

Community Leaders Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) Strategies Program

**A community consensus approach
to encourage the growth of local businesses**

Why Business Retention and Expansion?

A healthy and vibrant local economy depends on the well-being of a community's existing firms. Thus, efforts aimed at helping local businesses survive and grow in the local community are key to successful economic development. The community benefits because:

- Forty to eighty percent of all new jobs are created by existing firms
- Businesses that stay competitive are more likely to remain in the community and possibly expand
- Keeping an existing business is often easier than recruiting a new firm
- Firms considering moving will talk to existing firms. Odds are better of attracting new firms if existing ones are happy with the community.

Benefits of the Community Leader's approach to BR&E:

Economic development efforts often require action from many community players. Without community consensus, economic development stalls. Our program is a proven community involvement approach for building the consensus to move forward. The University of Minnesota Extension Service provides technical assistance, training and research to help communities assess business concerns, understand the structure of the local economy, set priorities, and implement projects that will help make communities more vibrant.

BRE Objectives:

Short Term

- Demonstrate community support for local firms
- Help solve immediate business concerns

Long Term

- Build community capacity to sustain business growth and development through creation of a broad-based coalition
- Increase the competitiveness of local firms
- Establish and implement a strategic plan for economic development

Who is involved in a BR&E Strategies Program?

The Leadership Team introduces and promotes the program in the community, coordinates task force meetings, and organizes immediate follow-up.

The Task Force is a broad-based group of local leaders, including representatives of economic development organizations, chambers of commerce, business, government, and educational institutions.

Business Visitors are leaders from the task force and community. Each team has two members and visits two to four businesses.

Steps to Business Retention

Firm Visits

- Community leaders are trained to conduct firm visits
- Using a proven survey, community leaders interview businesses about their needs, concerns and plans

Red Flag Follow-Up

- Task Force reviews surveys and responds to firms' immediate needs including linking firms to appropriate economic development programs and services

Strategic Planning

- Survey results are analyzed and documented in a written report
- A campus research review panel of University faculty and other economic development experts offer suggested projects to address business needs identified in the survey
- The Task Force uses the report and its knowledge of the community to develop a strategic action plan

Implementation

- Local teams carry out projects identified in the strategic plan

Types of BR&E programs:

Previous programs have addressed manufacturing, mixed sector businesses, agriculture and tourism. Programs have been completed in rural, urban and suburban areas throughout Minnesota including parts of cities, groups of cities, counties and regions.

Services available within Minnesota (prices effective 8/30/07, subject to change without notice)

- 1) Materials:
 - a) Web-site containing sample surveys, reports from BR&E programs, success stories, research on BR&E, etc. at www.bre.umn.edu . Free
 - b) *BR&E DVD* which includes Sibley County (Minnesota) Case Study and Tips for Successful BR&E Firm Visits. \$35 plus postage and handling at <http://shop.extension.umn.edu/PublicationDetail.aspx?ID=1827>

- 2) Educational Courses for Economic Developers: See www.bre.umn.edu or contact Michael Darger
 - a) BR&E Consultant Certification to facilitate this community-based BR&E approach. (online course for \$550)
 - b) BR&E Research Reports to compile surveys into a community strategic action plan (online for \$345)

 - 3) Workshops taught in your community: Contact your Regional Extension Educator:
 - a) Assessment workshop -- Is a BR&E Program Right for our Community? \$100 or free at the office of your Regional Extension Educator
 - b) Starting a BR&E Visitation Program (leadership team only) \$500
 - c) BR&E Visitor Training \$500
 - d) Setting Priorities and Taking Action (planning retreat) \$500

 - 4) Research Services (prices vary on length and complexity of survey): Contact Michael Darger
 - a) Custom survey instrument \$2,000-4,000
 - b) Data tabulation and analysis, \$2,000-4,000 (only available with survey provided by U of M BR&E)
 - c) Complete Research Package, \$8,500* (includes survey instrument, data tabulation/analysis, campus research review meeting involving University faculty to develop suggested projects to meet business concerns, four-chapter research report, and summary report AND workshop 3.d. Setting Priorities and Taking Action (planning retreat))

 - 5) Complete BR&E Package: Contact your Regional Extension Educator (Community must complete an application for acceptance into the program)
 - ❖ Standard package includes workshops A, B, C, D from #3, complete research package from #4, and in-person BR&E consulting throughout all phases of the project including quarterly meetings the first year of implementation.
 - ❖ Premium package includes all of the standard package items plus a customized survey instrument and University assistance in business selection.
 - ❖ Urban/suburban programs require more complex sampling, additional efforts to get representative sample size, etc. and therefore are priced accordingly.
 - a) Premium Urban/Suburban \$18,000*
 - b) Standard " \$15,000*
 - c) Premium Rural \$15,000*
 - d) Standard " \$12,000*
- * \$3,000 scholarship available through 12/31/07 if the community participates in a research project on the impact of Community Leaders BR&E on social capital. For programs accepted after 12/31/07 the scholarship is \$1,500.

Who to contact

BR&E Strategies Program Contact: Michael Darger, 612-625-6246 or darger@umn.edu or Liz Templin, Associate Program Contact, 763-767-3880 or templin@umn.edu

Minnesota's Regional Extension Educators – Community Economics:

- Central: Adeel Ahmed, 320-203-6050 or ahme0004@umn.edu
- East Central (MN) and East Metro: Liz Templin, 763-767-3880 or templin@umn.edu
- Northeast: John Bennett, 218-726-6471 or jbennett@umn.edu
- Northwest: contact Michael Darger, 612-625-6246 or darger@umn.edu
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- Southeast: Bruce Schwartz, 507-536-6308 or bwschwar@umn.edu
- Southwest: contact Michael Darger, 612-625-6246 or darger@umn.edu
- West and South Metro: Claudia Cody, 763-767-3875 or cody0031@umn.edu
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