Fundamentals Course Homework

Session 1

In this session, we've talked about developing a plan or roadmap for the implementation of a BR&E program. Given the planning model shown on Slide 9 of the presentation in Section 3, describe your (or your EDO's) vision of the outcomes, outputs, and inputs required to create an atmosphere of success for the program. Note that we're not asking for specific numbers (i.e., budget line items, numbers of employees, etc.), but rather a narrative of what should be considered when addressing each component of the planning model.

Due by the beginning of the August 28, 2025 session.

Response 1

My vision for the Durant Area BRE program to be successful is more about relationships and feels like more like a culture versus a program. Businesses know they can trust us to have regular touchpoints and growth happens intentionally. The team works together collaboratively to deliver on relationships and tangible results. Per the example of Covid 19 and the ever-changing economic conditions the program and team will remain flexible and adapt utilizing data measuring points.

OUTCOMES

Long Term Outcomes (Conditions)

A resilient local economy where businesses stay in Durant and expand. Due to the economic investment the tax base strengthens, and the city thrives with community development making quality of life high and a integrated economic system that continues to feed off of each other making Durant a vibrant and thriving place to invest, live, and visit.

Medium Term Outcomes (Actions)

Barriers are reduced between key stakeholders creating collaboration between partners. Workforce pipelines are adjusted. City infrastructure needs are met so that businesses are able to have necessities met to expand.

Short Term Outcomes (Learning)

A team of stakeholders are identified and work on visiting with businesses doing empathy work to better understand their needs and identify what the barriers are to their growth. Businesses see the team as true partners in progress and being proactive advocates on their behalf.

OUTPUTS

Participation – Who we reach

We should reach out to existing businesses across all sectors with emphasis on major employers, and growing businesses.
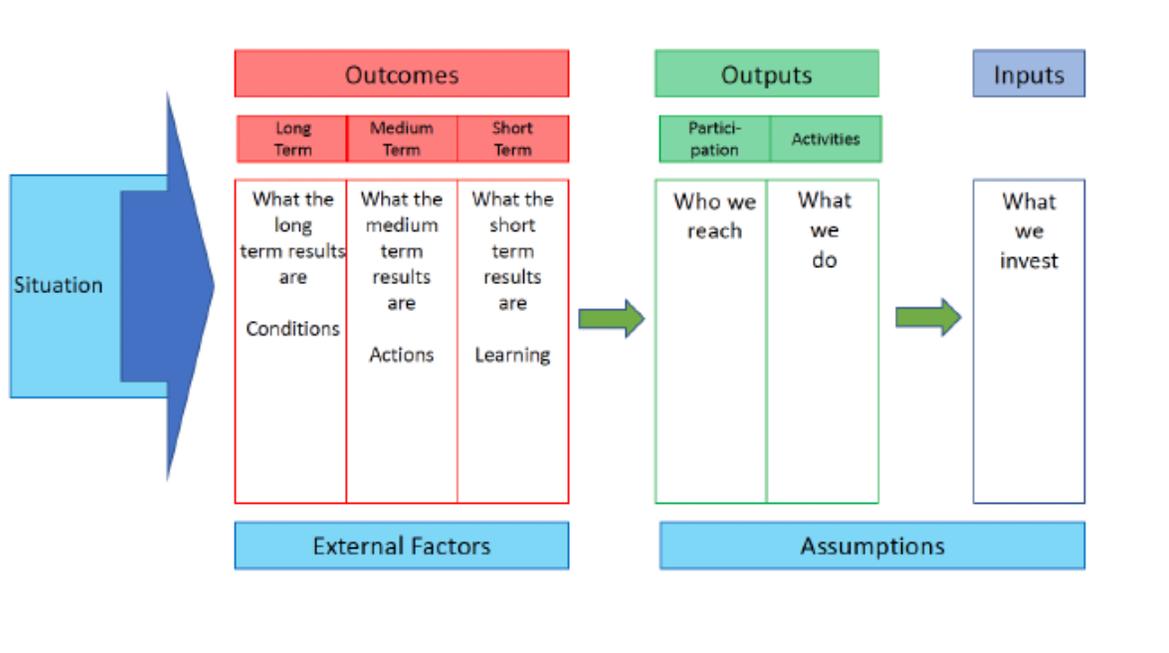
Activities- What we do

Business visits, surveys, Roundtables including World Café Model, follow up visits.

