

## Fundamentals Course Homework Responses

### Session 2

In this session, we've discussed the idea of integrating the idea of social capital into a BR&E program. In my view, this is only strengthened by the Regional Enterprise Networks Start-Up Guide (February 2014) that I assume you have been furnished (see the link on the course website if you don't have a copy of this document).

For this session, I'd like you to think about the ways in which you can strengthen the social capital through a BR&E program. I'm not looking for an exhaustive study on this, but rather some ideas or practices that you could implement in your program that would increase the social capital standing with regard to your area's existing businesses. Please try to keep your responses to one page.

Due by the beginning of the April 27, 2021 session.

### Response 1

From what I have gathered in one week, that we already utilize the social capital aspect. It sounded like there were a lot of broken relationships and trust among the community, local government, and other financial capital foundations that took time to heal and repair. They have definitely come a long way and are working better together on that trust and openness through what the community needs and how they can hash things out but still be productive. Regular meetings have been initiated to keep those groups knitted together and the discussion is continuous.

One of the key things for my social capital and BRE position is to build off what we already have, make those connections with local businesses, how we can help them grow and remain here in the county/city (the continuous model).

Also, one I am extremely excited about since I have lived and breathed agriculture my whole life – is connecting the rural county side with the small town. I have hopes of utilizing the components that embraces social capital by breaking down those negative barriers and showing the rural members what the economic department can do for them, the resources and connections we have for them, and be able to “talk shop” with them – to show how I can relate. When you can hang in with their conversations and share similar concerns for the community and the rural areas (especially land and farms), they feel more open to discuss issues and you are no longer just some girl that works with the big bad government.

I intend to be active in both the community and the ag community, by first establishing those relationships and earning their trusts (face to face). Then maintaining those relationships so they will feel more comfortable not only having me there asking them questions to collect data, but also comfortable to pick up the phone and REACH out TO ME to gain insight and resources and know that if I don't know I will find a direction for them to go in – to get that information.

You can't just talk the talk with business owners – you have to walk the walk; that is when they will respect and trust you and your department, and I hope to show that over the years through my community involvement enhancing that Social Capital here.

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## **Response 2**

Our social capital is strong in the city and county of Muskogee. Our various civil leaders work together on infrastructure as well as new industry recruitment and retention.

The partnerships are dependent on each other to help our area be competitive in recruiting and retaining companies and a strong workforce.

The quote you mentioned “Honesty and Trust give communities a “measurable economic advantage”” was so on point.

I would suggest to any community to start with implementing a common committee made up of local elected officials as well as established industry partners. Once this relationship is established, the communication is greatly increased and becomes more useful in achieving a common goal for the community.

Another way to encourage social capital is to invite those elected officials on tours of local businesses at least once a year so they can experience for themselves what the company does and what they could contribute to make it run better.

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## **Response 3**

One of the ways to build social capital is to provide opportunities for groups of people to meet and become familiar with one and other without having to “solve” any problems. The key to keeping these meeting inclusive is making sure your invitation list is diverse: Heads of Industry (major corporations and small business owners), Educational Leaders (ISD and College), Elected Officials, City Officials/Management and of course your EDC and Chamber. Below are some ways we provide opportunities for groups to build relationships in Pearland now.

- Business Development or Workforce Committees meetings, each month we spotlight a business or local program.
- Roundtable discussion on general topics that are relevant to group but not necessarily about their particular industry. An example might be Covid and what how it is affecting them and how they had to adapt and find solutions.
- Luncheons where elected officials or city management give updates with Q & A opportunities
- We have a day when we travel to Austin and spend the day visiting with Legislators about what's important to the Pearland community. Three of my businesses were on that that trip, it just provided the opportunity for people to volunteer to serve the community and spend the day getting to know people that aren't in your everyday circle.

These are just a few things that currently do. I always say that people do business with people they know and trust. Taking the time to give space for people to learn about their community and what makes up your local economy is important. You not only increase the chances for working relationships

when you are working on community strategic plans but you also increase the probability of local business turning to each to do business or referral business, and that will automatically strengthen the local economy.

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## **Response 4**

The Buda EDC established a BRE Program Task Force as a key component of creating connections with local stakeholders, partners, and service providers in the Buda area. The task force consists of members from the following organizations: The Buda Area Chamber of Commerce, City of Buda (including Tourism, Main Street, Development Services, City Management), Hays County Independent School District, Pedernales Electric Cooperative (local utilities provider), Workforce Solutions (local chapter), Austin Community College and the Texas State Small Business Development Center. This task force meets once a month for networking events to continue building relationships between our programs. This approach for strengthening social capital, allows all participating entities to cultivate relationships with one another and develop a more effective economic development strategy.

I believe this approach increases the social capital standing with our area's existing businesses because a lot of our members are small business owners in the community. They attend our BRE Program Task Force networking events as a member of the task force and a small business owner in the community. Allowing the opportunity for the bonding and bridging components of social capital to be used together to facilitate an effective community that solves problems. The bonding component is the strong distinctions between insiders and outsiders. But, as a leader in the community and a small business owner, they can relate to both groups of people, allowing for the "bridge" component to connect the two networks.

