MEDA ONLINE NEWS FOR MARCH 2011

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SCHOLARSHIP UPDATE
The MEDA Scholarship Committee received five applications for Round One of the Rick Jones MEDA Memorial Scholarships. Special thanks to First Interstate Bank for sponsoring two scholarships in 2011. The Scholarship Committee will be making an announcement soon.

ECONOMIC GARDENING WEBINAR
This Economic Gardening Working Group organized a webinar with Chris Gibbons, founder of Economic Gardening on February 16th. For some unknown reason, the webinar collapsed after the first ten minutes but was able to finish eventually. The powerpoint is available at:

STATE LEGISLATION
As we begin the second half of the Montana Legislative Session, watch for Legislative Alerts and be prepared to raise your voice in support of key economic development programs and projects. Publications showcasing key economic development programs are available at http://www.medamembers.org/legislature.html Use these documents to demonstrate the success of our economic development programs.

MEDA WORKING GROUPS
In addition to the Economic Gardening Webinar mentioned above, here are more working group updates:

- **Revolving Loan Fund:** Members of this group met via conference call on February 8th and joined an interesting discussion with Barbara Stiffarm, Opportunity Link. Providing loan services to tribal business owners can become complicated. The group discussed latest news and ideas to address the problems. To read the minutes and next meeting information visit: http://www.medamembers.org/rlf.html

- **Innovation and Strategic Planning Working Group:** This group is making great progress in bringing innovative economic development ideas and models to light in Montana. A job description was sent out to intern outlets across the state; eight top-notch intern applications were received. The Intern Subcommittee ranked the applications and selected not one, but two interns. Thanks to funding from Senator Baucus and support from NorthWestern Energy, the project is rolling full steam ahead. The Innovative Working Group will review the intern’s report and present a summary to MEDA members possible during the MEDA Spring Conference. To review the minutes visit: http://www.medamembers.org/planning.html

- **Workforce and Education:** This group met on February 17th and visited with Susie Burch, Flathead Valley Community College, to share ideas on what COT’s need before instituting a training or course when a need is indicated by employers. Susie also shared the model of Kalispell’s successful Flathead Business and Education Council. The minutes of the last call are available at http://www.medamembers.org/workforce.html
- **Energy:** The Energy group met for the first time on February 18\textsuperscript{th}. The group demonstrated an interest in focusing on policy, resources and project information. Participants are to send energy resources to the MEDA office to build a resource section on the Energy webpage. Minutes are available at http://www.medamembers.org/energy.html

- **Transportation:** The Transportation Working Group met via conference call on February 28\textsuperscript{th} to discuss transportation resources and ideas for participating in the MEDA Spring conference. The webpage for this group is http://www.medamembers.org/transportation.html

Working Group conference calls scheduled (dial in using 712.432.0175 pin 217279) in March:
March 8\textsuperscript{th}: RLF Working Group – 3:00pm

**GRANT AND FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES**

1. **New Community Friendly Grants** [Extension Community Resources Program weblink](http://www.registrar.msu.edu/urban/extension/). Check out these great community grant links. Thanks to David Young, Professor, Community Resource Specialist Extension Service & College of Nursing, MSU, for providing this information.

2. **MDOC, DEQ, DNRC, USDA, W2ASACT Funding Workshops Spring 2011**. Workshops are free and pre-registration is not required. Questions? Call 406.841.2770. If your community is planning to construct a public infrastructure project within the next few years that will require a grant or a low interest loan to make the project affordable, catch one of these workshops: Billings, March 9\textsuperscript{th}; Missoula, March 23\textsuperscript{rd}.

**OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOU**

Interested in sharpening your professional skills as an economic and community development practitioner? Looking for new tools to place in your economic development tool box? Check these out.

1. **Outlook Seminars:** The seminars run from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. and will be held in nine Montana cities during March 2011. Registration costs $80, which includes a proceedings booklet, lunch and a one-year subscription to Montana Business Quarterly, BBER’s award-winning business journal. Following is the schedule for other seminar cities:
   - Sidney – Tuesday, March 15, USDA/Agricultural Research Station
   - Miles City – Wednesday, March 16, Bureau of Land Management

   For more information or to register for a seminar, visit the BBER website at [http://www.bber.umt.edu](http://www.bber.umt.edu) or call 406-243-5113

2. Please join us for the 11\textsuperscript{th} Annual Wind River Business Conference/Native American Business Expo on Wednesday, May 4, 2011, at the Intertribal Center at Central Wyoming College in Riverton, Wyoming. This year we will be featuring three tracks: Government Contracting, General Business, and Artisan. Registration information and conference details will be sent out in the next few weeks.

3. **NADO Innovation webinars** – free. The series is bi-weekly and will be available on the website [http://www.knowyourregion.org](http://www.knowyourregion.org) if you can’t make the call. The focus is on innovative and economic development tools and strategies.

4. The Mineral County Challenge cordially invites you to attend a [Biomass to Biochar Symposium](http://www.biomass coalition.com) in St. Regis, Montana, on March 21 with a tour of Tricon Timber, LLC and a forest restoration site in Mineral County on March 22. Please visit [Biomass to Biochar Symposium](http://www.biomass coalition.com) to review the agenda, access pertinent background information, register for the symposium, and participate in our biochar forum. We encourage everyone to use the forum to exchange information and network both before and after the symposium.

**MONTANA BEAR Report** Learn what is new in your region with the statewide Montana BEAR Program’s monthly report.

View the February 2011 report and catch up on the latest BEAR Team news. There were 20 business visits held in February in the following counties:
MY TURN: WATCH FOR THE SPRING CONFERENCE AGENDA
The agenda committee met again in February to fine-tune the MEDA Spring Conference. The conference theme is: Leading the Way to Innovation. The keynote will be MSU President Waded Cruzado speaking on *The Innovative Power of MSU*. Other great speakers and discussions are planned – all centered around innovation. Stuart Leidner, Prospera Business Network, is the Chair of the Conference Committee. Save the date: April 27 – 28 preconference; April 28 – 29th MEDA Spring Conference.

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