INPUTS

What we invest

Dedicated staff and "BEAR" Team with key stakeholders imperative to be at the table meeting with businesses.

Outcomes			Outputs		Inputs
Long Term	Medium Term	Short Term	Partici-pation	Activities	
What the long term results are Conditions	What the medium term results are Actions	What the short term results are Learning	Who we reach	What we do	What we invest
External Factors			Assumptions		

(Situation → Outcomes → Outputs → Inputs)

Response 2

Inputs

Investing staff time, leadership support, and partnerships to carry out the BR&E program. This includes staff conducting business visits, coordination with utilities and other departments, and support from community and economic development partners. They also invests in building trust with businesses by listening, maintaining confidentiality, and following through on concerns when possible.

Outputs

Participation (Who We Reach):

The program reaches existing businesses of different sizes and industries throughout the community.

Activities (What We Do):

The staff conduct business visits or conversations, ask consistent questions, document feedback, and connect businesses with available resources or appropriate departments. Information gathered is summarized and shared with to help guide decisions.

Outcomes

Short-Term (Learning):

They gain a better understanding of business needs, concerns, and opportunities. Businesses become more aware of contacts and available support.

Medium-Term (Actions):

They use the information from the BR&E program to improve communication, coordinate across departments, and address recurring issues affecting local businesses.

Long-Term (Conditions):

Over time, the program helps create a stronger business environment, improved relationships between the Cities and local businesses, and increased confidence in the community as a place to do business.

Response 3

Developing a Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) program for the communities we serve is essential to strengthening local economies and supporting the long-term wellbeing of both businesses and residents. In Northern Minnesota, the purpose of a BR&E initiative is to demonstrate to business owners that they are not alone, that a network of resources, partners, and support systems exists to help them navigate challenges, plan for the future, and ultimately thrive. The program aims to shift business owners from a mindset of survival to one of sustainability, growth, and intentional transition planning.

Long-Term Outcomes
The long-term vision is to cultivate vibrant, resilient local economies where empty storefronts are replaced with thriving businesses and retiring business owners experience smooth, well-planned transitions to new ownership. These outcomes support economic continuity, preserve community identity, and prevent disruptions that can ripple through the local economy. A successful BR&E program

will contribute to a stable business environment where succession planning is normalized and communities benefit from sustained economic activity.

Medium-Term Outcomes

In the medium term, the program seeks to strengthen relationships among business owners, fostering a sense of shared purpose and mutual support. By encouraging peer-to-peer connection and collaboration, the program helps build a cohort of engaged business leaders who take pride in their community and actively contribute to its vitality. This sense of pride and ownership becomes a catalyst for broader community development and economic momentum.

Short-Term Outcomes

Short-term outcomes focus on building awareness and trust. This includes introducing business owners to local partners, CEDA and other organizations that provide technical assistance, financial resources, and strategic guidance. Early engagement helps business owners understand all the support available and lays the foundation for deeper participation in the BR&E process.

Vision for Outputs

The program's outputs center on consistent, meaningful engagement with local businesses. This includes:

- Conducting in-person visits to both thriving and struggling businesses to build relationships and understand their unique needs.

- Distributing and collecting surveys that allow business owners to share their stories, challenges, and opportunities.

- Maintaining a visible presence in the community to reinforce accessibility and commitment.

- Following up with business owners to ensure their concerns are acknowledged and addressed.

