BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Course offers In-Person + Online BR&E Training

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 In Your Community course begins in January, 2015. It teaches the fundamentals of BR&E in a blended format combining in-person and 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 online on January 12th. An in-person session will be held January 20 (starts 10 a.m.) to the 21st, 2015 (ending 2 p.m.) in Vadnais Heights in partnership with the Vadnais Heights Economic Development Corporation. This is conveniently scheduled prior to the EDAM (Economic Development Association of Minnesota) Winter Conference (scheduled for January 22-23, 2015 in Brooklyn Park). The course also includes several segments that will be conducted online following the January meetings, and we will wrap things up in-person on March 3rd (10:30 – 2:30).

The cost of the course is $400 and registration deadline is January 5th. There are also community team pricing options (see more details at http://z.umn.edu/brecourse). FMI, see reverse side.

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 blended BR&E course was re-designed in 2012 and is grounded in the community economic development principles of the BR&E Strategies Program approach. Several professionals around Minnesota have taken the course 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.

The course kicks off with two days of in-person learning led by Extension experts. You’ll see the BR&E process and learn about the milestones in a community-led BR&E program. You’ll also hear guest speakers, visit a business, and learn how to build an effective local BR&E team. Plus, a new innovation for 2015 is the “Micro BR&E” in which we will gather and examine real business data
from Vadnais Heights businesses and share the analysis and results with Vadnais Heights EDC.

The course then goes online in a series of segments that dig deeper into how to implement your own BR&E strategies. The online content includes video clips and presentations from BR&E experts, as well as ongoing forum discussions that allow you to interact with your instructors and participants. Guest presenters and BR&E practitioners from organizations such as the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce’s Grow Minnesota! program will enhance learning and discussions. We wrap things up with an in-person finale focusing on launching and sustaining your BR&E.

**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 in early January.

**BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION IN YOUR COMMUNITY—A BLENDED COURSE**

The following table lists course content as of December 2, 2014. This schedule is subject to change before course goes live in January, but general topics will remain the same.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session 0 – Online, January 12th</th>
<th>• Introducing the course technology, instructors and participants</th>
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| Session 1 – In person | • What and why of BR&E  
• The 3-step BR&E process (Research, Prioritize, Implement)  
• Organizing the Leadership Team and Task Force and planning the BR&E initiative  
• Volunteer visitor training and visits to Vadnais Heights businesses  
• Warning Flag analysis (identifying immediate priorities)  
• Analyze survey data for SWOT and ideating suggestions for the host community  
• “Micro BR&E” Task Force retreat (an abbreviated version)  
• Understanding interview guides and research methods |
| January 20–21, 2015, Vadnais Heights, MN | |
| Session 2 – Online | • Responding to Warning Flags |
| Session 3 – Online | • Reviewing data, identifying potential project ideas |
| Session 4 – Online | • Interpreting data and selecting priority projects for the community  
(Note: this course does not teach data analysis and report writing) |
| Session 5 – Online | • Organizing action teams to implement projects  
• Sharing the chosen priority projects with the community  
• Developing a plan to ensure tasks are completed |
| Session 6 – Online | • Realizing the value of Task Force gatherings to sustain momentum  
• Conducting effective Task Force and project team meetings |
| Session 7 – Final Session – In-person session, March 3, 2015, Twin Cities location TBD | • How to use Ripple Effect Mapping to evaluate BR&E results  
• Hear participant plans for how they will apply the BR&E strategies process in their communities?  
• Discuss key BR&E issues including issues specific to your community  
• Economic development suggestions for the community hosting the course  
• Course evaluation |