Fundamentals Course Homework

Session 3

In this session, we've touched on the idea of the necessity of reports and presentations for a BR&E program using a volunteer visitor methodology with a "blitz" approach.

For this session, I'd like for you to think about the benefits (and perhaps challenges) in preparing reports and presentations for the BR&E visitation program that you are envisioning in your REN. Please think about the following questions:

- To whom or what groups would the reports/presentations be delivered?
- How would this benefit the strength of the REN BR&E program?
- What would be included in the report given that the collection of data in a continuous model is likely to be relatively slow?
- How would you turn data into information for the audience(s)?

Due by the beginning of the March 27, 2020 session.

Response 1

This type of program would be very different for my community and I believe that the findings from the visits might determine to whom the report will be presented. My thoughts at this time are that we would want to present it to:

- Community groups - to share the REAL city make up and needs for our businesses and industries. These groups many times are needed to help make actual change in a community, so it would be important to get them on board with real data and statistics.
- Education Leaders in the Community – to share the educational and skill needs of our present employers. This should help drive training for the employees of the future for these businesses.
- Government – to share what the businesses and industries need for infrastructure and growth opportunities.

The reports would benefit the BR&E program and give relevance to the findings. So many times, we act on the perceived problems and challenges. By presenting real data, the BR&E program would steer the community and leaders in the direction needed not the one perceived.

I would think the reports would be different depending on the audience we were presenting.

- Community groups would need more simplified reports and graphics- an executive summery form.
- Educators traditionally like statistics and graphs and would appreciate drilling down into the minutia of the findings so I think the reports could be much more detailed.
- Government reports would need to fall somewhere in the middle, but have a value or cost associated with the findings showing them a ROI if actions are taken to meet the found needs.

My community has a university and I would like to utilize their business school and perhaps the entrepreneur center students to help analyze the information collected. I would want them to also help formulate and design the different reports as well as the presentations of the material.

Since this would be a new program in my community and if we are able to implement BR&E, I would want to have an accelerated timeline to gather as much information as possible as quickly as possible. Once the baseline data was collected, we would continue to update it on an ongoing basis. The reports would then be revised when needed and new needs added to the mix when uncovered.

Response 2

We try to keep our visits to 30 minutes which includes a tour if possible and interview with the business management team. We know that their time is valuable and do not want to over stay our welcome but do not rush the process if the company has issues that are needing addressed. I do feel like we can fine tune our surveys to include more information about the business.

Our reports include:
1. Contact information about the business
2. Summary of what the business does
3. Number of Employees
4. Annual Payroll
5. Annual Sales Revenue
6. Number of Employees living in the City Limits
7. Property size
8. Corporate Headquarters
9. Challenges
10. Supplier support needed
11. Expansion Plans
12. Employment needs
13. Workforce requirements and needs
14. Import/Export Assistance

We use the reports to assist the business needs and as of now do not publish the reports.

Response 3

Benefits:

1. The visitation program data would likely include the Board of Aldermen, who would be very interested with this information as they've not received it before.
2. The Board is consistently focusing on the health of businesses as it pertains to retail sales. Such a program would help support their outlook on the city.
3. Information in the report would include some fundamental factors (aside from financial health) that have been expressed by stakeholders as important.

a. Their awareness that they are in Dardenne Prairie
b. Their thoughts about the city and their desire to stay
c. Challenges they are facing, specifically anything related to the city (like street repair) that can be done to alleviate business issues
d. How they are interacting with the larger community, for instance their business neighbors and residential neighborhoods

4. The health of a business is related to all the factors above, however, data must be backed up with results. The understanding would be made acute that responses to the above not ultimately supportive to financial health or retention of the business in the city indicates a disconnect in the information we're receiving. The collection of hard data that supports their other responses will be slow, however an understanding would be expressed that it will come eventually, and may require further discussion.