These outputs create a continuous feedback loop that informs program priorities and ensures that support strategies are grounded in real, current business experiences.
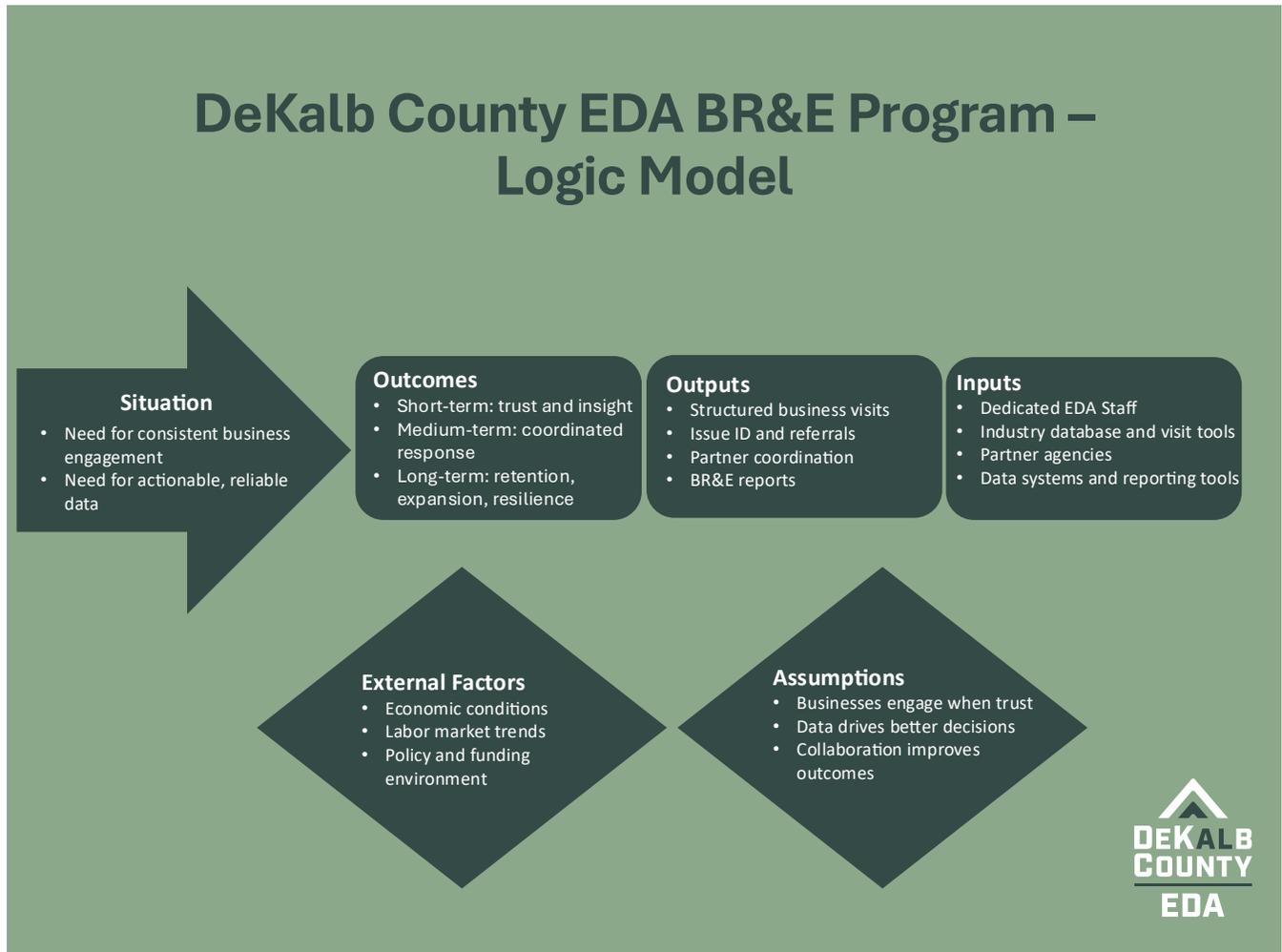
Vision for Inputs

To achieve these outcomes and outputs, the program requires intentional investment in time, presence, and relationship-building. Key inputs include:

- Staff time dedicated to in-person engagement, recognizing that trust is built through consistent, authentic interactions.

- Development of high-quality survey tools that capture meaningful data while respecting the time and capacity of business owners.

- Internal preparation and coordination, including time spent in the office designing surveys, analyzing responses, and planning follow-up actions.

- Collaboration with local partners, ensuring that the program leverages the full support available to businesses.

By committing these inputs, the BR&E program establishes the credibility and trust necessary to create an atmosphere of success. When business owners feel heard, supported, and connected, the community as a whole becomes stronger and more resilient.

Response 4

DeKalb County EDA BR&E Program – Logic Model

Situation
- Need for consistent business engagement
- Need for actionable, reliable data

Outcomes
- Short-term: trust and insight
- Medium-term: coordinated response
- Long-term: retention, expansion, resilience

Outputs
- Structured business visits
- Issue ID and referrals
- Partner coordination
- BR&E reports

Inputs
- Dedicated EDA Staff
- Industry database and visit tools
- Partner agencies
- Data systems and reporting tools

External Factors
- Economic conditions
- Labor market trends
- Policy and funding environment

Assumptions
- Businesses engage when trust
- Data drives better decisions
- Collaboration improves outcomes

Using the logic model presented in Slide 9, DeKalb County EDA's Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E) Program is intentionally designed to align resources and activities with meaningful, long-term outcomes that strengthen the county's existing business base. The program prioritizes outcomes first, recognizing that business visits and data collection are only valuable if they lead to improved decision-making, responsiveness, and economic stability.

