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MEDA Resource Team Assessment Working Group
December 10, 2015
9:00am

On the Call: Gloria Hawkins, Sarah Converse, Anne Boothe, Jason Rittal, Sue Taylor, Jen Kreiner, Dianne Lehm, Gus Byrom, Mike O'Rourke and Gloria O'Rourke.

Topics for Today's Call:

A. Review of last call's notes and Michele's handouts

Those on the call jumped right in to sharing ideas that would build positive outcomes for the Sanders County Resource Team's return visit on January 21st.

Highlights of the discussion:

- ⇒ Sue Taylor said W <http://www.abcdinstitute.org/yoming> now uses ABCD (Asset Based Community Development) prior to the team's visit. Wyoming holds a very brief training for the local community leaders involved in planning the team's visit. The result is that natural leaders step up and are ready to work before the team's arrival. Free download: <http://www.abcdinstitute.org/>
- ⇒ It was also suggested to provide ABCD training once priorities have been set and the working groups have been formed; this would build confidence and group enthusiasm.
- ⇒ Gus Byrom mentioned other leadership tools and assistance such as the Blackfoot Challenge scenario. Issues were ironed out regarding the need to protect natural resources and to build the economy: how can we make a living and yet protect the land.
- ⇒ Engage a BEAR Team.
- ⇒ Leadership training to learn to not be afraid of tension but to use it as an opportunity to build change.
- ⇒ Survey the skills and expertise of community members; empower people already there to step up. The community will then learn to help themselves understanding the existing skill sets. Example: Tribal elders felt young people were not learning traditions. Survey asked: Do you know how to build a canoe? If so, are you willing to teach? If not, are you willing to learn?
- ⇒ List powerful tools to help a community move forward.
- ⇒ Regarding the "who will serve as Champion" question: Identify champions ahead of the town meeting.
 - Ask who is already working on it..
 - Ask if they would be best?
 - Tap their shoulders....

B. Share experience of One Year Celebration in Big Timber with Training from MT Tourism Experts

Thanks to Karyl Tobel's experience with Resource Team Assessments as well as MT Dept. of Commerce programs, she suggested the one year return visit for the Big Timber Resource Team Assessment take place in conjunction with MT Tourism marketing and programs. The events were held December 8th - 9th and were a great success. The report outs from the Big Timber working groups were excellent and applauded. The tourism marketing and program training held the next day provided great tools for community leaders to do even more to build the community of Big Timber.

Next meeting: January 14th, 9:00am

Agenda Items:

- Return to Sanders County January 21
- How to obtain training on ABCD
- One Year Return Visit to Malta/Phillips County in February
- Requested assessment: Deer Lodge, MT
- Ideas for searchable database

Handout from Michele:

“From, “Community Questions: Engaging Citizens to Address Community Concerns,” by Joe Summers and Linda Hoke, Kettering Foundation “Citizens at Work” project.

Key Insights in Design of Efforts

1. **Citizens must be engaged if communities are to solve some of their most difficult problems.** Such problems have multiple causes and cannot be solved with a technical fix (unlike repairing streets and bridges). Effectively addressing these problems requires citizens to act – and keep on acting. So . . . *engage citizens to address community problems.*
2. **Citizens often think about problems differently than institutions or professionals.** Not only do people feel more empowered when they are encouraged to identify and frame the issues related to a problem or opportunity, but they often uncover different solutions than institutions or professionals who are looking at the problem from the lens of their own particular expertise. So . . . *recognize the limits of professional expertise.*
3. **People become engaged only around issues or problems that are of particular interest or concern to them.** It’s not realistic to assume that all citizens will be engaged in all issues. The definition of “community” is therefore dynamic and ever changing, with groups of people – who may or may not be connected by geographic borders – coming together to solve a problem or take advantage of an opportunity. So . . . *start with what people care about.*
4. **Citizen engagement – and governance – is a skill learned by practice.** It’s important to create mechanisms that allow for sustained citizen engagement rather than just one-time events. As citizens gain experience and see that they can make a difference, they may be drawn into issues beyond their initial areas of interest – particularly as they begin to see how many community issues are interrelated. So . . . *establish structures that sustain engagement.*
5. **It’s often most effective to engage citizens within the organizations and networks they are already a part of; we don’t have to start from scratch.** It’s likely that they are already talking about a particular issue in these networks and may have the capacity and connections to implement solutions. So . . . *engage existing networks.*
6. **Networks and connections between organizations can multiply the power of civic initiatives and make them truly community-wide, or “public.”** Yet, these connections typically don’t happen by themselves – active intervention is often needed to connect groups that might, at first glance, seem to have very different interests. Even groups working on similar issues often have weak connections. Conveners can help communities

re-define their relations, re-shape their networks, and restructure their capacity to act. So . . . *connect existing networks and stakeholders.*

7. **When a group of people comes together for a community conversation, there will be tensions between goals, ideas, and values.** What may at first seem to be tensions between groups may, with further examination, be seen as common values that everyone shares – such as a desire for freedom or for security—but which pull against each other. Tensions and conflicts do not have to be resolved as long as everyone shows respect for diverse positions. We can agree to disagree. It’s important to recognize tensions from the beginning of a community conversation. So . . . *recognize and value tensions.*