

Fundamentals Course Assignment

Final Project

Throughout this course, we've talked about the different elements that are essential to develop a Business Retention and Expansion Visitation Course. For your final project, develop a concise narrative or outline that describes your plan of work for implementing this type of program in your organization. Be sure to provide some insight regarding the way that the elements that we've discussed throughout the course will be included in the program.

This outline is not meant to be definitive nor comprehensive, but it is meant to be an aid for you in developing the initial logic of the program. Please try to have this exercise completed and submitted by the end of business on June 19, 2020.

Response 1

Regional Background

Western Nova Scotia is a coastal rural region three hours from the nearest urban center, Halifax (population of half a million). The Western Regional Enterprise Network (REN) is the region's central economic development body, serving and funded, in part, by five municipalities (Barrington, Argyle, Yarmouth municipality, Clare and Digby municipality) and two town's (Digby and Yarmouth). The region's population is around 50,000 and is about 100 miles long.

Being a coastal region, the area's main industry is fishing and lobstering. The industry harvests about \$1 billion (CDN) annually, mainly for export. Secondary industries supporting fishing would include seafood processing, boat building, fishing equipment manufacturing, transportation and service industries. Tourism is also an important sector in the region.

While the position of BusinessNOW Lead has been present for six years, with recent staffing changes and the COVID-19 effect on the region, it is time to develop a new BR&E strategy for the region.

Information - Survey

The last survey the Western REN had taken was prior to COVID-19. We need to update the information since much has changed.

We need to update our information in order to:

- Assess current business outlook
- Identify prominent clusters
- Determine the relative strength of different sectors
- Assess the employment and hiring outlook

Survey Development

The survey may start with an informal sounding of the region, consisting of telephone conversations to get preliminary indications from businesses. This would be a continuation of the extensive COVID support work that has been undertaken.

The next step would be to have consultations with EDOs and Support Workers in all of the regions to solicit input on the economic situation from different areas of the region.

In addition, the available area economic statistics and aggregate data should be reviewed, including a look at January to June 2020 where available.

Formulation of Survey Objective

From these preliminary information reviews, the specific objective of the BR&E project should be defined. This objective should answer the question: What problem are you trying to solve? The preliminary information gathering should highlight which problems are of highest priority, being both pervasive and severe. Ideally, one problem should be selected for the survey which would be the most immediate, severe, widely occurring, and actionable by the program. From this we could describe the possible outcome of the project.

Once the problem is identified and understood from the preliminary sounding, ideas about potential action items by the team should be considered in response to the problem and these used to help develop questions for the survey. It is important to consider the potential action items for responding to the problem, in order to select questions that would obtain information from the survey that would either support or discourage the particular action items and enable decision-making.

For example, if the problem was the need of COVID preparedness training, and the potential action item was to offer professional trainers to businesses, but the information from the survey clearly indicated that professional trainers were not wanted by the business owners, and instead they wanted access to online webinars and on-line courses on the subject, it is important to identify this preference by asking about it in the survey. If we hadn't considered the action items – professional trainers vs. webinars and on-line courses – we couldn't have asked about preferences in the survey.

The survey should seek to identify any Red, Yellow and Green Flags related to the main issue of the survey or explore those that were identified during the preliminary research.

The survey should be reviewed and tested before being distributed to the businesses. The questions should be tested for validity and for consistency in their understanding among the reviewers. A "mock" or trial run should be done on a small scale to ensure that information provides needed and not just wanted information. The information generated should be actionable by the Team.

Introduction of the Survey to Respondents

The COVID-19 crisis work done by the REN in the region has greatly aided in enhancing relationships with businesses and highlighting the organization's interest in helping businesses. It has enhanced trust and it is important to maintain and enhance this attitude. It should provide a willingness for businesses to work with us on other BR&E efforts going forward. Good relationships and positive attitudes will help going forward.

As such, a good thorough introduction to the Survey is important. It should explain the objective of the Survey, which is ultimately to help businesses. It should explain the topic being tested and how it will aid businesses and the economy. It should not make promises, since action will depend on what the results of the Survey indicate.

Method for Presenting the Survey – Electronic versus Visitation

The method of presenting the survey should be considered. The COVID-19 crisis has brought electronic means to the forefront at a sharply accelerated pace. To find a method or methods that are likely to generate the best response rate from businesses, we should consider taking the survey through electronic means, such as SurveyMonkey and similar platforms. This may need to replace to some extent the visitation process for the volunteer/paid professional model. This may be used initially as COVID-19 is still present and when the survey is seeking a general basis of information on the economy and not something more specific. More specific objectives may come a bit later and might better fit the continuous method, even if by video or by phone.

Involving the Team Throughout the Process

It is important to involve the team in all aspects of developing and delivering the survey. Input from the team is needed as is their support in the action phase following the survey. It is important for the team to select project objectives that are shared by the team members, and those that are practical and clearly intended to help businesses and the community. The leader should be able to explain the benefit and the objective for doing the project in human terms that can garner support from the team.