Outcomes: Desired Changes and Long-Term Impact

The overarching outcome of DeKalb County's BR&E program is a more resilient and competitive local economy driven by the success of existing businesses. In the short term, the program is expected to improve communication and trust between businesses and the EDA by establishing a consistent, proactive presence and clear point of contact. Businesses should feel confident that their concerns are understood and that there is a pathway for assistance.

In the medium term, the program aims to improve the county's ability to identify trends and respond strategically to workforce challenges, infrastructure needs, and expansion opportunities. By aggregating and analyzing business feedback, DeKalb County EDA can better coordinate partners, align workforce development efforts, and inform policy or infrastructure discussions with credible, business-driven data.

Long-term outcomes include increased business retention, higher levels of local reinvestment, and a stronger alignment between business needs and community assets such as workforce pipelines, utilities, and education providers. Ultimately, the BR&E program contributes to sustained job retention, expansion activity, and long-term economic stability across DeKalb County.

Outputs: Activities and Direct Products of the Program

The primary outputs of the BR&E program center on structured engagement and actionable information. These include the development and maintenance of a comprehensive countywide business database, routine and recurring business visits across industries and employer sizes, and systematic documentation of business needs, challenges, and opportunities.

Additional outputs include issue identification and referral, coordination with workforce and training partners, and support for expansion and investment projects. The program also produces internal and external reporting, such as annual BR&E reports and dashboards, which translate engagement data into insights for leadership and stakeholders. These outputs ensure the program moves beyond activity tracking and toward meaningful use of information.

Inputs: Resources and Investments Required

The success of the BR&E program depends on several foundational inputs. Dedicated staff capacity and clearly defined roles provide continuity and accountability for business engagement and follow-up. Standardized tools such as visit questionnaires, data systems, and reporting templates support consistency, accuracy, and institutional knowledge over time.

Partnerships are also a critical input. Collaboration with workforce, utilities, chambers of commerce, educational institutions, and local governments expand the program's ability to respond effectively to business needs. Finally, leadership support and a commitment to using BR&E findings in decision-making help ensure that the program's results are respected, acted upon, and sustained.

Creating an Atmosphere of Success

An atmosphere of success for DeKalb County's BR&E program is created when inputs, outputs, and outcomes are aligned with a shared understanding of purpose. By emphasizing ethical engagement, accurate data, follow-through, and transparent communication, the program reinforces trust with businesses and partners alike.

Response 5

Irving Economic Development Partnership – Irving, Texas

Our vision for the Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E) program at the Irving Economic Development Partnership is to create a proactive, relationship-driven system that supports the long-term success of Irving's existing businesses. We view program success as the direct alignment of inputs, outputs, and

outcomes. The program will be revamped under my leadership to include a team of volunteers to increase our community impact and engagement.

Inputs for our BR&E program include organizational commitment from the Irving Economic Development Partnership and the City of Irving, workforce and education partners, utilities, and regional agencies. Additional inputs include reliable business data, internal tracking systems, and established trust with Irving's business community, which allows for open communication and effective problem solving.

Output consists of structured and ongoing engagement with Irving-based businesses, including regular business visits, quarterly HR meetings, surveys, and follow-up communication. These activities are supported by clear intentional coordination processes across city departments and partner organizations. Internal KPI's and trend reporting serve as key outputs that inform broader economic development, workforce, and infrastructure planning efforts.

Outcomes of the BR&E program include stronger relationships with existing employers/community partners, increased awareness and use of available resources, and improved responsiveness to business needs in the short term. Over time, the program supports business retention, workforce development, reinvestment, and expansion within Irving. Ultimately, our desired outcome is a resilient and competitive local economy where businesses view Irving as a supportive, business-friendly community in which to grow and invest.

Response 6

OUTCOMES

Long Term - Conditions
- Connect companies with resources, incentives, and workforce solutions
- Strengthen relationships with current employers
- Support expansion opportunities
- Identify risks of business closure or relocation

Medium Term – Actions
- Standardized visit questionnaires
- Business newsletters
- Industry roundtable invitations
- Marketing materials explaining available resources
- Website pages dedicated to business support

Short Term – Learning
- Workforce needs
- Supply chain issues
- Facility or infrastructure constraints
- Technology adoption
- Exporting and market access

- Local regulatory challenges
- Expansion plans

OUTPUTS

Participation

- Chamber of Commerce
- Local Tech School
- Local College
- Utility providers
- City/county departments

Activities

- Workforce training partnerships (community college, workforce board)
- Help navigate permitting or zoning
- Connections to state incentives
- Supply chain matchmaking
- Export assistance
- Help finding land or buildings for expansion

INPUTS

- Define target industries
- Set annual outreach goals (# of business visits) (in-person visits, industry roundtables, CEO breakfasts, surveys, plant tours
- Establish metrics: jobs retained, expansions assisted, issues resolved
- Time for data entry and analysis
- Staff training in interviewing, economic development, and relationship management
- Leadership time for coordinating partners and responding to issues
- CRM or business intelligence platform (EDOiQ)
- Survey tools
- Data dashboards
- Business lists and industry databases
- Project tracking tools

Response 7

Inputs (What We Invest)

An effective BR&E program does not require large budgets, but it does require commitment. The most important investments are staff time, consistency, and leadership support. Staff must be trained to listen more than talk and to handle information confidentially. Strong relationships with utilities, workforce partners, and regulatory departments are also essential, as most business concerns cut across multiple areas. Just as important is the City's willingness to respond when issues are identified—nothing undermines a program faster than a lack of follow-through.

Outputs

Participation (Who We Reach):
Over time, the program reaches a broad cross-section of existing businesses. Participation improves as trust builds and businesses see that the City takes their input seriously.

Activities (What We Do):
The core activities include regular business visits, structured conversations focused on operations and future plans, and documentation of issues that may affect retention or expansion. The information gathered is reviewed for patterns and shared with decision-makers so it can inform practical, achievable actions.

Outcomes

Short-Term Outcomes (Learning):
In the short term, the City gains a clearer picture of business conditions on the ground. Staff and leadership better understand workforce challenges, infrastructure needs, regulatory frustrations, and expansion barriers.

Medium-Term Outcomes (Actions):
With consistent effort, the BR&E program leads to better coordination within City departments and more targeted responses to business needs. Policies, procedures, and priorities can be adjusted based on real input rather than assumptions.

Long-Term Outcomes (Conditions):
In the long run, the program helps create a stable and predictable business environment. Businesses are more likely to stay, reinvest, and grow locally when they believe the City is engaged, responsive, and realistic about what it can deliver.

Response 8

Outcomes (benefits/changes) - outcomes should be the priority.
- Long-term: Detailed action plan for program implementation that provides value for existing and potential businesses in our region
- Medium-term: Act on specific info gathered and together with partners create programs to mitigate current issues or improve the local business climate.
- Short- term: Identification of known and unknown issues in our local business economy. At this stage I think it is important to focus what that "value" in the long-term section of planning looks like for business owners and consider how that may be different across businesses/industries.

Outputs(Activities) – Should consider a goal number for each output activity and identify strategic targets within business community. (for our specific organization this is 100 clients; 75 referrals 4 Local Action Team Meetings, with a focus on HR and Business Transition need clients)
- Business visits and assessments
- Referrals - connect business to partners/resources that may already exist
- Feedback mechanisms – follow ups and stakeholder sessions

- Networking and workshop events
- Marketing events to assist in gaining community support and raise awareness

Inputs(Resources) and considerations
- Staff time – either paid or volunteer
- Financial resources – should consider feasibility
- Expertise – do we have access to the necessary capabilities either in house or with partners – if not where could find the skills (ex. legal, research, marketing, data analysis)
- Community support

Response 9

Outcomes

- EDC recognized as a business resource with consistent outreach
- Fortify our current businesses to successfully navigate challenges
- Stronger connection in the community with business-to-business relationships
- Consistent programming tailored to business needs
- Strengthened local workforce that meets the needs of our current businesses
- Strong local business community and support that attracts new businesses to our area
- Expansion of current local businesses

Outputs

- Set SMART goals to reach our outcome goals
- Reach out to a sampling of businesses in each industry and size to represent the local business make up
- Formal BRE interviews with questions that will give us information into weaknesses, strengths and pain points
- Provide data to business owners for their business to gauge where they are compared to similar businesses
- Quarterly to monthly training in the areas most needed
- Roundtable with representative business owners from each industry to discuss their needs and educate them on where we can help

Inputs

- Onboarding data tools that can help create a story for our community and individual businesses
- Information directly from business owners as to where they need help, what training they are willing to attend, and where they are strong
- Possibly hiring a professional to help create a BRE program
- Attending this class to learn more about successful program components
- Researching what has worked in other areas
- Assessing the time of our small staff and what is reasonable to implement

Response 10

On a small scale the BRE program starts with a welcome visit to new business as well an existing company. This allows us to request a return visit to present a survey of questions for our use not to be shared publicly.

