

# The Intelligencer

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## Vision 20-20 Project receives grant

*Federal funds will be used to  
boost Southwestern Illinois*

Congressmen Jerry F. Costello (D-IL) and John Shimkus (R-IL) on Wednesday congratulated the Vision 20-20 Project for receiving a \$250,000 Regional Innovation Grant from the U.S. Department of Labor. Vision 20-20 is a region-wide effort to coordinate area resources to best promote economic growth, development and investment.

Initiated in April 2008 by the Madison-Bond and Mid America Workforce Investment Boards and the Southwestern Illinois Leadership Council, Vision 20-20 has grown to include the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Madison and St. Clair County governments and Regional Offices of Education, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, Lewis and Clark Community College, Southwestern Illinois College, various private businesses and labor organizations.

The grant will be used to help define the economy of Southwestern Illinois and create a plan to encourage the growth and stabilization of area businesses. Part of this process will be to update the Community Audit conducted in 2003 and analyze recent

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local economic changes. The Vision 20-20 partnership will provide the leadership necessary to move an implementation plan along by identifying and efficiently using available regional resources. A coordinated effort of this scope is particularly important given the tough national economic conditions. The grant will help give the region the identity and the impetus to achieve greater economic development.

"Regional coordination is critical to maximizing our economic opportunities," said Costello. "We have seen great successes from this approach in the past, particularly in regard to transportation, and I will continue to support these efforts at the federal level."

"One of the ways the federal government can help in these tough economic times is through grants such as these," stated Shimkus. "I am pleased that Madison County was successful in obtaining this grant and will continue to seek ways to bring more jobs and training to our region."

"This opportunity to define and focus our regional economy could not have come at a better time," said Alan J. Dunstan, Madison County Board Chairman. "We are in a serious economic down-turn and need every resource available to move our citizens into productive work. The RIG will give the area the opportunity to come together to identify the opportunities our region has to attract and build business."

Dunstan further explained, "The groups working on this project include the Leadership County Southwestern Illinois, county and local government, the education community, the areas' Workforce Investment Boards, labor and business. These partners will ensure our success as we strive to support our existing businesses and explore new business opportunities. The assistance of our two congressmen was very helpful in this project, and we look forward to their continued support as we proceed with this process."

"The next two years will be a critical time for our region," noted Vaughn Vandegrift, President of the Southwestern Illinois Leadership Council and Chancellor of Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. "While our development pipeline is currently strong with billions of dollars in projects under construction, conditions in the national and global economies make it imperative that Metro East leaders come together and work collaboratively to chart the course for our region's long-term future. The monies received through this grant will go a long way toward supporting that collaborative effort as we continue to shape a bright future for Southwestern Illinois."