The Western REN has only one individual involved in economic development, the BusinessNOW/BR&E lead. There are however five other EDO or similar within the seven municipal governments with whom the REN works. These people, as well as Chamber of Commerce leads, municipal government leads, community leaders, associations, some politicians and many other stakeholders, would be the pool to draw on in forming an action team. In addition, those who are not actually on the team should be kept in the loop with information.

Team Composition

In an area with a relatively small group of key individuals, we'd expect that the Action and Operations Teams will be of overlapping make-up.

Team members should be selected for:

- Attitude,
- Leadership, reputation and respect within the community
- Drive,
- Experience,
- Abilities,
- EDO role,
- Understanding of BR&E role,
- Be familiar to the Leader and other team members where possible.

Meetings should be scheduled around projects, events and efforts, and should be frequent enough to keep a good level of communication and foster good working relationships.

The team may be asked to assist in the role-out of the survey and then to:

- Review the results of the survey
- Identify and discuss priorities resulting from the survey, considering timeliness, importance and pervasiveness of issues.
- Develop action plans
- Implement solutions – the action plan. The functions may be divided among team members. Sub committees may be used where appropriate
- Develop long term action plans
- Generate objectives for future surveys and projects
- Help prepare reports and presentations and deliver to “their” groups

Our area has some great people working in EDO. We have tremendous potential. We are at the moment of a re-set, or a new beginning and it is very exciting.

Response 2

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, Division of Strategic Development- BD/ED Department

Business Retention Expansion Plan (BREP): Draft Outline

Goals and Objectives: Develop/Execute/Evaluate a comprehensive BRE plan for initial use in CNO territory which will serve both Choctaw member and nonmember owned businesses of all sizes and types that are willing to participate. Once established it is the goal of CNO to maintain and improve upon this effort over time while using the information developed and knowledge gained for the sustainable benefit in the business community and the overall wellbeing of our tribal service area.

- 1.) Community/Regional Assessment: (Completed) CNO engaged consulting firm TIP Strategies as a partner for a 12month process to produce, 11 county comprehensive assessment, profiles and economic development plans which represents our baseline and comparative data originating from a series of full spectrum public meeting, field observations and offsite research. This is the first effort and data collection initiative of its kind for CNO, SEOK and by a tribal entity in Oklahoma.
- 2.) Leadership and Community Capitals Assessment: (Completed) CNO has a significant level of historical understanding and working knowledge of all aspects of our territory, Oklahoma and relevant individuals/events/activities to serve as an initial starting point for this effort. The subsequent 12month interaction period which was conducted by TIP and facilitated by CNO served as an objective sampling and direct public dialog by an outside (out of state) third party entity.
- 3.) BRE Action Team(s) Formation and Training: (Pending but Identified) Existing CNO BD/ED staff will comprise most of the overall teams along with select other agency partners with specific BRE compatible background, acceptability and experiences. CNO regional Business Advisors will focus on tribal member businesses due to their existing relationships and knowledge of that unique customer base which tends to be smaller and startup level businesses. CNO Business Developers will focus on midsize and larger entities and could be accompanied by County/Municipal/Regional

ED officials or specialized personnel appropriate for the range of specific industry visits. Example: Food, Forestry, Aviation, Technology, Logistics, Recreation, Entertainment, Healthcare, Service, etc.

- 4.) Surveys, Visitation and Observations: (Anticipated Fall 2020) Teams will develop relevant survey material and methods which could likely be an initial electronic sampler, followed up with a scheduled/coordinated field visit by designated team members for interview and observation. All CNO member business would be targeted with a goal of 100% sample size. From the other prospective, all larger and most significant businesses will be selected, followed by a significant number and range/variety of midsize businesses will be targeted. A representative sampling of smaller business should be tested for consistency with CNO member findings.
- 5.) Data Analysis and Collective Findings: (Winter 20/21) Team leaders with assistance of subject experts will analysis data, surveys and interview information/observations, and develop reportable findings, identify trends, needs and possibly identify outliers, dispel misperceptions or misinformation. Conclusions will be brought back and reported to the Team and Leadership in stage #6.
- 6.) Solution(s), Development and Targeting: (Winter 20/21) All reportable Information, observations and findings will be presented to leadership/team and relevant decisionmakers for discussion of findings, possible solutions and actions toward designated solutions. Leadership buy in will be necessary at this stage as will the assessment of capacity necessary and available to enact the prescribed solutions in a meaningful timeframe. Once consensus is achieved and solutions vetted then the process should move forward.
- 7.) Client Rollout/Input/Implementation: (Both general/specific and public/private: Target Spring 2021): The BRE process is expected to yield a range of action items to achieve the prescribed solutions. Some will be of a broad general public nature, while others could be very private, specific or even of proprietary nature. For what is allowable, there will need to be a public rollout, comment & buy in period before implementation. The private solutions will need to be dealt with appropriately along a timeline for each unique action/solution. Achievements should be recognized, acknowledged and celebrated as much as possible.
- 8.) Program Review and Post Assessment: (Summer 2021 and Continuous) Due to the fluid nature of the business climate today, program review, awareness and evaluation should be ongoing during the entire process in order that corrective actions can be prescribed if dictated by changing conditions. Improvements to the outcome are always welcome at any stage of the process. Once the process has matured, a post assessment should be performed and the improvements and achievements quantified. These results will be used along with process experience to improve upon the next BRE process cycle.

Response 3

Shelbyville-Bedford County Chamber of Commerce Business Retention and Retention Plan

A successful business retention and expansion program must have the capacity to assess each business in the community from the standpoint of their overall fiscal and operational viability. The BRE program must also get feedback on the businesses' perception of the community with respect to education, public safety, healthcare, utility service, infrastructure, workforce and local government.

We have developed the goal of enhancing our local economy through a well-defined and methodical approach to business retention and expansion with the following two objectives.

Objective 1: Retain local jobs through business retention & expansion.

- Implement a structured and consistent industry visitation program to identify opportunities for assistance or discover any obstacles.
 - The local business sector will be divided into 4 main sectors for an annual survey. These will be manufacturing, construction and distribution; retail sales; hospitality; and service-related businesses such as banking, insurance, real estate, etc.
 - Each sector will have a separate coordinator with a team of 8 to 10 individuals who will visit and survey companies within their sector.
- The survey will be conducted in January and February of each year and the results presented by March 31.
- Include visitation with out-of-market corporate headquarters which have local operations.
 - Visit at least 3 corporate headquarters each year.
 - Include the City and County Mayors, the Economic Development Director, the Chamber of Commerce Board President and the Chamber of Commerce CEO.
- Continue supporting and promoting existing industry by providing industry appreciation events and topic-driven connection events.
 - Host an annual plant manager's luncheon with the State Senator, State Representative, the City and County Mayors, the Superintendent of Schools and the President of the Tennessee College of Applied Technology.
 - Host an Annual Industry Appreciation Fish Fry.
 - Host a quarterly plant managers association meeting. Each meeting will have one of the following program agencies: Tennessee Valley Authority Division of Economic Development, Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development, State and Local Elected Officials, Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development

Objective 2: Facilitate ongoing small business success.

- Support existing small businesses with business-building workshops on hot current topics.
- Explore creation and management of a local co-worker space to accelerate entrepreneurial engines and opportunity.
- Open and serve all businesses through a new Small Business Development Center with incubator space. Stock with resources and toolkits including coaching, advising, publications, guides, and access to capital, legal and financial services.
- Incent entrepreneurial innovators to invest locally by providing micro-grants. Heavily promote other community incentives including façade and other grants.
- Partner early-stage entrepreneurs with legal, accounting, and financial consultation.
- Build business mentorship program connecting start-up entrepreneurs with experienced successful business leaders.

Response 4

To start my BR&E program I would first think of what data I'm looking at gathering and what the use and outcome will be. I have to make sure that my survey is capturing the data we are looking for but also a chance to build relationships along the way. Having known the focus for our city is youth retention, workforce, and now after COVID a big focus will be for business retention and new businesses. We had completed an economic development strategy in 2018 and the outcomes from that are my current role as Business Retention and Expansion. Both Council and our Economic Development board are excited about my role and are fully supporting of it.

The approach that I will take during my BR&E program is a segregated and somewhat continuous approach. I will be the only person visiting the businesses unless an EDO from my department has some time to spend visiting businesses here and there. I will have a training session with my team to go through the process and share with them the survey of questions we will be asking at the visits. This will be a continuous approach because I will hit each individual segment/industry. With the population being almost 70,000 and the business community being so large it will take this approach to ensure all segments of business are hit. I like the segmented approach because that gives you the opportunity to have fluid conservations and gain a good grasp of their industry. We are in the process of rolling out a business license program which will give me access to a huge list of businesses to target. Currently my list has been compiled from Chamber member lists and a credit report from Dunn and Bradstreet. Having the business license program in place will greatly benefit my program by knowing who's currently in my city and also a great way to track and welcome new businesses. Each business will be contacted prior to visit and an appointment will be set up at their business or if they don't have an office then a coffee shop of their choosing. I like having the visit at their location so you can see the operation and it makes it a bit more personable. Length of visit will vary depending on how engaged the business owner is and if they have further comments to the survey.

After each segment has been completed, the data will be analyzed and turned into information and a report that does a high-level overview of the data we captured. These presentations will be done for council, the industry that had been visited and also the college and Chamber. We work closely with these groups to try and improve the key areas we are focused on. Working with the local College during the BR&E program will help with our youth retention and our workforce development. Finding out what course needs are out there for industry and bringing those back to the College will help them be able to grow their course/trade programs. While doing the surveys with the businesses great attention will be given to listening to any red, yellow or green flags in the process and working on those as they arise and dispatch to specific departments that can assist.

Once all businesses have been visited, I will compile 1 report made up from each industry on the findings and discuss with my team and our Economic Development board what our next steps will be for the topics that arose. This final report will be shared with Council to let them know how our business community is doing.