The return visit with survey has basic information about the business and includes number of employees, facility size, Current hiring status, future expectations, and challenges.

Log visits and scheduled return visits for the future.

Create notes and work on solutions if needed to challenge presented.

Post emails/phone calls reaching out to thank them again for their time.

The business visits are made weekly and revisited quarterly with flexibility.

The goal we are hoping this achieves is a closer community and companies that trust in the RMDD and that we are here to help in any way we can to keep their businesses thriving and expanding depending on their goals. We want to have relationships with our businesses and let them know they are not alone. We all have the same goal in mind for success. Providing the community with products and services. The survey helps with knowing the needs and goals of each of the individual businesses. Collaborating with other resources can help businesses be successful.

The demographics are 1/3 Caucasian, 1/3 Hispanic, and 1/3 Black in a population of just under 6000.

There are about 273 businesses.

Leading industries construction, service and health care, food service, retail, education and social services.

Response 11

Inputs: Laying the Groundwork in Sanger

For Sanger EDC, the most important input is organizational and community commitment to existing businesses. This includes support from the EDC Board, City leadership, and staff who recognize that retaining current employers is just as critical as recruiting new ones. BR&E must be embedded into daily operations rather than treated as a one-time initiative.

Staff capacity and defined roles are essential inputs. Team members need dedicated time for business outreach, visit coordination, documentation, and follow-up. Training in interview techniques, confidentiality, and issue triage ensures visits are productive and professional.

Another key input is local partnership coordination. In Sanger, this means strong working relationships with:

- City departments (planning, permitting, public works, utilities)

- Workforce and education partners serving the I-35 corridor

- The Chamber of Commerce and local business networks

- Denton County and regional economic development partners

These relationships ensure that when a business concern is identified — such as workforce needs, infrastructure issues, or permitting delays — there is a clear path to a solution.

Sanger EDC also needs a reliable tracking and communication system. Documenting visits, concerns, and follow-up actions allows the EDC to identify trends across industries such as retail, service businesses, and light industrial users. Clear communication about the purpose of the program and confidentiality of responses builds trust within the business community.

Together, these inputs establish the credibility, structure, and capacity necessary for a successful BR&E program in Sanger.

Outputs: What the Program Looks Like in Action

For Sanger EDC, outputs are the visible signs that the BR&E program is active and engaged with the local business community.

The primary output is consistent business outreach and visitation, including in-person visits, calls, or structured surveys with existing employers. These interactions should cover topics such as workforce challenges, facility needs, supply chain issues, and future growth plans.

Other key outputs include:

- Documented business concerns and opportunities gathered during visits

- Issue referrals and coordinated follow-up with the appropriate city department or partner

- Resource sharing, such as workforce programs, grant opportunities, or local development incentives

- Trend reporting to the EDC Board and City leadership, highlighting recurring themes like infrastructure needs, retail demand, or workforce gaps

Communication is also an important output. Sharing success stories, available resources, and program updates through newsletters or social media helps reinforce that Sanger EDC is actively working on behalf of its businesses.

These outputs demonstrate that the program is organized, responsive, and focused on action — not just data collection.

Outcomes: Long-Term Impact for Sanger

The outcomes of a well-executed BR&E program shape Sanger's overall business climate.

Short-term outcomes include stronger relationships and trust between the business community and Sanger EDC. Business owners feel heard and more comfortable reaching out before small issues become major problems.

Intermediate outcomes involve the resolution of barriers. When issues related to permitting, utilities, workforce access, or infrastructure are addressed efficiently, businesses can operate more effectively. This reduces frustration and lowers the risk of companies downsizing or relocating.

