

**Regional Branding Task Force
FAQs Rev. 3**

Jan. 18, 2012

1. **Where did this initiative originate?** This initiative originated from *The Path to Regional Excellence* meeting held on Nov. 3, 2009 at Kirkwood Community College. It was hosted by the Corridor Business Alliance (CBA) and Corridor2020. The meeting attracted over 350 community and business leaders and featured Michael Langley, a regional planning expert, who discussed the qualities of an effective region. Click **HERE** for a link to his presentation

<http://corridor2020.com/2009/11/path-to-regional-excellence/>

Michael Langley's Five Regional Imperatives/Keys to Regional Excellence:

- 1). Culture of entrepreneurship & innovation
- 2). Culture of inclusiveness and diversity
- 3). Workforce/education
- 4). Infrastructure (physical, environmental, governance
- 5).*Brand/Image*

The event also featured a panel discussion which included Sally Mason, president of the University of Iowa, and Eliot Protsch, the then-executive vice president, of Alliant Energy, and was moderated by Jack Evans, president of The Hall-Perrine Foundation.

The CBA felt the regional event was hugely successful and decided to use the momentum and success to continue its work. The CBA hired Michael Langley to return to the region and conduct a strategic planning session on December 18, 2009. More than 30 business and community leaders participated in the session.

The strategic planning session resulted in three key strategic initiatives for the region to tackle over the next three years. The branding initiative is one of those three initiatives.

2. **What are Corridor2020 and the Corridor Business Alliance (CBA)?**

Corridor2020 is an informal vehicle to communicate and share information about building a stronger region. A website www.corridor2020.com was created for this purpose. The idea was a result of collaboration between Chuck Peters from Gazette Communications/Source Media and John Lohman from the *Corridor Business Journal*/Corridor Media Group.

The Corridor Business Alliance (CBA) includes 13 organizations in the Cedar Rapids and Iowa City area that were interested in discussing a regional approach to economic development. The work of these groups has evolved into the formation of the Corridor Business Alliance (CBA). Members include Alliant Energy (Jeanine Penticoff), Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance (Dee Baird), Entrepreneurial Development Center (Curt Nelson), Iowa City Area Chamber of Commerce (Nancy Quellhorst), Iowa City Area Development Group (Joe Raso), Kirkwood Community College (Kim Johnson), MidAmerican Energy (Greg Theis), Kirkwood's Small Business Development Center (Al Beach), The John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center at the University of Iowa (David Hensley), University of Iowa (Jordan Cohen), University of Iowa Small Business Development Center (Paul Heath) and East Central Iowa Council of Governments (Doug Elliott).

The vision of the CBA is to create a vital regional economy through the creation and growth of business.

3. Who is on the Regional Research and Branding Task Force?

- a. Dee Baird
- b. Tim Bradshaw
- c. Jordan Cohen
- d. Marilee Fowler
- e. Kim Johnson
- f. John Lohman
- g. Curt Nelson
- h. Chuck Peters
- i. Nancy Quellhorst
- j. Joe Raso
- k. Josh Schamberger

Past Members:
Shannon Meyer
Kristie Wetjen
Pam York

4. **Are there any paid staff on the task force?** No. It is strictly an organization made up of volunteers. The initiative's finances are being facilitated through Kirkwood Community College.

5. How is the task force organized?

The initiative is chaired by John Lohman, president and publisher of the *Corridor Business Journal*. The task force meets on an ad hoc basis.

6. **How much will this cost?** The cost to hire North Star Destination Strategies for this project is approximately \$125,000. That amount does not include the implementation of the regional brand.

7. **Which organizations have contributed so far?** The initiative is funded primarily through members of the CBA. Additional local, regional, state and federal support/grant money will be sought to support this effort and the brand implementation.

To date, the following organizations (listed alphabetically) have pledged financial support for this effort.

