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*It is MEDA's privilege to submit this report for the current contract to Montana Department of Commerce, Montana Department of Labor and Industry and Montana BEAR Team participants regarding Business Expansion and Retention (BEAR) Program activity in the state. The following is a summary of MEDA BEAR activities as provided for in the Scope of Work under Amended Contract MT-MEDA-ED-12-01 for the month of March 2016.*

## ACTIVITY REPORT FOR MARCH 2016 MONTANA BEAR PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

### MEDA SPRING CONFERENCE ~ SPECIAL BEAR SEGMENT

With the focus on workforce, the MEDA Spring Conference “Plug in to Montana’s Talent” has multiple sessions that will benefit BEAR Team members. In particular, the Friday morning session will feature Warren Vaughan, Gallatin County BEAR, and Jeff Batton, HomeStake Partners (previously CFO and Marketing Director for Printing for Less). Warren and Jeff will co-present a high energy segment demonstrating how it is done: helping small business owners and startups learn the specific skills and systems they need to succeed. [Agenda and Registration](#)

### MARCH BEAR REPORTS

Below are various reports of BEAR activity across the state for the month of March. In all, 19 businesses were reached with a multitude of referrals made to assist each business.

BEAR Team	Report for March
<b>Bitterroot Job Service</b> Report by: Michelle Twist	<b>BEAR Google Form Report:</b> One business visit in Hamilton, Ravalli County. <b>Challenges:</b> Marketing, Funding for Marketing <b>Referrals:</b> IWT Grant Program
<b>Butte/SW MT BEAR</b>  Report by: Pam Haxby-Cote	<b>BEAR Google Form Report:</b> Pam Haxby-Cote, BLDC, submitted three BEAR visits for Butte/Silver Bow County. Julie Jaksha, Headwaters RC&D/SBDC, assisted Pam Haxby-Cote with one BEAR visit <b>Business types:</b> 1 industrial, 1 manufacturing, and 1 retail. <b>Challenges:</b> Competition, economy, workforce (2), marketing (3), sales, working capital, soft skills, and accounting. <b>Referrals:</b> SCORE, BLDC, IWT
<b>Anaconda/SW MT BEAR</b> Report by: Jim Davison	<b>BEAR Google Form Report:</b> Five business visits <b>Challenges:</b> Succession planning (4), IWT (1) <b>Action Items:</b> 5 – 1 IWT and 4 sign-up for succession planning assistance through Anaconda Local Development Corp.
<b>Gallatin County</b>	<b>Spreadsheet:</b> 16 clients (2 new businesses, 14 existing businesses)

<p>Report by: Warren Vaughan</p>	<p><b>Business types:</b> Marketing/Design firms (2), Computer Services, Digital/online sales, Construction, Agriculture, Janitorial Services, Auto Mechanic, Medical Marijuana, Restaurant, Nonprofit Consulting, Home Inspection, Alternative Health, Real Estate, Small/Artisan Manufacturing</p> <p><b>Action Items or Referrals:</b> 29 action items - 16 resource providers (all private sector, volunteer team members) were involved in these 29 action items. 11 for industry connections/networking, 6 IWT applications, 4 marketing, 3 business strategy, 2 website, 1 Kiva Zip (crowdfunding loan), 1 business systems and efficiencies, 1 fundraising strategy.</p>
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## IWT UPDATE ~ CHRIS WILHELM

Chris sent the following reminders on March 7<sup>th</sup>:

- IWT exhausted 3rd quarter funding in the beginning of March, but continues to accept and process requests (applications) to develop and maintain a waiting list. Applications submitted this fiscal year but not yet awarded will continue to be placed on the waiting list.
- There is one more quarter's funding to allocate in April, and I am building the wait list for that funding.
- IWT will ONLY have a waiting list within a funding year... meaning between 1st and 2nd quarters, 2nd and 3rd quarters, and 3rd and 4th quarters. This process will continue through the end of the fiscal year (June 2016), and allows the program to:
  - o Maintain a waiting list to quickly handle released funding as it becomes available; and
  - o Show the need for IWT funding is greater than the available funding.
- There will be no waiting list between fiscal years as they are separate funding streams. Trainings that take place in early July will continue to have challenges with timing - there's just no way around that.
- Training does not need to begin within the same quarter training is applied for, but it does need to begin within the funding year (by June 20th so we can manage funding that is released and facilitate financial agreements).
- Funding availability changes constantly as funding is awarded, released, and re-awarded.
- Grantees forfeit their funding if they do not sign their financial agreements or file their claim timely. Applicants are notified multiple times and their recommending entity is copied on each email. Final reminders include a specifically dated deadline, and strongly advises the funding for their grant will be forfeited if I do not receive paperwork by that date. With plenty of people in line, it will be no problem re-granting funding.

**TRAINING:** Mike and Gloria are available either via webinar or in person to conduct a BEAR training, refresher course, or organize presenters for a specialized business topic. Contact the office by dialing 406.563.5259 or emailing [gloria@medamembers.org](mailto:gloria@medamembers.org).