

Chamber hires consultant

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Journal staff report

AngelouEconomics, a Texas-based consulting company, has been hired by the Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce to lead a new effort focused on increasing business activity in the region.

Named "Empower Rhode Island," the five-month process, which began this week, is designed to create a private-sector approach to spurring business activity among selected industry sectors in Providence and the state.

"Our goal is to develop an action-oriented economic-development strategic plan that will continue to build on the area's assets, address opportunities and encourage the private sector to take a stronger role in shaping the economic future of the community," said Edward J. Cooney, vice president and treasurer of Nortek Inc. and chairman of the board of the Providence Chamber. "AngelouEconomics will bring international experience and expertise to the table."

A Web site, www.EmpoweringRhodeIsland.com, provides details on the project and an online survey that community residents and business leaders will be encouraged to complete. The consulting team plans to hold several meetings with business, civic and elected leaders during a first round of personal interviews and focus groups. This initial phase of the study will help the team form a baseline understanding of Providence and the state's opportunities, issues and strengths for business growth.

"We feel extremely fortunate to be working with the Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce and the Greater Providence region, a community with a world-renowned cultural atmosphere that has earned such a positive reputation as being one of the nation's top lifestyle destinations," said Ben Loftsgaarden, AngelouEconomics senior project manager. "We look forward to creating a strategy that complements these tremendous quality-of-life attributes and capitalizes on the economic assets that position the region and state as a world-class location for business, as well."