Thanks to everyone who attended, participated, sponsored, and presented the MEDA Fall Conference. According to the 40 evaluations received, this was one of MEDA’s best conferences ever!

Enjoy the summary, photos, and presentation files.  Slideshow

Tuesday, October 13, 2015
MDOC Mini Training

This mini training provided maximum information on Montana Department of Commerce Programmatic Changes. Attendees learned of key changes in the tools that make an impact on Montana’s economy.

Manufacturing Sector Partnership Meeting with RevUp! was a second pre-conference training option. More information on the program is available here http://www.revupmontana.com/

Plenary Keynote in the Grand Ballroom with Carl Casale, CEO, CHS, Inc.
MEDA attendees were treated to a luncheon by conference host Big Sky Economic Development as part of their Annual Meeting. The lunch keynote was Carl Casale, CHS, Inc. who shared inspirational comments regarding the benefits of making huge investments in Montana.

Above left: Steve Arveschoug recognized his staff as BSEDA became a Certified Economic Development Organization. Above Right: MEDA Members prepare for a great conference.
After months of planning, MEDA held the

Montana Infrastructure Town Hall Meeting: A Call to Action
Following an introduction to the event by Governor Bullock, the meeting was facilitated by Jason Rittal, James Grunke, and Steve Arveschoug.

Presentations included:

⇒ Montana’s Infrastructure Report Card – Shoots Veis; Investment is Key – Stories Behind the Projects – James Grunke; A Public Private Partnership Success Story – Steve Corning; Montana Urban Areas – City of Laurel – Heidi Jensen; Montana’s Rural Areas – City of Conrad – Mayor Wendy Judisch; Montana’s Counties – Mike McGinley, Beaverhead County; Higher Education – Kevin McRae.

Combined Presentations  Map Slides Only

⇒ Attendees broke into small groups to answer the following questions:

1. What are the key elements of a sustainable infrastructure investment program for Montana?
2. What are the immediate next steps that you want to see realized following today’s meeting, and who should be responsible for those next steps?

Panelists: L to R Kevin McRae, Mike McGinley, Wendy Judisch, and Heidi Jensen.

Small Group Breakout Reports will be available soon!

A networking session followed the Call to Action meeting. Several groups met at local restaurants for working dinners called Dinner with a Difference.

Thanks to our host, Big Sky Economic Development and to the MEDA Fall Conference Agenda Committee for making this conference possible: Melanie Schwarz, Chair; Dianne Lehm, Ben Rose, Deanna Langman, Rick Edwards, Dena Johnson, Allison Corbyn, Jeanne Larsen, Jason Rittal, Sarah Converse, Kellie Danielson, Liz Ching, Karyl Tobel, Steve Arveschoug, James Grunke, Brian Obert, Ken Richardson, and Chris Cerquone.

Melanie Schwarz, BSEDA
Conference Chair
Wednesday, October 14

Following Congressional Greetings from Senator Tester, Senator Daines, and Congressman Zinke, Jason Rittal, MEDA President, began the second day’s agenda.

Highlights, Case Studies, and Current Areas of Focus
A valuable update was received from: MT Dept. of Commerce – Sean Becker; MT Dept. of Agriculture - Angie Nelson; MT Dept. of Labor and Industry – Pam Watson; Governor’s Office of Economic Development – Liz Ching

L to R on the stage: Angie Nelson, Sean Becker, Liz Ching, Pat Watson

And a very popular presentation…..

Community Development meets Economic Development
How are we the same? How are we different? How can we work better together? Presenter and Moderator Sara Hudson, who holds a Master in Public Administration and completed her doctoral coursework in Urban and Public Administration, wowed attendees with her explanation of CD’s and ED’s.

Sara’s Presentation

Sara was joined by Panelists: Kathie Bailey, Dave DeGrandpre, Jason Rittal, and Warren Vaughan.
How to Market Your Community No Matter the Size
Since 2009, PitchEngine has had a hand in helping 50,000 brands connect with their communities. Jason offered enthusiasm and terrific ideas for MEDA attendees.

Jason Kinzler, CEO, PitchEngine

Public Relations and Marketing for Every Community
Everyone enjoyed this interactive exercise with Dana Pulis, CEO, Kinetic Marketing, to create a pitch to promote their communities with resources available. Handout

Dana Pulis, CEO, Kinetic Marketing

Learning Lunch – MEDA participants enjoyed a noisy – but very informative lunch. Each table was hosted by a business owner or expert on a particular topic. Attendees learned about targeted economic development districts, the financial industry, healthcare, planning a business, succession plans, and much more!

Plenary Session Keynote:
How Montana became the Best Place for Start-ups in the Nation

E.J. Reedy, Director of Research and Policy at the Kauffman Foundation.

Presentation

Read all about the Kauffman Index
**MEDA 1st Annual Awards Event**

For the first time, MEDA honored innovative partnerships and projects with the MEDA Innovation Award. The winner: Accelerate Anaconda, Anaconda Local Development Corporation, Jim Davison, Executive Director.

L to R: Jim Davison is presented the MEDA Innovation Award for Accelerate Anaconda by Jason Rittal; Jason recognizes Janelle Gustafson, USDA/RD, as the funder for the project. Janelle shared information on the Accelerate Anaconda project and noted that seven businesses have opened as a result of the pop-up shops funded by the USDA grant.

**MEDA 1st Annual Anthony J. Preite Champion of Economic Development Award**

Tony Preite was proud and pleased to present not one “champion” award, but two. Billie Lee and Jim Smitham were both presented with their awards and expressed what a privilege it was to be honored by their colleagues.

L to R: Tony Preite, Billie Lee; Jason Rittal, Tony Preitie, and Jim Smitham; 2015 Award Winners

Following evaluations, closing remarks and great door prizes, some attendees joined the post conference training with Brent Donnelly and Martin DeWitt: **Training for Economic Developers and Loan Specialists** and learned the details behind managing USDA/Rural Development Programs.

Thanks to our generous sponsors for supporting the work of MEDA as we strive together to build Montana’s economy: