On May 12 – 13, 63 students gathered in Missoula to learn as much as possible about building and maintaining a top-notch business expansion and retention program. The evening of May 12th was set aside for the 2nd Annual Montana BEAR Roundup. This provided an opportunity for those that could not attend the full training to network and share Montana specific program issues with team members from all across the state.

Instructors Laith Wardi and Linda Beck (left) were a dynamic presentation duo. Participants enjoyed lots of interaction and made application of what was taught by playing Deal or No Deal, Jeopardy and “Who Would You Call First”? Ann Berlin (right) served as the IEDC onsite coordinator for the course.

Kellie Danielson, pictured with Laith Wardi (above right) served as the IEDC Host and talked about the value and importance of becoming a Certified Economic Developer.
2009 BEAR ROUND UP SUMMARY
The 2nd Annual BEAR Roundup was held the evening of May 12th. Those that attended the IEDC BRE training were invited to join Montana BEAR Teams for dinner and to exchange ideas regarding various scenarios when working with the Montana program.

Below are the three scenarios and the brain-stormed responses:

Scenario One: We have a BEAR Team already in place and have been conducting visits but recently our numbers have declined and interest is falling off. What can we do to re-ignite our team?

- Share success stories from other BEAR teams – what is working?
- Have a fun activity to re-energize
- Get new people involved
- Identify the crisis, the successes and yourselves
- BBQ’s and Mimosas
- Highlight resource partners and all that they provide
- Businesses need to be rejuvenated – get businesses interested…divide them into clusters or sectors and then target them for a two month period
- Newspaper testimonials
- Flyer in chamber newsletters
- Advertise on the radio
- Partners have different venues so use their programs to advertise
- Personal invites – get out of your office and let people know what BEAR can do

Scenario Two: How would you decide in your community which businesses would get most attention, some attention and who do you acknowledge that you can’t serve?:

- There are no businesses that could be ignored or go unacknowledged
- There is always something you can do even if it is to let them know that they are bleeding
- We can’t weed out or cut off anyone
- Businesses need to be proactive – they have the option to accept the services we offer

Note: The consensus was that in Montana at this point and time there are no clients that a BEAR team decide to engage. In more dense markets programs may have to become more selective, but this is not an issue in Montana.

Scenario Three: How do you make you or your team so indispensable to your business customer that to lose you would create a serious issue for the BEAR client?

- Need to be a team player – it should always be a “we”
- Earn people’s trust – that is when they call you for help
- Giving the customer what they want
- Cheerleaders - provide that “atta boy, atta girl” and serve as the voice for the community
- Be a facilitator of resources – we may not know the answer but know the people that do
- “We are all in this together” – become community relevant, not relevant to an individual business
- The organization needs to have credibility – not so much one individual.
- If you take on too much you also take on the liability. If you are going to be terribly missed you have gone too far.

**In Closing:**
BEAR Teams were encouraged to participate in the statewide ABC Clinics as this is an excellent tool organized by Montana Department of Labor that reaches BEAR clients.

In response to a question about what the BEAR office could do for local teams, it was suggested a press release from the Governor would be helpful. The press release could describe how the services provided by BEAR Teams and their clients provide helpful information to the Governor, Montana’s leadership and most of all…to the businesses that make Montana thrive.

**2009 Montana BEAR Roundup**