



MONTANA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT/CRDC WORKING GROUP

QUARTERLY MEETING

October 5, 2011

Lake County Community Development

407 Main Street SW, Ronan, MT

PRESENT: Martin DeWitt, Brian Obert, Larry Mires, Toni Pedersen, Larry Watson, Warren Harden, Janice Wannebo, Billie Lee, Gib Turner, Chris Beacham, RTS; Trent Williams, RTS.

VIA PHONE: Jim Davison, Sarah Converse

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Welcome and Introductions

Terry Myhre welcomed everyone to the meeting and requested introductions.

Brief Update on SBDC Meeting with MDOC

Instead of discussing the SBDC program today, a meeting is pending with Andy Poole, Ann Desch and the CRDC/EDD representatives.

RTS – Montana Regional Strategic Analysis Project

Trent Williams, Principle, explained that RTS is a non-profit that assists existing companies and regions grow. Much of their work has involved regional cluster development and identifying pockets for growth. The Montana Regional Strategic Analysis Project will help Montana have better data in improving growth in Montana. The idea is to match the data with regional and local aspirations to also address growth.

Chris Beacham said the basis of the project is to identify the strongest sectors in each region and then develop strategies and clusters around that activity to help them grow. Data reflecting entrepreneurial opportunities will also be studied. Chris is interested in learning from each CRDC/EDD/LDO about priorities and unique local needs/situations.

Trent and Chris requested any CEDS, current documents, studies, data, etc., that will help them with the data gathering. The CRDC/EDD representatives shared ideas and provided input on the project.

USDA-Rural Development Capacity Building Funding

Matt Chase provided information on this topic as a result of the August meeting. It is posted on the CRDC/EDD Working Group webpage.

Cost Savings

A discussion took place on how the CRDCs/EDDs could combine needs for services and save on costs: group health insurance, bookkeeping, audits, etc. Jim Davison suggested an RBOG be used to analyze how we could deliver better and more efficient services.

Broadband Update

Public meetings to discuss the state's broadband issues have begun. Martin DeWitt shared about the meeting held in Wolf Point in which about 30 people attended. Contracts and schedules have not been forthcoming.

CRDC/EDD Blog Access

Those involved with CRDC/EDD activities now have access to the blog for discussion and exchange of information on regional economic development activities and issues. The link is on the MEDA webpage under the Groups tab.

Around the Table Updates

- Sweetgrass Development: Sarah Converse is headed to NADO for training. The organization is also planning grant administration training and is working on broadband issues. Sarah is very busy with energy activities as well.
- Headwaters: New CRDC person coming on the end of the month as Warren is working on other projects. Headwaters continues to use BSTF to build projects in cooperation with Anaconda Local Development. A housing coordinator is in place thanks to AmeriCorps. Ag and energy are two prime areas of focus; building on these opportunities. Received an RBOG for webinar facilities in each of the counties under Headwaters to utilize ideas and improve communication with local development organizations.
- MBAC: Brian Obert shared about several remediation projects and business development projects. Gold and copper mines in Jefferson County as well as a tunnel copper mine in Meagher County are in the works. Permits should be in place by the end of 2012. This could bring 125 people to the town of White Sulpher Springs which is a town of just over 700.
- Great Northern: Martin DeWitt reported the Epic Center with asbestos flooring is being cleaned up; approved for assessment grant for \$750,000. Housing projects are wrapping up in some communities and just starting in others. Loan balance is at capacity. There are unbelievable needs for housing and population impacts (water, sewer, etc.) due to oil and energy activity. "Man Camps" create problems regarding crime, sanitation and schooling of children.
- MBDC: Janice Wannebo reported Montana West Economic Development and Great Falls Development Authority ranked highest and will be the two new MBDC's.
- Gallatin/Park County: Larry Watson reported BlackHawk is locating in Manhattan, Montana. Stuart Leidner, Prospera, worked hard to bring this about; cluster development is very possible. EDA planning grant of \$50,000 recently received to re-start the planning district between Park and Gallatin Counties. Larry has made progress on a long awaited project to build a new interchange on I90 that affects the Gallatin Airport, Belgrade and Huffine Lane in Bozeman. Gallatin Field is now designated an international airport. The interchange will cause great re-direction of business and business growth. Larry hopes to plan ahead and accommodate both

agriculture and business. Larry utilized Recovery Zone Facility bonds to fund interest free loans for the Ferraro/Hope (Rockin' R Bar) Project and Alpine Orthopedics (\$7.8 million total.) Larry is seeking funding from TIGER (Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery) for the new Gallatin airport interchange.

- Lake County CDC: Billie Lee reported they are striving to complete the CEDS by the end of December. Billie said partnerships are being built with tribal government and local government following the model of the Compass Project. The process builds community partnerships and includes visioning with the tribes, businesses, local government, etc. Lake County CDC is the lead on the project which will take about a year to complete. Billie said the area is slowly coming out of the recession. A great boost to the area is OPE/Core Innovation which is causing many spin-off ideas/products as a result of their gasless motor invention. Billie is also working on marketing Lake County CDC in new ways. The Food Enterprise Center just completed an agreement with MMEC on food production for third party audits.
- MEDA President Larry Mires discussed the MEDA Code of Ethics and the importance of developing partnerships in a professional, efficient manner. Larry requested feedback from the CRDCs/EDDs on improving communication for building better partnerships. Larry also requested feedback on revising/improving the Code of Ethics. MEDA would be happy to serve as the conduit to improve communication. It was noted that often a Local Development Organization is critical to follow-up of the loan project no matter who makes the loan.

Closing

With no further business, Terry Myhre encouraged everyone to take the two tours offered by Lake Count CDC: Mission Mountain Food Enterprise Center and OPE/CORE Innovation.