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**News from the S. C. Council on Competitiveness**

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**Action agenda outlines plans to boost S. C.'s economy**

Columbia, S. C. – May 27, 2005 – The S. C. Council on Competitiveness today released details of its long-term strategy to raise per capita income in South Carolina. The document is the result of the council's first year of work involving about 200 leaders in business, government and academia.

The strategic plan outlines, for the first time, a detailed action agenda for steering South Carolina's economy in a new direction. The strategy seeks to raise prosperity by creating vibrant clusters that enable business and industry to become more innovative and create higher quality products and services.

The South Carolina Council on Competitiveness is leading the collaborative implementation of the plan. Volunteers are organized into issue task forces and committees on South Carolina's clusters. The plan outlines their detailed mission, objectives, activities and metrics.

Ed Sellers, CEO of BlueCross BlueShield of SC, chairs the council, and Gov. Mark Sanford serves as an honorary member. Greenville businessman George Fletcher will begin work in June as the council's first executive director.

"There is a great spirit in South Carolina to make ourselves better, faster. This action plan outlines how we can do this, by building a supportive infrastructure together with other organizations that share our goals," said Sellers.

"I hope the strategic plan sparks conversation, encourages new partnerships and gets more people on the grassroots level involved," said Fletcher.

Task forces are examining issues ranging from education and work force development to improving opportunities for small businesses and distressed areas. In addition, six cluster committees have been developed so far: travel and tourism, textiles, apparel, automotive, agribusiness, and fuel cells. These groups are steered by an overarching committee on activating clusters. A cluster is a group of interconnected companies and associations in a similar line of business that collaborate to build and expand products and services.

The S. C. Council on Competitiveness is a result of collaborations spearheaded by the Palmetto Institute and the S. C. Department of Commerce, including representatives from the Palmetto Business Forum, the S. C. Chamber of Commerce, the University of S. C. and the S. C. Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism. Monitor Group, an international strategy advisory firm, managed the effort, and Harvard Professor Michael E. Porter, who donated his time to the project, served as the senior adviser. Creating the council was one of his key recommendations in “Building the Competitive Advantage of South Carolina,” unveiled in December, 2003.

The council’s mission is to develop and drive the state’s long-term economic strategy by working with companies, government, universities, economic development organizations, and other groups to identify and implement actions and policies that are aligned with the long-term strategy, and that will boost the competitiveness of South Carolina firms.

Download “A Strategic Plan for South Carolina” at [www.CompeteSC.org](http://www.CompeteSC.org).

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