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## **Response 5**

- Offering personal discounts/promotions to retain customers if expanding is in the business plan.
- Offering training to encourage locals to want to work for the company.
- Swapping services with other businesses to create a relationship that supports each other.
- Purchasing product/services local so other businesses will do the same for your products/services.
- Collaborating on giveaways with other businesses to promote one another's businesses.
- Host community events to promote brand awareness.

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## Response 6

This homework is basically how my BRE Program works to let my partners know what is new with each other and government programs. The Program has a group of 50 plus PREP Partners. These are organizations such as Chamber of Commerce's, SBDC's, EDC's. Economic Development Programs at the local colleges. Out of these 50 organizations, 7 of the organizations do the BRE's surveys.

As the coordinator I have a meeting (now Zoom) of my Partners and Interviewers. In the past I have a in person meetings about 5 times a year. I try to travel to different locations within my 6-county area. My last meeting was help in Punxsutawney, PA, yes home to the groundhog at the official groundhog weather museum located in an old post office. I had attendance of 25 people. The agenda was to kick off a Business Resource Summit that I was hosting in the near future. (cancelled due to Covid.) Speakers included, the local EDC director, county commissions (her boss), my boss, myself and a guest speaker that discussed recent statics on the employment situation in our coverage area.

The entire meeting's goal is designed to help our partners be more aware of who is in charge of the organizations, what's new or going on. New staff is introduced. Since my program is a state program, they are invited to attend.

Lunch is served and a tour of the facility is given. The meeting is all about meeting people and finding out what services they have to offer area businesses.

With Zoom the meetings do get better attendance but are not as much fun! Some of the past speakers include local colleges, loan directors, Workforce Development, local government and state officials.

The purpose of the meetings is for everyone to get to know each other and what services they have to offer.

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## Response 7

**Introduction:** Business Retention and Expansion program will benefit from social capital which will provide an access to a network and strengthened relations. It provides a platform for communication and sources for the action required for a successful program.

- Social Capital: describes the connection among people & organizations; the social glue that facilitates action.

Although, social capital is defined as the relations or connections among people & organization, as mentioned above, for the purpose of the BR&E program it includes the following as well:

- Human Capital: skills/abilities of residents and the ability to access outside resources and knowledge to increase understanding and identify promising practices. Also addresses the community's leadership and abilities.
- Political Capital: ability to influence rules and regulations and their enforcement. Reflects access to power and power brokers, including government officials and leverage with regional firms.

- Cultural Capital: influence the voices are heard and listened to, which voices have influence, and how creativity, innovation, and influence emerge.

**Objective:** Describe the effects of implementing social capital to Business Retention and Expansion Program.

**Recommendation:** Having social capital will provide relations with stakeholders of the city that have the means to take action on issues. By creating connections with leaders we can ensure to provide solutions to our local business owners on their needs or identified gaps.

To increase our social capital, we partner with local organizations. Like we work closely with the local Workforce Solution to provide resources to the local business communities. Workforce Solutions helps with organizing job fairs which reduces unemployment in our community. It also provides recruitment for the businesses, and training opportunities.

We work closely with the Chamber of commerce to get to know the small business community. Attend ribbon cuttings, provide resources, and webinars/trainings that may benefit the local business community.

The citizens of our community are also a great source we need to take inventory of our city to know what skills/abilities are present

We need to work closely with politicians/leaders & management in our community to ensure that they are aware of our program and the need for it is justified. We need to keep them informed about our efforts and provide report on needs and gaps within our community. These individuals are great source in this *process* and they are able to take *action*. Knowing the champions of our community is important as they will be key to getting programs implemented. The movers and shakers of our community are very passionate about getting things done, we will make sure to identify these individuals and keep a close communication with them.

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## Response 8

Social Capital is essential in the business community in order to collaborate effectively. A few driving factors that our community requires is:

- To network proactively
- Be strategic
- To create a diverse business community
- Make time
- And of course, due to the Covid-19 Pandemic – social media networking and collaboration is key

In the Town of Port Hawkesbury, I have recently brought together the local business and economic community once a month by meeting at a neutral space and having a coffee/ breakfast discussion. We provided this meet and greet through social media and an email chain. We have had great turnouts with

10 -15 participants each meeting. This changes monthly due to covid restrictions. We discuss various topics and I provide a light agenda.

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### **Response 9**

We have such diverse areas in our county and the county is growing quickly. We add roughly 1,250 new residence each month to our current population of +467,000. We have areas that are wealthy, growing by leaps and bounds, people with money moving into the area that want growth. They want places to eat, shop and work. Most of the community in that area leaves the county and drives into a neighboring county for employment. So their focus is on bringing in high wage employers. Then we have the other extreme in the eastern side where this is old mining country, very small population, not much infrastructure and they are more hesitant about change and growth. We do have many chambers and groups throughout the community that we try to keep a pulse on. We do participate in quarterly meetings with all the area chambers to keep track with the different communities and what is going on in the area. I think through a BR&E program we can build upon these connections and use these visits to provide more direct feedback to community leaders. We have a lot of small businesses in the county that should have more of a voice. I think a BR&E program would help facilitate that to a degree and strengthen relationships between business owners and local government. My former director always said the scariest words in the English language for a business owner are: "Hello, I'm from the government. I'm here to help." ☺

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### **Response 10**