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Economic Development Academy Shares Insider Perspective

Nelsonville – How to attract new industry was the topic of a recent one-day seminar attended by more than 50 economic development professionals from Appalachian Ohio. A team of site consultants who work nationwide with dozens of companies each year to locate new businesses and industries provided their perspective of what it takes to compete and win in this very competitive arena.

The seminar was the first in a three-part Community Economic Development Academy that will culminate in a mock site visit by the consultants to individual Appalachian Partnership counties. The academy, sponsored by the Appalachian Partnership for Economic Growth (APEG) and funded by AEP Ohio, was attended by economic development professionals representing 17 counties.

The purpose of the academy is to help local economic development professionals and key community leaders understand the types of information required and why they must be able to respond quickly to site planner's requests for information.

"The days of industry attraction relying on golf outings and fine dining are over," said Tonya Crist, InSite consultant. "Companies ask us to gather dozens of very specific data points which we feed into a computer model that identifies those communities who fulfill basic qualifications. If you can't quickly provide not only basic information but project specific information, your community will not be considered."

Among data basics are details on the land or facility proposed for the project, the area's average industrial utility costs, excess sewerage and water capacity and proximity to roads. Project specifics can range from rail access to space for future expansion and facility ceiling height to minimum number of loading docks.

"We developed CEDA to help our APEG community partners identify their competitive gaps and opportunities," said Tim Wells, manager, economic and business development, AEP. "AEP is investing in the future of southeastern Ohio by supporting this unique opportunity for communities to learn directly from professionals engaged in the business of selecting communities for new investment."

For communities completing the 3-part series, AEP is sponsoring a grant competition that will fund an economic development project to enhance their local development efforts.

The Appalachian Partnership for Economic Growth (APEG) is one of six JobsOhio regional partners working to create jobs and economic growth for Ohio. Headquartered in Nelsonville, APEG serves 25 Ohio counties and provides Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) services to an additional three border counties for a total of 28 counties.

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