

We're In This Together



October 13 – 15, 2020

Thanks to so many, the MEDA Virtual Fall Conference and Candidate Forum was a success. The biggest “thank you” of all goes to the MEDA Fall Conference Committee. They had the daunting task to create a meaningful virtual agenda that avoided zoom fatigue. Based on the feedback thus far, the committee was highly successful. *Thanks to: Toni Schneider and Russ Fletcher (Co-Chairs), Brian Obert, Charles Robison, Jim Atchison, Lad Barney, Lorraine Roach, Rick Edwards and Sarah Converse.*

Thank You

MEDA Virtual Fall Conference Summary

October 13, 2020

[Slideshow from Tuesday](#)

[Recording](#)

Over 100 MEDA members and partners registered for the MEDA Fall Conference. President Brian Obert kicked off the event with a warm welcome. Brett Doney, Great Falls Development Authority, served as the host for the 2020 MEDA Impact Awards presentations which included:

2020 IMACT AWARD WINNERS

[Southeastern Montana Development Corp.](#)
[Powder River County Bridge Disaster Recovery Effort](#)

[Anaconda Local Development Corp.](#)
[COVID-19 Rapid Response](#)

[Accelerate Anaconda - Anaconda Local Development](#)
[Business District Historic Sign and App Campaign](#)

[Big Sky Economic Development](#)
[Space2Place](#)

[Big Sky Economic Development](#)
[Coulson Park Project](#)

[Choteau Area Port Authority](#)
[Community and Economic Development Success](#)

[Great Falls Development Authority](#)
[Creative Bridge Financing](#)

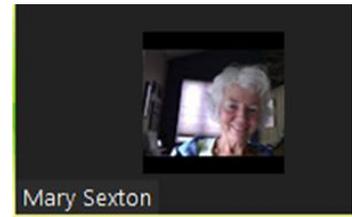


JIM ATCHSION

2020 ANTHONY J. PREITE CHAMPION OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Next, Jim Atchison was named the 2020 Anthony J. Preite Champion of Economic Development. A recorded message was shared from Tony Preite, congratulating all of the award winners, and Jim.

Following the Tell Us Something workshop, Award winners were given time to respond to Questions and Answers from MEDA participants. Pictured right, Mary Sexton responded to questions regarding Choteau Area Port Authority success.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING

Tell Us Something with Marc Moss



Russ Fletcher introduced Marc Moss, creator of Tell Us Something, to begin MEDA’s Professional Development segment. Marc emphasize the [importance and the impact](#) of storytelling. Thanks to the MT CARES Act, a special workshop was offered October 19 – 23 for MEDA partners to sharpen their skills. A special event will be held November 6th for the stories to be shared.



<https://www.tellussomething.org/>

CANDIDATE FORUM

Throughout the three mornings of the conference, a Candidate Forum was held. The following questions were sent to the candidates ahead of the forum. A little time was provided for questions from participants; each candidate was given about three minutes for a wrap-up statement. Steve Arveschoug served as moderator for the forum.

<i>Gubernatorial Questions for Mike Cooney and Greg Gianforte</i>	<i>Federal/State Questions for Steve Bullock, Steve Daines, Kathleen Williams and Matt Rosendale</i>
<p>1. For several decades, MEDA has had a strong working relationship with the Governor’s Office of Economic Development, the Departments of Commerce and Labor, the Montana Board of Investments, and others, to deliver economic and community development tools and resources to businesses in our local community. If elected, what will be your strategy to further this strong partnership with MEDA and together deliver existing and future resources that will foster the economic growth of both rural and urban communities throughout the state?</p> <p>2. Investments in infrastructure and workforce are the bedrock of our economic growth. In every corner of Montana, in every meeting we attend, MEDA members are continually challenged about how we properly meet the workforce and infrastructure needs of our businesses and communities. What is your plan to address these critically important issues and how can local economic development leaders partner and support that effort?</p>	<p>1. Federal economic development programs, including the Economic Development Administration (EDA), the suite of USDA Rural Development programs, Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) Fund, National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Manufacturing Extension Partnership, and Small Business Administration (SBA) Small Business Development Centers have proven to be critical to community economic development success across Montana. Will you support continued funding for these essential programs?</p> <p>2. The CDFI Fund and USDA Rural Development were left out of the CARES Act funding. Will you support supplemental funds for these programs and encourage USDA to create more flexible terms to make these programs more effective at helping get Montana’s economy growing again as quickly as possible?</p>

