RUSHING YOUR NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS ~ JUST A BIT
If you have not yet experienced a MEDA Resource Team Assessment, make it a goal to participate on a team in 2016. Just ask one of the Sanders County Team members about their experience. Although it was a longer-than-usual assessment as it covered the entire county, team members said they gained more than they gave. The team arrived in Thompson Falls on November 3rd and travel the 4th and 5th via a mini-tour bus and listened to over 150 people share their thoughts and ideas for improving where they live. Jen Kreiner did an incredible job in facilitating and arranging listening sessions plus two town hall meetings; great participation was experienced at every site. Gypsy Ray was with the team all along the way and assisted with facilitation. The team is now working on their reports and anticipating a return to Sanders County on January 19th.


MONTANA INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING UPDATE
This is not news to anyone: Montana has an infrastructure funding problem that requires creativity and collaboration to solve. Since MEDA’s Call to Action Town Hall Meeting held in October, the Montana Chamber held a meeting on November 4th to bring coalition partners together. Brian Obert, Montana Business Assistance Connection, represented MEDA, and reported that subcommittees are being formed to tackle the issue on several fronts. MEDA will soon send out an announcement with the Call to Action Summary, a working definition of “infrastructure”, and more detailed coalition information.

MEDA WORKING GROUPS UPDATE
- MEDA RLF Working Group—This group meets the third Tuesday of each month at 10:00am but is taking the month of December off. Plan to join the meeting on January 19th, 2016. View the minutes
(thanks, Sammie Chagnon) on the working group website. If you are interested in joining this group, please contact Gloria at the MEDA office.

- MEDA Resource Team Assessment Working Group – This MEDA Working Group meets the second Thursday of each month at 9:00am. Participants are making progress on two main areas of focus: 1. Improving the current process and 2. Adjusting the current process to meet planning document data collection needs. Minutes from the November Meeting. Everyone is welcome to join the conversation.

**MEDA MEMBERSHIP UPDATE**
MEDA’s membership stands at 247. To review all of the benefits of membership, visit our webpage.

**MEDA BOARD MEETING SUMMARY**
The MEDA Board held a one-item-agenda meeting on November 23rd to discuss and plan MEDA’s participation in the Infrastructure Coalition. A document is being drafted that will be shared with the MEDA Membership this week.

**BEAR OUTREACH DATA FOR NOVEMBER**
It was great to see new outreach taking place in Park County with Clyde Park and Gardiner businesses participating.

- **Number of business surveys or contacts:** 13
- **Counties involved and number of visits:** Gallatin – 10, Park – 2, Lake - 1
- **BEAR Team members conducting visits:** Warren Vaughan – 10, Katie Weaver – 1, Stephanie Cunningham – 1, Sarah Skofield – 1, Lynn Lagerquist, and Carol Cunningham.

**IWT FUNDING 2nd QUARTER UPDATE**
Chris Wilhelm, MDLI, reported on November 12th that IWT 2nd Quarter funding has been exhausted. Applications are still being accepted and will be placed in “submitted” status to be reviewed for eligibility in the order in which it was received. Eligible applications will be awarded funding beginning in January, on a first-come, first-served basis until 3rd quarter funding is exhausted. If funding is released from other grantees prior to next quarter’s allocation, eligible applications can be awarded.

**GRANTS AND FUNDING**
Check these out! New Community Friendly Grants Extension Community Resources Program weblink. Thanks to David Young, Professor, Community Resource Specialist Extension Service & College of Nursing, MSU, for providing this information.

GRANTSTATION: Click here to read the entire newsletter or click on the section headings for specific grant opportunities and important announcements. Email MEDA for the username and password.

The Montana History Foundation grant cycle officially opened with a deadline of January 22, 2016. The new website contains the grant criteria and application. *NOTE: You might need to “REFRESH” your browser to see the new page: www.mthistory.org Only one application per organization will be accepted in a given funding year. If you currently have an open grant and have completed it, submit your photos and final report in before January 22, 2016 to qualify for a 2016 grant. Contact Gena Ashmore, 406.449.3770

Scholarship for Smart Growth Conference. For anyone who is interested in the Smart Growth Conference but is limited in ability to pay conference registration fees, please check into the possibility of getting scholarship funding. The Local Government Commission (LGC) is sponsoring its annual scholarship fund to offset conference registration fees for individuals representing small nonprofits, community-based and grassroots organizations, local policymakers, health officials, school officials, and other local government agency staff. Priority will be given to those traveling from outside the region to participate. The LGC Scholarship Application deadline is December 18, or until all available funds have been awarded. All awards will be made no later than January 4, 2016. https://newpartners.org/scholarships/ New Partners for Smart Growth Conference February 11-13, 2016, Portland, OR

The 2016 EPA Brownfields Assessment, Revolving Loan Fund, and Cleanup (ARC) Grants Proposal Guidelines for assessment and cleanup grants are now available. The EPA expects to award up to 223 grants total ($54.5 M) with 151 ($34.1 M) as assessment grants (Phase I/Phase II assessments for petroleum or hazardous waste sites). Proposals are due to EPA by December 18 at 11:59 p.m. Eastern time and must be submitted through www.grants.gov.

OPPORTUNITIES AND TOOLS FOR YOU

Interested in sharpening your professional skills as an economic and community development practitioner? Looking for new tools to place in your economic development tool box? Check these out.

⇒ Tools to Unify Your Community – IEDC Strategic Planning. January 21 – 22, New Orleans, LA. Training is part of the Leadership Summit. Agenda Registration

⇒ CDFA is proud to announce the release of the The Practitioner's Guide to Economic Development Finance 2nd Edition and the Tax Increment Finance Best Practiced Reference Guide 2nd Edition. Both guides have been revamped from cover to cover to reflect modern changes and additions in the development finance industry.

⇒ Exciting news: Farm Link Montana is up and running! The new online clearinghouse has a wide array of Montana-specific resources for beginning farmers and ranchers, as well as tools to connect beginning farmers with internships, mentorship, and land. Contact Annie Heuscher 406-830-8218 December2015.doc