

## Snyder pushes for regional economic planning

LANSING (AP) — Gov. Rick Snyder is hoping to boost regional economies across Michigan by enticing local agencies to come up with more cohesive plans for their future.

The state has set aside \$2.5 million for a voluntary program in which regions can apply for money to create “prosperity” plans. They can qualify for different amounts of funding depending on the extent to which they share administrative services or even consolidate various planning and workforce development boards along with economic development districts.

As part of the initiative, Snyder is ordering state departments to start serving 10 regions around the state. His aides said there now are at least 80 different geographic areas served by state agencies dealing with everything from public health to roads to prisoners’ re-entry into society.

“The more you can get under one roof, the better you are at moving things forward on behalf of a region,” Bill Rustem, Snyder’s director of strategy, told The Associated Press on Wednesday, a day before the Snyder administration planned to formally release details of the effort.

To qualify for funding in the fiscal year that starts Oct. 1, Rustem said, state-designated planning regions and Metropolitan Planning Organizations must bring together representatives of transportation, economic development, workforce development, adult education and higher education so they get on the same page on a regional vision instead of operating in silos.

He said it’s the first time in decades that the state, not just local governments or the federal government, will have “skin in the game” in regional planning.

Snyder aides stressed that

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local officials will call the shots on their regional economic plans rather than

state government.

“It really gives them a stronger voice down here,” said strategy adviser Sara Wycoff.

Too often, Rustem said, a local transportation plan

may have nothing to do with the area economic development plan, which may have nothing to do with what colleges and universities are doing. Where local and regional collaboration is occurring,

it often is cumbersome and happens in spite of a structure seemingly designed to dissuade it, he said.

Under Snyder’s plan, local representatives from the private, public and nonprofit

sectors could get up to \$250,000 to create a Regional Prosperity Collaborative, \$375,000 for a Regional Prosperity Council or \$500,000 for a Regional Prosperity Board.