

Fundamentals Course Homework Responses

Session 1

In this session, we've talked about utilizing a community profile within a BR&E visitation program. The profiles that we've examined mainly dealt with economic issues within the study community. Given your perceived goals for the program that you anticipate beginning in your community, please describe the elements of a community profile that you would anticipate using in your program. Do not attempt to assemble this profile; simply describe the types of elements that you would ideally include in the profile and provide a concise description of why you would include each of these elements.

Due by the beginning of the June 4, 2020 session.

Response 1

Elements I would include in a Community Profile:

- Demographics
 - o Population with segmented age groups and growth rates
 - o Household income, Per Person Income
 - o Number of households, along with rent/own
 - o *WHY? Helps answers questions about if community is growing/dying, if we need to build new homes, and how our household/individual income relates to state/national averages for incentives, grants, etc.*
- Labor Force
 - o Education institutions and educational attainment
 - o Labor participation rates and unemployment rate
 - o Employment by industry and occupation
 - o Commute Times and labor shed
 - o *WHY? Are we meeting the needs of our employers with training/education, do we have unemployed/underemployed workers, what types of jobs are available, where are workers going to or coming from and can we provide opportunities for them to work/live locally?*
- Employers with employment numbers/salary
 - o *WHY? Know who we should be visiting and track growth/shrinkage*
- Identification of industry clusters
 - o *WHY? Identify opportunities for partnerships (up/down supply chain) and networking, recruitment of support services.*

Response 2

The Atoka City Industrial Development Authority is currently working with existing businesses as well as recruiting new industries. Current local industries compound the competition for the available

workforce by poaching employees that will leave a position for a small increase in pay. The business owners need options that will increase employee pay without decreasing their profitability. This demographic information on our BREI Program would include workforce housing, education, cost associated with employee turnover, and workforce development programs. A community profile for Atoka should contain information that the existing industries can use to address the issues impacting their specific companies.

Demographics

Housing: One of the primary issues in Atoka is the housing shortage. The lack of available workforce housing is causing problems with attracting and keeping a qualified employee pool. These demographics should include the number of rental properties, the number of houses open to line production and middle management, and proposed new housing developments.

Education: Local industries need to know the education level of the average line worker and how to develop that employee to the next level. The information would include high school graduation statistics, trade school programs, and expected pay scales.

Employee Turnover: Employees will often leave a position for as little as a twenty-five cent per hour increase. Employers need the defining hourly rate that separates qualifying for assistance programs and an employee's ability to earn enough to lose those benefits. The businesses also need the breakdown of costs associated with employee turnover.

Workforce Development Programs: The industries need to know specific workforce development programs that will retain employees while increasing the bottom line. Some of these programs include apprenticeship programs and additional training availability.

Response 3

Building a BRE program is about building relationships with all businesses in your city or county. Having all groups of the community involved from: CEO's/managers, local government-mayor, city manager and/or staff, local retail owners, EDC and locals. Outreach and support-Creating a "team" where the business feels part of the action to move forward with expanding or needing help with a problem they might be experiencing. The connections you make as a BRE would then continue to grow creating a one for all vibe. Others helping others for the greatness of the community. We are a private and public funded EDC. Our budget is small so creating relationships is a big part of how we operate.

Response 4

We are fortunate that we have access to EMSI databases, including demographic profiles that provide excellent numeric and graphic details.

Beyond the standard information provided in these reports, some of the focus elements that would be of importance in my areas of responsibility (many small towns with limited resources) are:

Labor Force and Education: In addition to the traditional educational level information, it would include the availability of skilled labor and the regional workforce availability in a 15-45-60 mile area. Please see the “Location” element below for travel time versus travel miles context that would be provided.

Information would include not only the availability of locally-accessible college, technology, and trade training centers, but also examples of personalized and customized training that has been provided on-site to local businesses and industry by those entities.

Location: Use travel minutes versus travel miles to emphasize the shorter travel times in non-urban areas. Where a fifteen mile commute in a heavily populated area might conjure up a forty-five minute drive time, that distance in our areas would be a fifteen minute commute.

This also applies when providing information on the availability of a regional workforce and the distance from a major airport, highway, port, or other landmarks.

Utilities: In addition to the other utility information, detail the availability of competitively priced reliable electricity with excess capacity at various voltages for electricity-intensive prospects.

Land: Emphasize the availability of affordable and significantly sized tracts of land ready for development specific to the customer’s need.

Response 5

I would want to assess demographics, industry types, social constructs within the community to include religious aspects, financial and economic position of constituents, and educational resources. The first place I would start is our city’s comprehensive plan.

Brenham completed a comprehensive plan last year. This is also a valuable tool. This is in two parts, “Existing City” and “Future City.”

https://www.cityofbrenham.org/city_government/departments/development_services/comp-plan.php

I would also want to do a deeper dive on demographics. We contracted with Headlight Data for a plug-in tool that we have on our website. This is the first place I would look for community descriptors.

<https://brenhamed.com/local-data/demographics>

<https://brenhamed.com/washington-county-economic-scorecard>

<https://brenhamed.com/locate-here/workforce>

I would also tap into the data available for our community from the Texas Workforce Commission at [https://texaslmi.com/.](https://texaslmi.com/)

And then the Brazos Valley Council of Governments has an Esri account that they will utilize for any additional reports I would like to review.

