CONFERENCE SUMMARY REPORT
About 90 MEDA Members and Partners enjoyed a diverse and information-packed agenda during the 2012 MEDA Fall Conference, hosted by Snowy Mountain Development Corporation.

On the evening of October 1st, a pre-conference tour was arranged to the CMR Wildlife Refuge along the Missouri River. Participants said the evening of viewing elk, deer and other wildlife was simply unforgettable.

OCTOBER 2nd
The first hour and a half of the conference was packed with an Eastern Montana Coalition Update, an EDA Grant Award, and the Gubernatorial Forum.

Kathie Bailey, Executive Director, Snowy Mountain Development Corp., welcomed everyone to Lewistown and the 2012 MEDA Fall Conference. Tony Preite provided an update of the Eastern Montana Impact Coalition. John Rogers presented an Eastern Montana grant award on behalf of EDA and Senator Max Baucus.

Liz Ching (Sen. Max Baucus), Jim Atchison, John Rogers, Martin DeWitt, Leslie Messer and Jason Rittal
Next, MEDA attendees listened to Steve Bullock and Ron Vandevender share their thoughts on economic development in Montana. Candidate Rick Hill was not able to attend. Each candidate provided written responses to six questions regarding economic development. 
MEDA Interview of Montana Gubernatorial Candidates

Connecting Economic Opportunities
After a break and a move to the Mountain Rooms, Chris Beacham, Regional Technology Strategies, shared his findings on a special report titled “Montana Regional Sector Analysis”. The material was reviewed, then attendees gathered by region to further review the information and discuss how new opportunities could be realized from the information.

Tour Time!
Demonstrating Economic Opportunities
When reviewing the 31 evaluation forms returned, the highest ranking event of the entire conference were the tours.

Regional Sector Analysis Results

Montana State Overview

- Billings Region
- Bozeman – Helena Region
- Butte Region
- Central Region
- Eastern Region
- Great Falls Region
- Missoula Region
- North Central Region
- Northwest Kalispell Region

Above: Chris Beacham presenting the study results.
Below: Stuart Leidner reporting ideas from the Bozeman/Helena region.


Berg Lumber Chronology  Brewery Flats Chronology  Paris Laundry Chronology


MEDA AND LEADERSHIP MONTANA SOCIAL

To wrap up the day, MEDA attendees met in the Centermark area of the Yogo Inn and enjoyed reconnecting with Steve Simonson, Leadership Montana and networking with colleagues.

TALES AND TRIALS FROM THE TRENCHES

The MEDA Agenda Committee came up with a new idea. Economic developers were asked to share stories revealing the more humorous side of working in economic development. About ten people shared wonderful stories. The winners, pictured left to right:

1st Place: Brigid Bulfin
2nd Place: Leslie Messer
3rd Place: John Rogers
OCTOBER 3rd

MEDA LEGISLATIVE STRATEGY SESSION
Rick Edwards, Chair of the MEDA Legislative Committee, brought MEDA attendees up-to-date on MEDA’s legislative agenda and progress to date. As the flow of tax dollars from Montana’s natural resource industry will no doubt receive attention during the pending Legislative session, Evan Barrett, Governor’s Office of Economic Development; Ed Caplis, Montana Department of Revenue; and Dan Villa, Montana’s Budget Director, shared important information via Skype.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS
MEDA participants enjoyed breaking into smaller sessions and learning specific information on the following topics:

Session 1  Financing Community Healthcare Facilities and the role of Economic Development Organizations.

Steve Troendle, presenter, (pictured left) Montana USDA/RD
Session 2  Review of Economic Development Programs. Participants received a refresher and updates on BSTF, CDBG, Micro Finance, - and more. Presenters included Karyl Tobel, Nick Rich, Debi Davidson, Annmarie Robinson, and Janice Wannebo.

Session 3  Successful Collaborative Community Efforts (Panel ) - One Montana (Lisa Grace); Montana Community Foundation, (Cathy Cooney); DEQ Brownfields (Jason Seyler); City of Lewistown (Duane Ferdinand) and Central Montana Manufacturing Association.

IMPROVING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ONLINE
Promoting Economic Development in Greater America

Online communications has been rapidly changing the way economic development professionals engage site selectors and businesses. In this presentation, Aaron and Matt provided new insights gleaned from recent site selector interviews and shared some strategies to improve an online presence.

Pictured L to R:  Aaron Brossoit, Partner, VP of Business Development, Matt Marshall, Director of Sales, Golden Shovel Agency
Links to Video Clips: Herding Cats Building an Airplane while Flying Fairy Jobs Mother

COLLABORATION AT ITS BEST – PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER
To give a real-life example of all that had been discussed during the MEDA conference, Brian Menges, 2nd St. Bistro, Livingston, MT, pulled everything together. Brian shared how his love for quality food, quality dining experiences, energy conservation and recycling has brought success to him, his employees and the City of Livingston.  Read Brian’s Story

Last but not least – MDOC CERTIFIED PARTNER PROGRAM

Karyl Tobel, Montana Department of Commerce Assistant Division Administrator was assisted by Annmarie Robinson and Debi Davidson in handing out certificates to those that had completed online courses to learn about key economic development programs.

Pictured L to R:  Annmarie, Debi and Karyl
Thanks to the MEDA 2012 Fall Conference Agenda Committee: Kathie Bailey, Chair; Luke Walawander, Karyl Tobel, Jeremy Vannatta, Rick Edwards, and Tracy McIntyre. Also, thanks to Jason Rittal for serving as conference facilitator in the absence of President Tracy McIntyre.

And finally, thanks to our Sponsors for making this conference possible:

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