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MEDA Resource Team Assessment Working Group
November 12, 2015
9:00am

On the call: Sue Taylor, Gloria Hawkins, Anne Boothe, Gus Byrom, Kathie Bailey, Michele Archie, Mike O'Rourke, Dianne Lehm, Jen Kreiner, Paul LaChapelle, and Gloria O'Rourke.

1. Introductions and Background

Following introductions, a brief background summary of the focus of this working group included:

- a. Sharpen the process, improve conversations, increase successful outcomes
- b. Consider meeting multiple program assessment data gathering needs through this process

2. Return visit to Big Timber

Gloria mentioned that Big Timber will hold a one year celebration of its successes since the team's visit on December 8th. On December 9th, representatives from Tourism will provide a training for community leaders in Big Timber. This will be an opportunity for tourism staff to learn more about the Resource Team Assessment process and for MEDA to learn more about tourism training.

3. Debrief of Sanders County Assessment

Gloria shared an overview of the Sanders County Assessment and noted two suggestions had been implemented that the RTA Working Group had suggested:

- a. Met with leadership in a group (department heads) and privately (Commissioners only);
- b. Obtained existing planning documents prior to the assessment.

Suggestions and comments from Jen Kreiner:

- Harder to absorb information when facilitating; very helpful to have a non-team member to facilitate.
- Critical to have hosts do their work prior to each sector listening session and invite attendees.
- Did feel rushed – have listening sessions be a bit longer.
- Give elected officials tools to respond to local comments.
- Each community is so isolated it is interesting that the majority of issues touched everyone.

4. Using Sanders County Assessment to Sharpen this Process

Using the Sanders County experience, ideas were discussed on sharpening and improving the Resource Team Assessment process. A summary of the ideas:

- Regarding the process: people in the community see problems as theirs, but not the solutions.
- Explore capacity: where are the communities in their ability to engage with each other to resolve these issues. Use some kind of pre-assessment tool to help the team understand the existing community environment.
 - See documents shared by Michele that could be tweaked. This would encourage the community to work together to solve their own problems. This is key.

- Gus shared a previous example of a very polarized group and said it took many months, many meetings; to come to the point solutions could be built. Sanders County has three very strong groups: before champions can be asked to step up, priorities must be set. Time and a longer process is needed, not a one night town meeting.

Prior to returning to Sanders County consider:

- Discover who are the conveners? Who gets things done under the table? How are they doing them? Ask: Who do you go to when you want to get things done?
 - Once identified, meet with them and review the report prior to the town meeting.
- Could the trusted leaders host the meeting when the team returns rather than the team (outsiders)?
- Visit with One Montana to see if they could assist in building common ground and healing/resolving serious divisions.
 - Consider MEDA take on an advisory role in such circumstances.

5. Searchable Database

A searchable database on the MEDA website under Assessment Resources called “Common Topics” would be very helpful. In addition to common issues such as housing, this list contains issues from Sanders County that are often typical:

- a. EMT Volunteers dropping
- b. Lack of Law Enforcement countywide
- c. Lack of Communication throughout the County
- d. Consistent Cell and Internet Access
- e. Water and Sewer

6. Topics for the next meeting:

- a. Review of Michele’s handouts and discussion.
- b. Continue discussion of the process modification for the return town meeting to Sanders County.
- c. RTA Requests
- d. Create a needs assessment process so that only one is needed for multiple programs