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New Research Outlines How the Greater Washington Region Can Better Prepare for Global Competition

Research by George Mason University's Center for Regional Analysis points to public-private partnerships as key to economic growth

Washington D.C. – November 19, 2014 – Following up on a 2013 [study](#) from the Brookings Institution calling the Washington Metro Area (WMA) “a global city, but not...a global marketplace,” researchers at George Mason University's [Center for Regional Analysis](#) (CRA) have concluded that waning federal influence and limited public and private leadership networks are hindering the region's appeal to the global marketplace. The research was sponsored by [the 2030 Group](#), business leaders interested in greater cooperation for long-term prosperity for the entire Washington metropolitan region.

“The region's advantages related to its workforce, economic base, transportation network, and public institutions have historically been oriented towards the federal government and its natural way of helping the region's economy to adapt to rapid changes to global political and economic situations,” Stephen Fuller, director of the CRA, said. “These strengths are in jeopardy and much work will be needed to maintain these assets as the federal influence wanes in the future.”

Due to political shifts, unprecedented reductions in federal workforce and the subsequent reduction of contracting activity, there was a decrease of the WMA's Gross Regional Product in 2013. With no changes to this trend in sight, the region must rely on the growth of the private sector in order to become more competitive in the global economy.

“The 2030 Group has spent the past five years generating research and analysis on the long term growth needs of the region. Our challenges of transportation infrastructure, workforce education and training, and housing policies need to be addressed through better regional cooperation – which includes far more involvement from the private sector community – for the Washington metropolitan region to become more competitive in the new global economy,” offered Bob Buchanan, president of the 2030 Group.

CRA researched 12 peer regions, including New York City, Chicago and Atlanta, and found that one key disadvantage faced by the WMA is that it lacks a public-private organization dedicated to building cooperation across jurisdictional lines, fostering collaboration among public, private, and institutional interests, and achieving positive results in terms of attracting investment and jobs. A critical component of each of these organizations is that it provides a platform for region-wide dialogues on key issues – but also actions taken are made transparently and with accountability: such a platform simply does not exist in the WMA at this time.

With this in mind, CRA prepared an “**Agenda for Global Fluency**” that highlights six initial ways to build on the region's strengths and overcome its weaknesses:

1. **Creating opportunities for public-private partnerships** that transcend historical rivalries among local and state governments in the District, Maryland and Virginia.
2. **Improving connectivity among business and financial communities** by creating a platform for businesses to interact with one another and their investors, not only federal agencies.
3. **Reinforcing the region's competitive advantages** through cooperation among the region's state and local governments and businesses to retain the region's educated workforce, positive entrepreneurial climate, international connectivity and excellent public transit.
4. **Developing a sustainable funding model for infrastructure investments** that addresses the long-term needs of the entire region.

5. **Maximizing the impact of Washington Dulles International Airport** by implementing public-private partnerships that ensure the Dulles area reaches its full potential.
6. **Developing a regional messaging and marketing approach** that puts aside past differences for the benefit of the greater region.

“Successful regional partnerships are often born from times of crisis not unlike Washington’s current economic struggles,” Fuller said. “The conditions are now favorable for building a regional development strategy, but strong leadership will be needed to achieve this outcome.”

To see the full results of the study click here. <http://cra.gmu.edu/global-competitiveness/>

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