MEDA FALL CONFERENCE SUMMARY

Snowy Mountain Development did an outstanding job in not only coordinating the MEDA Fall Conference, but in managing the weather as well.

The conference focused on change and trends taking place in Montana rural economies. The goal of the conference was to inform, prepare, and equip our colleagues as we build Montana’s economy...now and in the future.

Thursday, September 12th

The pre-conference Professional Development Training was on the topic of Gracious Space. When changes in rural economies and communities stir controversy, economic developers are called upon to create a setting that is comfortable for learning, collaboration, civility and wisdom. Kathie Bailey provided an overview; instructors were Marie Hirsch (pictured left) and Katie Weaver (right).

Gracious Space Training:
- Table Talk/Chart Paper Notes
- Gracious Space Handout
- Your Role
A panel discussion followed titled “When Competition and Cooperation Converge.” Kathie Bailey facilitated this session and asked panelists to share their experiences of what worked and what didn’t work when engaging with communities. Left to right: Katie Weaver, Jim Davison, Leslie Messer, Tracy McIntyre, and Kathie Bailey.

MEDA Conference Kickoff Lunch & Key Note

Kathie Bailey (left above) and Brian Obert (right above) as well as Federal and Local Officials welcomed everyone to MEDA and Lewistown.

Keithon Walter, pictured far right, was the Keynote and described how the unique public/private partnership of the Elks and Pine Meadows Golf Course facility came to be.

Panel on Existing Economies

Abby Majerus facilitated a panel with representatives of leading industries in rural Montana and how they are adjusting to economic change to ensure viability.

L to R: Jan Stoddard, (MDOC Tourism and Outdoor Rec); Laura Bennett, CMMC (Healthcare); Paul McKenna Petroleum County Commissioner (Ag); and Abby Majerus.
**Trivia Time!**

Sarah Converse arranged a Trivia Time segment to encourage all attendees to visit display tables. Sarah also was key in managing MEDA’s amazing door prizes.

Thanks for bringing extra fun to the conference, Sarah!

**Panel on Changing Economies and Summary**

Christie Williams facilitated a group of panelists who discussed emerging industries and trends in rural Montana communities and how they are impacting these areas. L to R: Mike Kautz, APR (Tourism); Tom Metcalfe, Triangle Communications/Metcalfe Media (Remote Work); Thomas Dilworth, Big Sandy Organics – Kracklin Kamut (Ag); Todd O’Hair, MT Chamber of Commerce (Remote Work, etc.) and Christie Williams. Below Right, Sarah Hudson provided a rousing summary of the entire Changing Economies segment.

Thanks to the MEDA Fall Conference Committee: Carly Wheatley, Chair; Sarah Converse, Sara Hudson, Kathie Bailey, Katie Weaver, Carolyn Jones, Anne Boothe and Gloria O’Rourke.
**2019 MEDA AWARDS**

MEDA attendees gathered at the Central Feed Grilling Company to network, listen to great music, and celebrate the 2019 awards.

*Jim Davison: 2019 Anthony J. Preite Champion of Economic Development*

WeCAN received the Innovation Award for its three state collaboration, including Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho, to redesign and strengthen Community Reviews. This project is innovative in that it involves a variety of organizations across a three-state area working together to deliver a better process with better results for the communities they serve. Project goals are to build community capacity, develop community leadership, and strengthen Community Capitals. Sue Taylor submitted the nomination.
Part of the celebration was listening to excellent music which included Kathie Bailey’s husband and young grandson (center).

Friday, September 13th

**MEDA Membership Working Breakfast**

Vice President Brian Obert began the last day of the conference with an update on MEDA’s RFP to find the Next Generation of Economic and Community Development Tools for Montana. In addition, Paul Tuss (right) nominated MEDA for the Montana Nonprofit Association Common Good Award. MEDA won the award and will receive $1,000 and be honored at an awards dinner in Billings, October 3rd.

**Seeking Investments? The Office of the Montana State Auditor**

Lynne Egan, Deputy Securities Commissioner, Office of the Montana State Auditor, (pictured left) explained the do's and don’ts of asking investors for investments.

[Presentation](#)

Brian Obert and Debi Davidson – Debi’s last MEDA conference as she retires in April.
Quick, Slow, Slow...

To keep things lively, over a dozen program representatives gave Rapid Fire 3-minute presentations on the work they do. Next, attendees had two 15-minute intervals to visit two of the topics of most interest to them.

Presenters included MDOL SafetyFestMT, Kayla Criscuolo; Export Montana, Katie Willcockson; PTAC, Deanna Langman; Accelerate MT/Blackstone, Karl Unterschuetz; IWT, MDLI Kay Strayer; MDOC DLA, Tash Wisemiller; MCDC, Tracy McIntyre; SBA, Wayne Gardella; Census 2020, Jeri Bucy; Heart of the Rockies, Gary Burnett; MDOC BSTF, Debi Davidson; Dakota Business Lending, Christie Williams; MWTC, Abby Majerus and MDOC Housing, Penny Cope.

Table Talks
**Friday Keynote—Tara Rice**

Director of Montana Department of Commerce, Tara Rice, introduced her leadership team and provided an update on focus and activities within [Montana Department of Commerce](#).

![L to R: Jan Stoddard, Jennifer Pelej, Emilie Saunders, and Tara Rice.](image)

**Door Prizes, Evaluation, and Closing**

Conference evaluations indicate attendees found the conference enlightening and valuable with resources in their pockets to take back to their communities and put to work.

**Photos and More Photos**

![Photos and More Photos](image)
Our generous sponsors who made this conference possible:

$1,000 Level

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