<p>3. We've spent the last 7 months working with small businesses in our communities to adapt to COVID-19. How can the State of Montana and local/regional economic development organizations partner to help sustain traction in our economic recovery during this critical time?</p> <p>4. Tax Increment Financing is one of a small set of tools that are available to communities throughout our state and provides a mechanism for leveraging private investment that is critical to economic development. How familiar are you with tax increment financing and can we count on your support in continuing this valuable program for our communities?</p> <p>5. In 2019/20 MEDA partnered with over 60 organizations and businesses, including the Montana Chamber Foundation to conduct a comprehensive analysis, titled Montana Next Generation Analysis: Community and Economic Development Tools. This work helped to identify opportunities to take our community and economic development tools and strategies to another level--comparing Montana to neighboring states with varying political leadership and unique initiatives related to workforce development, infrastructure and community development, talent retention and attraction, public/private partnerships, and new business recruitment. To stay competitive Montana needs innovative approaches to how we respond to these opportunities. In that context, how can MEDA partner with you to support the innovation of our community and economic development strategies and tools?</p>	<p>3. Montana is behind most states in reliable broadband with speed, cost, and availability issues across the state in both rural and urban areas. Federal programs, laws, and regulations have not appeared to be effective in helping Montana address this critical infrastructure issue. Will you work with us to ensure Montanans have access to world class broadband service and how would you accelerate our ability to provide broadband to underserved communities?</p> <p>4. EDA is the primary economic disaster response agency and received \$1 billion to respond to COVID nationwide. For comparison, Montana received \$1.2 billion in CARES Act economic relief and recovery and even this was not enough to meet the total need. EDA's limited funds were distributed through non-competitive grants, leaving little for competitive grants needed to help Montana businesses and communities. Will you support additional EDA funding to give more Montana economic development and tourism organizations, counties and municipalities a chance to compete for funds?</p>
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October 14, 2020

[Slideshow from Wednesday](#)

[Recording](#)

NEXT GEN REPORT AND PANEL

The second morning of the conference started early with a welcome from President Brian Obert, and two more candidate forums led by Steve Arveschoug. Steve then moderated a panel who shared their insights on the Montana Next Generation of Community and Economic Development Tools Study.



Panelists were: Todd O'Hair, Montana Chamber; Brit Fontenot, City of Bozeman; Tracy McIntyre, MCDC; Nicole Borner, MACo; Terry Brockie, Island Mountain Development and Jim Atchison, SEMDC

[Review the Final Report](#)

MEDA VIRTUAL IGNITE

While it would have been great to be in person, our 3-minute Ignite presenters did not disappoint. Thanks to Joe Willauer for facilitating the following talks: MDT- Small Business Supportive Services – Maghan Strachan and Maggie Metzger; MWTC – FDI Strategic Plan – Abby Majerus; and MT BioScience Cluster Initiative – Hallie Widner.



October 15, 2020

[Slideshow from Thursday](#)

[Recording](#)

MEDA LEGISLATIVE STRATEGY

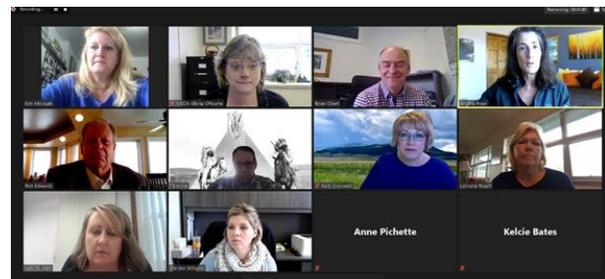
No doubt the 2021 Legislative Session is going to be challenging. Rick Edwards, MEDA Legislative Committee Chair, shared the work done thus far by the committee to set strategies and priorities for the session. MEDA conference participants shared their thoughts and ideas.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Breakout Topics:

- **Next Gen – Steve Arveschoug**
- **Broadband – Tracy McIntyre**
- **Montana Passenger Rail –**
Missoula County Commissioner David Strohmaier and House District 100 Representative Andrea Olsen
- **Workforce – Brian Obert**
- **Value Added Ag – Sarah Converse**
- **Community Tools – Lorie Higgins, Tara Mastel**

Conference participants were able to break out into rooms via zoom and have an in-depth discussion on several key topics.



Workforce Breakout Group

IT'S A TWO THUMBS UP WRAP!

Following a wrap-up by President Brian Obert, Britta Miranda-Freer asked everyone to give a two-thumbs up for economic development across Montana.



Thanks to our membership sponsors for making this virtual experience possible!

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