

## New EDC Study Will Identify Desired Businesses, Industries

By Hill Vaden  
*The Winchester Star*

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The Winchester-Frederick County Economic Development Commission is always looking for ways to attract new businesses to the area and expand existing ones.

On Thursday, two representatives from AngelouEconomics of Austin, Texas, conducted a press conference at the EDC offices to outline an economic research project they are being commissioned to perform for the Winchester area.

The four-month project will be used to “identify target industries and businesses that will lead to a thriving and diverse economy,” according to a slide from Thursday’s PowerPoint Presentation.

“This will allow us to identify industry clusters that could be located in Winchester-Frederick County five to 10 years from today,” reads a press release from AngelouEconomics.

The project will be divided into three phases.

Phase one, which was conducted over two days this week, consisted of background research, expectation determinants, and local interviews. Two project leaders — Daniel Kah, research director, and Ben Loftsgaarden, project manager — both arrived in town Tuesday to begin phase one.

So far, the area’s economy has impressed them.

“We were pleasantly surprised,” Kah said. “[We see] many more strengths than weaknesses.”

He cites a young population, low unemployment rate, and proximity to Washington, D.C., as some of Winchester-Frederick County’s greatest attributes.

One of the main challenges facing the Winchester community is salary.



AngelouEconomics Research Director Daniel Kah (right) and Winchester-Frederick County Economic Development Commission Executive Director Patrick Barker discuss a new project that will identify the area’s best business and industrial prospects during a press conference Thursday at the EDC’s Winchester offices. The chart shown below details the steps involved in selecting appropriate companies.  
*(Photo by Jeff Taylor)*

"The wages do not seem to be keeping pace with the living expenses," Kah said.

Kah and Loftsgaarden hope to target employers that will pay workers well enough that they can afford to live here.

After a community assessment, the two men will make recommendations for target industries.

"We start big with almost every industry in the United States and try to filter," Kah said.

The suggestions will be extremely specific and not just broad employment sectors.

"We are not going to recommend biotech or manufacturing," Kah said.



Daniel Kah of AngelouEconomics discusses the new economic research project Thursday in the offices of the Winchester-Frederick County Economic Development Commission.  
*(Photo by Jeff Taylor)*

The Austin economists are also going to work closely with Winchester-Frederick County leaders and residents to determine what employers the community wants.

"If it is something the citizens of a community and the leaders of a community aren't comfortable with ... it won't make the list," Kah said.

They said the first step in making the list is to determine what industry clusters currently exist in an area, and evaluating their successes and future expectations.

The study is being paid for by the EDC with tax dollars allocated by the Frederick County Board of Supervisors.

"It is probably going to be approximately \$50,000," said Patrick Barker, executive director of the EDC. "This project really is the center of our next strategic thrust.

"It is a reality check. It is going to give us some businesses to go after."

Barker said the EDC received recommendations from various state and local agencies as to what sort of economic research group to employ.

"This was the unanimous recommendation from the New Business Development Committee," he said.

Wendy May, EDC marketing coordinator, said AngelouEconomics was picked from a list of four similar organizations.

Both May and Barker believe they have contracted the best team for Winchester-Frederick County, and are anxious to see the results.

"This will play a huge role in how we market," May said. "It really adds validity to how we are spending public dollars."

"We have moved this project forward as quickly as we could," Barker said.

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