



BUSINESS RETENTION &
EXPANSION INTERNATIONAL

Business Retention and Expansion

Assessing the Community

Business Retention and Expansion International | P.O. Box 15011, Hattiesburg, MS 39404-5011 | 601.602.8074 | brei@brei.org

Why have a Community Assessment?

- ▶ As a leader of the local BR&E effort, it is necessary for you to understand the important factors in the local economic environment
 - ▶ The economic environment is more than the specific sectors that the program is targeting
 - ▶ The economic environment is likely affected by the social, cultural, legal, and other factors present in the community
- ▶ A snapshot of what is occurring in the community at a given point in time – it is the “story of place”
 - ▶ A substantial regional science literature from both the U.S. and Canada indicates that the best economic development policy is “place-based;” a BR&E visitation program fits this description

▶ 2

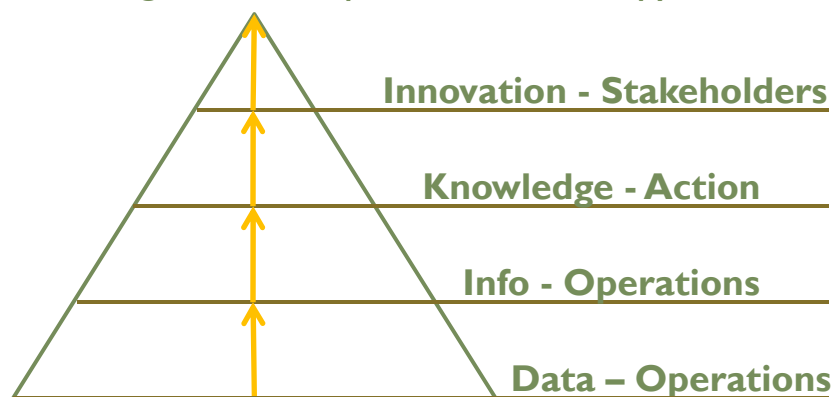
Community Assessment Characteristics

- ▶ Recognize the comprehensive environment in which the community's businesses operates
- ▶ While the economic environment should obviously be included, other sectors should be considered
 - ▶ Demographic
 - ▶ Educational
 - ▶ Financial
 - ▶ Social
 - ▶ Religious
 - ▶ Natural Resource
- ▶ Can be demographic, social, economic, educational, religious, financial, natural resource, etc., based; BR&E programs typically utilize an economic assessment with other pieces of information included
 - ▶ But determine the sectors that affect the chosen industry sector and gather information on those sectors

▶ 3

What role are you playing for the local community?

This type of activity can move the BR&E organization up the innovation pyramid



▶ 4

Source: Steve Deller, University of Wisconsin. NACDEP presentation, 2010.

What is its purpose?

- ▶ Adds value to the program and the partners' involvement
- ▶ Adds to what is known about the area
- ▶ Demonstrates the impact of regional and global interactions
- ▶ Assists in understanding future trends regarding the local economy
 - ▶ Variation among economic entities and locales
 - ▶ Characteristics of these entities and areas
 - ▶ Drivers of economic change
 - ▶ Relative importance of tools that can be utilized to address these drivers

▶ 5

Improvement and Development Agency
<http://www.idea.gov.uk>

How is the Assessment Valuable?

- ▶ The process of gathering data for the assessment can help educate the champion, economic development professional, task force, etc., about the types of economic activity in the community
- ▶ The product that results can assist in educating the community regarding the reason for the BR&E program's existence, why a strategic method of addressing the needs and concerns of existing businesses is needed, and to provide a basis from which to develop a plan of action for the program

▶ 6

Preparing the Assessment

- ▶ Begin by looking at existing profiles developed by the state/provincial economic development authority
 - ▶ *Sources of Secondary Socio-Economic Data*
 - ▶ <http://novascotia.ca/business/>
 - ▶ <http://statcan.gc.ca/eng/start>
- ▶ Given prior knowledge or assumptions about the community, determine what is missing from the profile that concerns existing businesses
- ▶ Utilize the task force (Operations/Response/Action Teams) or technical assistance entity to determine other necessary information needs
 - ▶ *Preparing for the Future: A Guide to Community-Based Planning*
<http://srdc.msstate.edu/publications/archive/243.pdf>

▶ 7

What Should the Assessment Describe?

- ▶ Current data sources describe the current conditions under which businesses operate
- ▶ The direction of change
- ▶ The intensity of change
- ▶ How your community compares to other similar communities
- ▶ The overall picture that the data paint about your community

▶ 8

Concerns With Data Use

- ▶ Cost and benefit of the data – what will it cost to get the information and will its benefit exceed that cost; often a concern with privately held and/or primary data
- ▶ Interpretation – understand what is contained in the data and how its components affect accurate interpretation
- ▶ Relevancy – is the data relevant to the assessment
- ▶ Accuracy – how accurate is the data; a concern for private or anecdotal data
- ▶ Timeliness – is the data timely? This is often a concern with federal data

▶ 9

Questions

▶ 10

Creative Commons License

- ▶ This work carries an attribution non-commercial share alike license.
- ▶ <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>

