MONTANA’S NEXTGEN: FOURTH VISIT COMPLETED!

Please take and share the survey(s)! Deadline: March 13th.

**PRACTITIONER SURVEY**

Montana continues to “wow” our TIP Strategies consultants by demonstrating great participation and deep information sharing as they completed their fourth visit to Montana. Up first was a planning meeting in Helena with the Steering Committee and Stakeholders, next was Eastern Montana, third was North Central Montana, and fourth was Southwest Montana. Next up: Western Montana!  

**BUSINESS SURVEY**

We’re In This Together
Pictured above: Listening sessions in Bozeman (left) and Anaconda (right).

**MEDA SPRING CONFERENCE – REGISTRATION OPENING SOON**

The MEDA Spring Conference will be less of a conference and more of a strategic planning session to take the MEDA and Montana Chamber Foundation “NextGen” report and turn it into an action plan. In addition to MEDA colleagues, partners from across Montana’s economic sectors will be encouraged to attend. The event will be held on the campus of Carroll College, May 28th and 29th. Registration will be available soon. You won’t want to miss this meeting!

**WELCOME TO MEDA! MEMBERSHIP UPDATE**

MEDA is growing! Welcome our new members: Holly Carpenter, BLDC; Velda Shelby and Dacia Whitworth, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes; Anne Pichette, MBAC; Julie Lacey, Missoula Economic Partnership; Libby Addington, MoFi; April Limburg, Stillwater County; Kevin Myhre, Century Companies; Ann Peterson, MTIP; Stephanie Ray, Stillwater County; Kay Reynolds, Resources and Tools for Business Success; and Karl Unterschuetz, Accelerate Montana’s Rural Innovation Initiative.

The MEDA Membership Committee met February 4th and continues to work on building MEDA as well at its membership.

Many thanks to our first membership sponsors:

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**MEDA WORKING GROUPS UPDATE**

All partners, including MEDA Members and Non-Members, are welcome to join a Working Group.
Wind Projects, Anyone? - Check out the notes from the previous meeting and other resources [here](#). If you are interested in learning/sharing about wind projects in Montana, plan to join the group.

MEDA Community Review Working Group - This [working group](#) is all about assisting with MEDA’s Community Review process and resources. During the meeting on February 20th, the group reviewed the application from Troy. Troy will be the next Community Review! Next meeting: April 16th 9am. [Notes from the call](#).

MEDA Opportunity Zone Working Group – The first meeting of this Working Group was held February 6th. Check out the resources [here](#).

MEDA Remote Work Working Group – Review [the previous minutes here](#) and check out the interesting [Grow Remote](#) website.

**MEDA SCHOLARSHIP 2020 – Q2 ROUND NOW OPEN**

Congratulations to the First Quarter winner of the MEDA Rick Jones Memorial Scholarship: Tyler Menzales, GFDA. The 2nd Quarter Round is now open. Deadline: May 1st. [Apply today](#).

**Upcoming Census Events**

Check out all of the [resources for your use here](#)

- **Mid-March**: All Montana public K-12 schools should begin looking for their Census and Schools packet from the State Complete Count Committee. This will include a Census activity book for K-6 and all schools will receive posters, fact sheets, rack cards, and a Statics in Schools brochure. Educators, please keep your eyes open for these items and help Montana's children obtain a complete count for their future.

- **March 12 - 31**: Montana households will begin receiving official Census Bureau materials with detailed information on how to respond to the 2020 Census online, by phone, or by mail. Watch for a postcard to be mailed to you or left in a packet along with the Census form on your front door.

- **March 30 - April 1**: The Census Bureau will count people who are experiencing homelessness over these three days.

- **April 1**: Census Day!

- **Throughout April**: Census takers will begin visiting college students who live on campus, people living in senior centers, and others who live among large groups of people.

- **May - July**: Census takers will begin visiting homes that haven’t responded to the 2020 Census to help make sure everyone is counted.
**Wash your hands. The handshake is out. – The elbow bump is in.**

MATR has started a news category: [The Corona Virus Information](#)

Russ Fletcher said, “One of the best ways to address this will be through information. Please share information that may be of help to Montana businesses and individuals so that we can be better prepared.” [REGISTER HERE FOR ACCESS TO MATR, WHERE YOU CAN SUBMIT AND EDIT CAREER OPPORTUNITIES, RESUME, NEWS STORIES, COMPANY INFORMATION, UPCOMING EVENTS, RECEIVE THE NEWSLETTER AND MORE.](#)

**TOOLS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOU**

Check out the information below to learn of new tools and opportunities for you as you work in the field of Economic Development.

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**DEAR COMMUNITY LEADER,**

We are excited to announce a great opportunity for you and your community to learn about the “brain gain” concept, gain valuable local leadership skills, and engage in a facilitated discussion about the future of your community.

Twenty rural communities across Montana will be chosen to participate in a one-night event featuring rural expert Ben Winchester. We will broadcast Ben, author of the “brain gain” concept, on **April 15th** from 6-8 p.m. to participating communities. Ben will share his surprising research and insight.

**TOPICS INCLUDE**

- Population stats showing most counties, including rural counties, are seeing population increases of people in their 30’s and 40’s.
- The top things that bring newcomers to town and how to welcome and keep them in your town.
- Why it is so hard to find people to step up to leadership positions in the community.
- Proven ideas on how to engage new leaders in your community.