Challenges:

1. Unlike some of our surrounding communities, many of our city's businesses don't even know they are in ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮, and if they do they don't care. For them it is a simple real estate problem (as has been expressed to me by many…) regarding location, location, location.
2. Regarding the audience (City leadership and Board) we have had many businesses that have previously expressed satisfaction to them directly, but have then departed despite having an open channel regarding their concerns and their knowledge of an open channel.
3. There are certain concerns that a visitation program report could convey to the audience – like high real estate or lease prices or e-commerce – that are largely out of the control of the city to do anything about. I'm unsure how the audience's knowledge of this information would be helpful.
4. A "blitz" program might not provide enough one-on-one time, which for ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ small community is far more important. Many of our SME's would like to see me once a year, but that's about it outside of an occasional checkup. I'm unsure how to make light of that in a report.

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Response 4

We have just started the BRE program in our town last fall. We have divided our businesses into 6 different sectors. We are currently completing our second sector of visits. A report is expected from the data gathered from each sector. Once the summary report is complete it will be presented to our CAO and council. Benefits to this would be recognizing what challenges, issues, companies are experience and noting if many are experiencing the same issues. By presenting the results to Council this will make them aware of any issues that need to be addressed that can further affect their strategic priorities going forward. The data included in the report will be a summary of information collected from business owners. Challenges I will face is that the data collected is more comments then numbers which makes if very difficult to compare to each other and create simple graphs or charts. I am new to this position and where this program is new to the Town there is no template to follow, I am looking for

direction as to what information should be included in the report and how should it be presented. Businesses have signed a confidentiality agreement; no businesses will be singled out as the summary will be done as an overall analysis. Information included in the report will be a summary of the business climate, workforce, training, challenges, financial performance, and immigration. The conclusion will focus on observations and directions.

Response 5

We will be presenting reports and presentations to our County Commission, County Economic Development Corporation, Township Board of Commissioners, Two Business Associations in the County, Two Rotary Clubs, Grow Benzie (non-profit), Alliance for Economic Success (regional economic development group), and Networks Northwest.

Each of these entities would offer support and promotion of the BR&E program in our county, including financial support and possible manpower to implement the program.

With the COVID-19 Virus impact on the economy our whole approach to data and our BR&E program will be changing. Collection of data will rapidly change in the coming days, weeks and months. In Michigan about 75% of businesses are shuttered for at least three weeks, talk is now they will remain closed into June. This creates a whole new dynamic in data collection and reporting.

We would consider looking at a third-party to turn our data into information to present to the public.

Response 6

This report would more than likely be delivered or most widely used by city/county/government groups. I would also like to see our top school administrators and the board of trustees given this report. I also think it would be extremely beneficial to share the information with our private funding & foundation groups that are currently investing in our city's growth, so that they continue to do and hopefully on a larger level.

• How would this benefit the strength of the REN BR&E program?

I truly believe in the theory of "the more you know, the more you grow." The more information that has been statistically derived or given to you, the more opportunity you have to advance and grow. Working with each of the groups mentioned above and sharing with them the BR&E data and findings enables you to reach and educate the main supporting factors within you community.

• What would be included in the report given that the collection of data in a continuous model is

likely to be relatively slow?

Listed below is what I would like to see the report include so that you cover both a general and extensive overview of the data.

- History of the business (year, location, etc.)
- General information on business
- Number of Employees
- Location
- Business services/products offered (type of business)
- Employees living in city limits vs. those who don't
- Average annual training opportunities & funding needs
- Business needs both now & in the future
- Operating budget
- Businesses biggest asset
- Businesses biggest challenge

• How would you turn data into information for the audience(s)?

By presenting the data collected with real life examples and similar trends within other communities, the information becomes more relatable and encourages the audience to utilize the data to make changes within their business. It encourages them to engage rather than just receiving the data and doing nothing with it. It should be delivered in a group setting through meetings with the groups identified above. This shows the initiative and interest to start and finish a program backed by statistical data in order to implement and execute success.