Specifically within the retail sector, we also utilize information from The Retail Coach. While the data is a bit outdated according to retail location professionals (revising in the coming budget year), the information is still valuable. Scroll down on the webpage to download the Retail Trade area and Retail Gap Analysis:

<https://brenhamed.com/invest-here/retail-in-brenham>

Response 6

One of the target sectors that I am focused on is the ICT / tech sector and many of the companies I will be speaking with are startups and scaleups. There are many elements of a community profile that could be used for a BR&E program focused on this sector. A few of the concerns that I hear from businesses (both local and those looking at an expansion to the region) include availability of talent, quality of life, and investment opportunities. There are many talented workers with specialized skills who may be new to the community and do not have the necessary network to help them find meaningful employment in their field. Businesses should have a better understanding of the available skilled work force and know how to access this talent. An in-depth look at the labour market including graduates, immigrants, and recent retirees (e.g. military) would be a beneficial element. Quality of life including access to education, healthcare, recreation, affordable housing, and commute times / transportation to name a few would be worth using in the program as well. Access to capital is a concern for many of the businesses that I am speaking with. Therefore, a look at available venture capital and funding organizations (public or private) would be a useful element of the community profile.

As I mentioned above, there are many elements of a community profile that could be looked at such as demographics, economic data, religion, natural resources, etc. These are all important and useful, however I wanted to highlight labour market, quality of life, and investment opportunities as these are concerns that businesses often mention when I meet with them.

Response 7

Some elements of a community profile that I would anticipate using in a BR&E program for my community (East Hants) include:

- Demographic data –businesses need this information to plan for their workforces, or the customers they will be serving.
 - Population - provide current population, and projections/rate of growth, age breakdown (e.g we have one of the fastest growing and youngest populations in NS)
 - Education– close proximity to many postsecondary educational and research institutions, a highly educated labour force (e.g over 50% have a degree or diploma beyond high school)
- Regional demographics & physical characteristics – businesses need this information to plan for their supply chains, business opportunities, catering to local needs, expansion planning etc.
 - East Hants covers a large geographic area (1,787 km²)
 - Average commute time (25 minutes).
 - Consists of diverse communities (opportunities are different, i.e Fundy area focused on tourism)
 - Location advantage/transportation - located along major highways, minutes from largest airport in Atlantic Canada, close to CN Rail main line, Port of Halifax. No traffic congestion.
 - Availability of land
- Labour – businesses need this information for workforce planning, skill availability, etc.
 - Employment and unemployment rates; Workforce availability; Occupations and industries.
 - Number of local businesses, and list of major employers – important to know the players in the business community, and to keep track of number of businesses to know who is staying, expanding, or new businesses being added.
- Costs of doing business – this can be a make or break for keeping businesses or helping them to expand.
 - taxation, utilities, etc.
- Quality of life – can help businesses decide to stay in local community or expand if there is a good quality of life here, can help them attract a workforce who lives in the area, etc.
 - Recreation opportunities, climate.

This information should be readily available to provide to businesses, as it provides a strong, comprehensive understanding and overview of the community. It can help highlight where opportunities exist, which is important to know your advantages (demonstrates why a business can stay or successfully expand), but it may also show where your disadvantages could be and if you work to address these issues you will help businesses in your community to succeed. Your community profile can be used to provide a comparison (either to other communities, or even on some factors to show difference before and after starting your BR&E program).

Response 8

I have found that many times business managers/owners spend a tremendous amount of energy focusing on daily operations and the “bottom-line”. A community profile with specific elements provide a view of the community at large containing a wealth of knowledge to be strategically utilized in Retention and Expansion efforts.

ELEMENTS:

Demographics – to assess compensation rate(s) with the average cost of living to retain quality employees and attract hire performing talent.

- Population
- Average Income/Cost of Living/Poverty Rate
- Total Sales Tax
- Industry Snapshot

Education – Identifies work pool and talent base

- High School Graduates/Higher Education Certificates/Degrees
- Trade Schools
- Training/Education Institutes

Workforce – assess skills gap with workforce needs and availability

- Internship/Apprenticeship Opportunities – Need to share generational knowledge and on the job training in the workplace
- Labor Participation Rate vs. Unemployment rates
- Skills Transferability - Recent Business Closing(s)

Utility Representation/Infrastructure – an overview of possible provide capacity status to address expansion needs.

Response 9

Basic demographics information – population details, educational attainment, etc. in order to paint a picture of our community.

Workforce information – largest employers/ sectors, available workforce and skills within a 45 minute drive time, certificate and degree attainment (specialities)

Housing – available housing by type/ cost, future housing development information

Response 10

Aggregate statistical databases, such as EMSI, can be useful tools for BRE programs for a variety of purposes, including filtering through local businesses to know which to survey, helping businesses expand, and determining an appropriate amount of incentives to provide.

Industrial Reports

Our BRE program can use Industrial Reports to determine which business sectors represent the largest portions of the regional economy. Even if the BRE program approaches businesses of all size, it can be helpful to acknowledge which sectors may require special attention. Additionally, Industrial Reports helps identify which local sectors are growing or shrinking. Using this, the BRE task force can compare this against local businesses to see if they are growing and need to expand or are shrinking and need to adjust their strategy.

Occupation Reports

Once our BRE program has identified a business that wants to expand, Occupational Reports can be used to help prepare a business for expansion, primarily by determining if the existing labor supply can accommodate that growth. Information related to workforce availability, skills transferability, talent compensation, the educational pipeline can help a business decide if its appropriate to expand. If not, the BRE program should work with the regional college or tech centers to see if coursework could be developed to grow these types of skillsets.

Input – Output Reports

Once our BRE program has prepared a business to expand, City staff can use Input – Output Reports to help determine the appropriate value of any incentives to offer to the project. Input information provided by the business, such as the number of jobs created, the type and pay of those jobs, and increased local sales, can be plugged into the modeling software. The output information will estimate the total impact of the project, including total jobs created and total earnings increased. Using this data, City staff can estimate the tax impact to the local community and devise an incentive that reflects the municipality's return on investment.