Participating communities will hear Ben’s talk and then participate in a discussion with their local group, led by a trained facilitator. Ben Winchester is from the University of Minnesota Extension Center for Community Vitality and was keynote speaker at the fall Reimagining Rural Gathering held in Harlowton, MT.

**BENEFITS**

- Receive up to $200 to defray costs of local event.
- Have community coaching available as you plan your local event.
- Receive free facilitator training for the designated local facilitator.
- Have a trained co-facilitator (MSU student) available to assist with the local event.
- Receive individualized free marketing materials to assist in local promotion.
- Have access to local or county data provided by Ben through his presentation.

[Link to application](#)   Deadline March 10th!
Please register for It's Your Small Business, Protect It! on Mar 31, 2020 11:00 AM MDT at: https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/397212174877128450

An estimated 25% of businesses don’t open again after a major disaster, according to the Institute of Business and Home Safety. Protect your small business by identifying risks relevant to your location both natural and man-made. Smart planning can help you keep your business running if disaster strikes. Potential flooding is a genuine concern in Wyoming, Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota in 2020. Participate in this webinar to find out the right steps to prevent and prepare for disaster, and where to get aid if disaster strikes.

Montana has many business assistance tools here. Want to receive updates from the Department of Commerce? Subscribe to receive email updates here.

Please join Communities in Action in the 2020 Leadership Summit, sponsored by Stockman Bank and Richland County, hosted at the Richland County Event Center on March 19, from 1 to 6 p.m. The goal of the 2020 Leadership Summit is to grow social capital by investing in the community’s leadership. The 2020 Leadership Summit is free and open to the public.

Opportunities such as these are rare in eastern Montana, be sure to take advantage.

Register

Check it out:

Accelerate Montana Rural Innovation Initiative.
http://acceleratemontana.umt.edu/departments/amrii/default.php
GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

⇒ **MSU Extension** has a great list of grants!  
  [http://msucommunityresources.org/GrantOpportunities.html](http://msucommunityresources.org/GrantOpportunities.html)

⇒ **MEDA** is a member of [GrantStation](http://www.grantstation.com). Email gloria if you would like the username and password.

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The next application deadline for funding through the BSTF Job Creation Grant Program is March 11, 2020. For application guidance or further information, contact Annmarie Robinson at 406.841.2250. For more information, visit [MARKETMT.COM/BSTF](http://www.MARKETMT.COM/BSTF)
Technical Assistance and Training Grants

USDA is accepting Fiscal Year 2020 applications for grants to help rural communities expand their capacity to access financial resources for economic development. | Stakeholder Announcement

Achieving e-Connectivity for Rural America • Developing the Rural Economy • Harnessing Technological Innovation • Supporting a Rural Workforce • Improving Quality of Life

USDA to Prioritize Projects Supporting Strategic Economic and Community Development

- Community Facilities Loans, Grants and Loan Guarantees
- Water and Waste Disposal Program Loans, Grants and Loan Guarantees
- Business & Industry Program Loan Guarantees
- Rural Business Development Grants

To apply for the funding, applicants must meet underlying program requirements and submit the Form RD 1980-88 to the nearest USDA office. Program funds available under SECD expire on June 30, 2020.

Interested parties can learn more about this opportunity during a webinar on Thursday, March 12 at 3:00 p.m. Eastern Time. Register for the webinar

EDA Launches Build to Scale (B2S) formerly known as i6 Challenge

EDA is pleased to announce that it has redesigned its Regional Innovation Strategies (RIS) program. With a 40 percent budget increase and recent reauthorization, the new program is called Build to Scale (B2S), which builds regional economies through scalable startups. The modernized brand better reflects the spirit of the entrepreneurship communities it works to serve. Please visit the Build to Scale Web page for more information.
Montana’s Small Business Development Centers Support Statewide Business Growth, Job Creation

New Report Shows Montana SBDCs Across the State Supported Launch of 61 New Businesses, 2,300 Jobs in 2019

HELENA, Mont. – The Montana Department of Commerce today released a new report showing that Montana Small Business Development Centers supported more than 2,300 jobs last year through assisting small business growth across the state.

“Small businesses strengthen local economies, create jobs and contribute to our state’s overall economic health,” said Commerce Director Tara Rice. “Montana’s Small Business Development Centers are at the vanguard of small business growth, serving as a no-cost resource to turn an idea into an opportunity.”

Montana’s SBDC network, which is made up of 10 satellite offices across the state and is headquartered at the Department of Commerce, also assisted Montana entrepreneurs in successfully launching 61 new businesses in 2019.
One of those businesses is Trovare, a high-quality cooking supply store in Whitefish. Trovare’s owner, Julie Hickethier, relied on the expertise at the Kalispell Regional SBDC led by Dan Gorton to start her business. She opened her doors to customers in November 2019.

“Dan Gorton challenged my thinking, urged me to explore more profitable options, probed my level of confidence in assumptions, and independently analyzed data,” Hickethier said. “He offered suggestions, unbiased criticism, and essentially helped me develop a solid plan. It’s people like Dan who help people like me turn a dream into a reality.”

Montana is consistently one of the top states in the nation for entrepreneurial activity. In 2019, the state ranked number one in the U.S. for the share of the workforce employed by small businesses.

Since forming in 1989, the Montana SBDC Network has provided free business assistance, supporting more than 29,000 entrepreneurs through technical assistance, business planning and access to capital.

In 2019, Montana’s SBDCs helped small businesses obtain 102 loans, resulting in almost $29 million in financing.

March 2020