

MDOC/MEDA Resource Call May 25, 2016 10:30-11:30

Present on the call:

Paul Tuss, Kathie Bailey, Gypsy Ray, Jim Davison, Michael O'Rourke, Anne Booth, Ken Richardson, Kurt Keysor (EDA), Sean Becker, Michael Finnerty, Jan Wyrick, Carolyn Jones, and Annemarie Robinson.

Sean Becker/MDOC Report

The new Director for Montana SBDC is Michael Finnerty, formerly of Salt Lake City. Michael shared that he is presently conducting a review of the SBDC programs in Montana focusing on ways to make the SBDC more efficient, how to better use existing funding, and how to expand funding. Michael is just completing a new strategic plan for the SBDC program focusing on new market strategies and measurable outcomes.

Carolyn Jones with the Wood Products and Micro Business Revolving Loan programs shared that there is still about \$60,000 available in revolving loan funds that need to be committed before the end of the fiscal year.

Jan Wirack with the VisitMT.com website and data base shared that they are focusing on getting tourism related Montana businesses to update or create a listing on this site. The listing is free-of-charge for these businesses and allows them to connect directly to more than one million visitors to the site each year.

Sean Becker shared that MDOC is focusing attention on the decline in out-of-state visits particularly from Canada. With a 17% decline in Canadian visitors to Montana MDOC has focused about \$300,000 in media campaigns to attract Canadian and German visitors to Montana. Sean also shared that MDOC is considering ways to expand revolving loan dollars available during the next legislature by as much as \$2,000,000.

MEDA Report

Paul Tuss with Bear Paw Development shared that he has three infrastructure project applications in process for funding. They have loaned nearly all revolving loan funds and need to find more funding. Bear Paw is also working on several Brownfields sites for financing and reclamation.

Gypsy Ray with Lake County Community Development shared that they have three applications in process for Big Sky Trust Fund grants for feasibility studies. A MEDA Resource Team just completed a visit in Ronan which hosted more than 100 participants. Gypsy will be bringing a new two year strategic plan for the area on line in the next month. Lake County Community Development is also hosting the MEDA Fall Conference in Polson October 12-14.

Kathie Bailey with Snowy Mountain Development shared that they are about to recognize annual award winners for their area. Business of the Year will be MOVE Bumpers, a Lewistown business that has expanded from about \$10,000 in annual

profits to more than \$300,000. Partner of the Year will go to Venture Network and Project of the Year will go to Lewistown's ROC Group and to Roundup's Innovation Challenge. Kathie has 21 Brownfield projects in process with 4 more assessment requests. Anne Boothe reported on a \$1,000,000 loan for the Central Montana Railroad which is still recovering from damage to trestles from the flood five years ago.

Mike O'Rourke shared that Montana Ambassadors is working with GOED on a visit from a Chinese delegation of investors June 22 and 23. They are also working with GOED on the Innovate Montana Symposium in Billings July 13-14. The Ambassadors will also host their Annual Business Open in August and Mike encouraged those on the call to invite business connections to this great networking event.