, but also by its residents. It is now safe for families to enjoy a few hours on the river that was not feasible in the past. The Claiborne County Chamber reported an increase in tourism spending in the county among local businesses. This includes Shelly Belle's Kayaking and Tube Rental who expanded and opened a very large and popular restaurant on the river where tourists as well as locals enjoy river side dining. Participation in the yearly Regatta established in 2014 has also increased and the proceeds will provide sustainable funding for continuous improvements to the river. The Powell River Blueway Trails project is a great example of a community's collaboration, sweat equity and ownness that resulted in the enhancement of an underutilized asset for economic growth.

Jackson County – Workforce Development

During the 2017 ABP forum, county stakeholders identified the following as a top long-term goal: *Develop additional post-secondary educational and training programs in Jackson County to improve educational attainment & strengthen workforce skills.* The corresponding short-term goal that rose as a top priority: *Pursue the potential opportunity to locate a Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) satellite campus in Jackson County, in collaboration with Jackson County Schools system and the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR).* After the forum, county leadership worked together with many partners, including TCAT Livingston in Clay County, local industry and TBR to bring a TCAT satellite campus to Jackson County. An empty building that served as a golf pro shop adjacent to the high school was acquired by the school system. TNECD awarded a \$50K AEG to the community to assist in the remodel of the building that was completed by TCAT construction students from neighboring Clay County. The students

obtained real-world experience and it allowed the county to stretch the resources to complete the very ambitious project – the first higher education institution in the county.

Economic and Community Impact: By addressing the needs of local employers and creating a pipeline of skilled workers, industries will be retained and potentially recruited, and residents will be empowered with in-demand skills to gain employment. The immediate success of the TCAT will be measured by the completion and placement of students. The numbers reported to-date:^{xii}

Fall 2018 High School Dual Enrollment (Information Technology Program)	18
2019 Full-time Adult Enrollment (Information Technology Program)	10
2019 High School Dual Enrollment Program (Information Technology Program)	18
2019 Full-time Adult Program Enrollment (Information Technology and Powerline Construction/Maintenance)	30
2019 Certificates/Diplomas to be Awarded	20
2019 Cooperative/Work-Based Learning Placements	8
Participating Employers (Information Technology Program)	4

White County – Industrial Development

During the ABP forum in October of 2016, stakeholders of White County identified: *Develop new publicly owned, controlled, ready to market industrial property*, as a top 2017 long-term goal. The two corresponding short-term goals were: 1) *Evaluate and identify the site, utilizing the state’s Property Evaluation Program (PEP) report* and 2) *Identify resources and incentives that could be accessed to acquire and develop sites*. The county applied for a \$50K AEG from TNECD to complete the due diligence on its most promising industrial site identified by PEP. This allowed them to market a vetted, pad ready site which gave them a competitive edge to land

a project. In October of 2017, Hormann Door, a German based company, announced its plans to locate a new garage door production facility on that site, with a capital investment of \$64M and the creation of 200 jobs.^{xiii} Hormann Door broke ground in Sparta, TN on July 13, 2018. There were many resources and programs, including Asset Based Planning, that played a part in attracting Hormann Door to White County.

VI. CONCLUSION

The Asset Based Planning Initiative has proven to be very successful and the process replicable in any size or economically positioned county. In 2019, TNECD incorporated Asset Based Planning (ABP) into the ThreeStar Program to *help communities develop goals to maximize their local assets to drive economic development.*^{xiv}

Brooxie Carlton, TNECD Deputy Assistant Commissioner, indicated the success of the program was evident by *“the request from participating communities to expand it across the state and to institutionalize it in the ThreeStar Program.”* She went on to say, *“I see that it has helped communities focus on their greatest assets and develop specific steps and projects to help them build off those assets. Since the program is broad and covers everything from industrial development to education to tourism, communities can tailor it to what they most need. The grant program then allows them to develop projects that fit them the best.”*

UT CIS continues to collaborate with a network of internal, local, regional and state partners to assist communities in their economic development efforts and views the ABP approach as an effective and adaptable economic development tool. The approach fosters community engagement and collaboration, facilitates partnerships between communities and resource partners, and results in positive outcomes for the communities that participate.

The asset-based process provides for short-term wins that in turn create positive energy and momentum as communities work towards their longer-term goals.

Beth Phillips, UT CIS Economic Development Program Manager stated, *“The feedback has been extremely positive from the communities we’ve served through this program. We’re pleased to see the Asset Based Planning process used in the state’s Three Star Program and are excited about opportunities to apply this approach to other strategic planning initiatives.”*

ⁱ Read, Anna “Asset-Based Economic Development and Building Sustainable Rural Communities” Part 1 briefing paper from the ICMA, Center for Sustainable Communities, 2012. <https://www.nado.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Asset-Based-Economic-Development-Part-1.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Read, 2012.

ⁱⁱⁱ Appalachian Regional Commission. “Appalachia: Turning Assets into Opportunities.” October 2004. <https://www.arc.gov/images/newsroom/publications/asset/asset.pdf>

^{iv} “Governor’s Rural Task Force.” 2016. <https://www.tn.gov/ruraltaskforce/updates/report>

^v ARC Appalachian Regional Commission. <https://www.arc.gov/research/SourceandMethodologyCountyEconomicStatusFY2007FY2020.asp>

^{vi} “Governor’s Rural Task Force.” 2016.

^{vii} “Governor’s Rural Task Force.” 2016.

^{viii} “Governor’s Rural Task Force.” 2016 Executive Summary. <https://www.tn.gov/ruraltaskforce/updates/report>

^{ix} TN Department of Economic and Community Development website – ThreeStar. <https://www.tn.gov/ecd/rural-development/threestar.html>

^x TN.GOV Website: Transparent Tennessee: Open ECD – TNECD Performance Metrics <https://www.tn.gov/transparenttn/jobs-economic-development/openecd/tnecd-performance-metrics/openecd-long-term-objectives-quick-stats/distressed-counties.html>

^{xi} Powell River Blueway Trail Project. <https://www.tn.gov/ruraltaskforce/best-practices/asset-based-planning/powell-river-blueways.html>

^{xii} TCAT Livingston – Jackson County: Economic and Community Impact. <https://www.tn.gov/content/tn/ruraltaskforce/best-practices/asset-based-planning/tcat-livingston---jackson-county.html>

^{xiii} White County – Property Evaluation Program <https://www.tn.gov/ruraltaskforce/best-practices/site-development/white-county---property-evaluation-program.html>

^{xiv} TNECD website. <https://www.tn.gov/ecd/rural-development/threestar.html>