A healthy, vibrant local economy depends largely on the strength of a community’s existing businesses. Community leaders can help local businesses survive and grow by implementing effective business retention and expansion (BR&E) strategies. So how do you do that?

The next offering of the Business Retention and Expansion Online course begins in May, 2016. It teaches the fundamentals of BR&E in a convenient online learning. The course is designed for economic and community development professionals and other community leaders who want to learn how to implement a community-led BR&E effort.

COURSE COST AND SCHEDULE

The BR&E course begins on May 18th and concludes on July 13th. The cost of the course is $500 and registration deadline is May 6th. There are also community team pricing options (see more details at http://z.umn.edu/brecourse). See schedule below.

A PROVEN APPROACH

Economic development efforts rely on action from many community players. Without community buy-in, economic development stalls. Extension’s BR&E Strategies Program, established in 1990, is a proven approach for involving the community and building consensus to move forward. Our online BR&E course was re-designed in 2016 and is grounded in the community economic development principles of the BR&E Strategies Program approach. We also offer a traditional face-to-face version of the course and the next offering will be in January, 2017. Many professionals around Minnesota and beyond have taken our BR&E courses and moved into action with BR&E initiatives in their communities.

After completing the BR&E course, you will be able to: understand the three major elements of the BR&E process; access BR&E resources and networks as needed; plan a BR&E initiative that fits your community; and organize a community to implement BR&E strategies.

QUESTIONS AND REGISTRATION

For more information, visit this website for updates: http://z.umn.edu/brecourse. To register for the course, contact Michael Darger, University of Minnesota BR&E Director, at 612-625-6246 or darger@umn.edu. You will receive instructions for logging on to the course site as part of the registration process.

© 2016 Regents of the University of Minnesota. All rights reserved. University of Minnesota Extension is an equal opportunity educator and employer. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, this material is available in alternative formats upon request. Direct requests to 612-625-8233.

Printed on recycled and recyclable paper with at least 10 percent postconsumer waste material.
## BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION ONLINE

The following table lists course content as of March 7, 2016. This schedule is subject to change before course goes live in May, but general topics will remain the same.

| Week 1                      | ■ Introducing the course technology, materials, instructors, and participants  
|                            | ■ Economic Development and BRE  
|                            | ■ The community development model for BR&E  
| Week 2                      | ■ Setting goals:  
|                            | o How many businesses & volunteers?  
|                            | o Timeline?  
|                            | o Considerations for volunteer or professional visitation  
|                            | ■ Build on existing group or create a new team?  
|                            | ■ Local vs. regional – scaling your BR&E efforts  
| Week 3                      | ■ Planning the work  
|                            | ■ Communications - internal, external  
|                            | ■ Selecting businesses - Mixed sector or sector specific?  
| Week 4                      | ■ Building partnerships for BR&E  
|                            | ■ People  
|                            | o The core team roles  
|                            | o Task force and volunteer visitors  
|                            | o Volunteers – recruiting, training, retaining, and recognizing  
| Week 5                      | ■ BR&E Technical Issues  
|                            | o Interview guides & survey  
|                            | o Branding your BRE  
|                            | o Urban, suburban, rural considerations  
|                            | o Focus groups, mixed methods research  
| Week 6                      | ■ Conducting quality visits for both relationship building and good data  
|                            | o How to train volunteers  
|                            | o Doing your own practice BR&E visit with a real business  
|                            | ■ Responding to individual business issues (aka “warning flags”)  
| Week 7                      | ■ Finding the big picture -- data tabulation & analysis  
|                            | ■ BR&E reports  
|                            | ■ Determining priority projects and moving into action  
|                            | o Research Review  
|                            | o Action Planning Retreat  
|                            | o Commencement Mtg  
| Week 8                      | ■ Building credibility; avoiding pitfalls.  
|                            | ■ Creating the right BR&E for your situation  
|                            | ■ Sustaining BRE momentum  
|                            | ■ Using Ripple Effect Mapping to evaluate BR&E results  

© 2016 Regents of the University of Minnesota. All rights reserved. University of Minnesota Extension is an equal opportunity educator and employer. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, this material is available in alternative formats upon request. Direct requests to 612-625-8233. Printed on recycled and recyclable paper with at least 10 percent postconsumer waste material.