1. Alliant Energy
2. Cedar Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce
3. City of Cedar Rapids
4. City of Coralville
5. City of Marion
6. *Corridor Business Journal*/Corridor Media Group
7. The Eastern Iowa Airport
8. Gazette Communications/Source Media Group
9. Iowa City Area Development Group
10. Iowa City Area Chamber of Commerce
11. Kirkwood Community College
12. Linn County
13. Marion Chamber of Commerce
14. MEDCO
15. Priority One
16. University of Iowa

8. **Why was North Star Destination Strategies selected as the branding firm and not a local firm?** North Star, based in Nashville, TN, is the only company to combine research, strategy, creativity and action in one program specifically for communities. They have worked on branding efforts with over 130 communities and regions in more than 30 states
9. **How long will this process take?** The entire branding process took approximately 24 months. The initial research phase took nearly six months to complete.
10. **Who provided input into the Research phase of the process?** Over 1,500 people from throughout the Eastern Iowa Region participated in the quantitative and qualitative research phase. The Research phase included one-on-one meetings, phone interviews, small and large groups discussions, and numerous e-mail surveys. Slides from the research can be found by clicking **HERE**.
11. **When will the entire branding initiative be completed?** The branding initiative is expected to be completed by the end of the 1st Quarter of 2012.
12. **How will the brand be implemented?** A strategic plan with timelines and costs for implementing the brand will also be part of the completed project.

13. What will be gained/learned from this initiative? Or what is the goal of this initiative?

A brand is not created; it is discovered within the spirit of a place. Using qualitative and quantitative research tools, North Star will help us achieve a focused snapshot of our region's values, assets and priorities, which can then be articulated as our "brand."

We will learn what are the strengths and weaknesses of our region. We will learn what we think of ourselves as well as what people outside the region think of us. We will get a better understand of which regions we compete with on a national and global stage.

Brands uncovered in this manner are endorsed and absorbed by their communities due to their fundamental truth. Because of this, they are exceedingly useful to community leaders in furthering the economic, political and social goals of the region. In other words, an honest, relevant, clearly and cleverly articulated brand can move our community from good to great.

14. Will individual communities lose their own identity in this process?

No. It is the Task Force's hope that a unified regional brand will help make our region more globally competitive while preserving and celebrating the identities of local communities.

15. Will the new brand be "what we are" or "what we want to become?"

As mentioned in the answer to #9, a brand is not created; it is discovered within the spirit of a place. Using qualitative and quantitative research tools, North Star will help us achieve a focused snapshot of our region's values, assets and priorities, which can then be articulated as our "brand."

16. **Will the current "Technology Corridor" brand be replaced with the new brand?** Naming options are being considered at this time and both terms of Technology and Corridor are being evaluated. The final naming choice will not be imposed on any organization or entity, but successful regions use a singular name when discussing the region and its assets with both internal and external audiences. Buy in and support will be crucial for the success of the regional brand.

North Star's work will represent the collaborative recommendation (North Star and the Corridor creative committee) and North Star's expertise as a community branding firm, but our region will have full discretion in naming and implementation efforts.

17. Who will determine what the new name and brand will be?

A Creative Subcommittee worked with North Star to recommend naming and logo options based on the research. Those recommendations were submitted to the Task Force. The Creative Subcommittee was comprised of:

- Josh Schamberger (CHAIR) – President, Iowa City/Coralville Area Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Tysen Kendig – VP Strategic Communications, University of Iowa
- Mary Quass – President/CEO, NRG Media
- Ann Ricketts – Associate VP of Research, University of Iowa
- Joel Milefchik – Corporate Brand Mgr., Rockwell Collins

- Pam York – Executive Director, University of Iowa Research Foundation (FORMER MEMBER)

18. What can I do to help?

Continue to stay informed and provide your thoughts and input to John Lohman, the task force chair, or any of the Task Force members.

John Lohman can be reached at johnl@corridorbusiness.com or (319) 887-2251.

19. How do I stay informed about this initiative?

The best way to stay informed is to keep coming back to www.corridor2020.com for periodic updates.