Long-term outcomes are directly tied to Sanger's economic stability and growth. Businesses that feel supported are more likely to:

- Reinvest in their facilities

- Expand operations

- Retain and create jobs

- Serve as ambassadors for Sanger's business-friendly environment

Over time, this strengthens the city's reputation along the I-35 corridor as a community that values its employers and responds to their needs. The result is a more resilient local economy built on retention, expansion, and sustained private investment.

Creating the Atmosphere of Success

For Sanger EDC, an atmosphere of success comes from consistent follow-through. Businesses must see that their input leads to real action. When strong inputs (leadership support, partnerships, and systems) enable meaningful outputs (visits, follow-ups, and reporting), the outcomes naturally follow: trust, stability, and growth.

A BR&E program succeeds in Sanger when businesses view the EDC not just as a recruiter of new companies, but as a long-term partner invested in the success of those already here.

Response 12

Outcome

Long term: Helped/Assisted 60 businesses with becoming self-sustaining, helping to grow a competitive economy, that is able to stay current and meet the everchanging needs of the present-day culture and community.

Medium term: Take action on the data received, create a comprehensive plan to begin a program to assist reduce weaknesses. Coordinating leadership meetings with county/city/community, creating a collaborative effort to rebuild and sustain businesses.

short term: Build a survey form. Visiting businesses, building a relationship of trust, in order to build a strong database to understand their weaknesses, strengths, threats & opportunities.

Output =   By going to my data base, referring to it to increase the knowledge of the business, helping teach an action plan to become a thriving sustainable business.

Inputs = Create a survey to use. Determine a certain number of existing businesses per community, ie, Hugo, the larger community I would set the number at 50, Soper may be 10. Gather resources needed. Engage expertise to gather ideas of the implementation of action plan.

Response 13

In this assignment, I have developed a plan to implement a successful and sustainable BR&E program for my community in Texas. My organization is a Type A Economic Development Corporation (EDC) which is authorized to utilize portion of sales tax revenue for economic development with manufacturing and industrial sectors.

Benefits or changes (outcomes) that may result

My vision for BR&E is to engage existing local manufacturing and industries to build a relationship with them and facilitate businesses connections between them. My goal for my EDC is for us to become a local economic development expert and act as a consultant for their business needs.

Outcomes-Long Term (Condition)

Through my BR&E planning, I will focus on creating long-term benefits for existing local manufacturers and industries that ensure they feel confident, supported, and empowered to continue growing within the community. By strengthening relationships and collaboration, these businesses know that community stakeholders are their strongest advocates for sustained success.

Outcomes-Medium Term (Action)

Before reaching the long-term outcome, the medium-term outcome is for my EDC to facilitate impactful introductions for companies and local stakeholders. These meetings are focused on discussing current issues such as workforce development, supply chain/logistics, and City ordinances.

Outcomes-Short Term (Learning)

To begin the BR&E program, it is important to know the existing local manufacturing and industries. First, I will collect data on who is in my community and create a contact information database. Companies will be categorized by if they are locally headquartered, estimated employee size, and existing relationships with my EDC. This categorization helps prioritize the contact list. The database will have basic operational information for the company that might be available on their website.

Activities (outputs) that take place

Outputs-Participations (Who we reach)

It is important to meet with decision-makers such as business owners, CEOs, presidents, or site managers to identify opportunities. The first contact will be made by phone calls and emails to introduce myself and my EDC and to make an in-person appointment. I will stop by their facility if I am not able to communicate with them by phone or emails.

Outputs-Activities (What we do)

The first face to face meeting with a company will be a basic introduction of my EDC and services we offer. I would like to know the company's leadership team, operations, and any red flags that surface during the meeting. I will make a commitment to assist in finding the right person to connect to meet their needs. After the first meeting, I will follow up with the company with an email summarizing our discussion. To build a relationship it is very important to continue following up until my commitment is fulfilled. I believe this is the first step to demonstrate how my EDC can assist the company and we are trustworthy. As a part of my BR&E program, I will continue to meet with local companies. The frequency will be determined through conversations and the company's immediate needs.

Resources (inputs) that are invested

Inputs (What we invest)

My EDC exists to support manufacturing and industrial development in my community. BR&E is one of the core missions of the EDC because we understand effectiveness of BR&E. My EDC is invested in BR&E with full-time staff and dedicated budget to assisting locally existing companies with their operational needs.

Response 14

The City of McAlester established the Local Economic Advancement & Development (LEAD) Committee on April 9th, 2019. The committee consists of eleven members that represent a variety of development partners and economic sectors, including City Council, Finance, Education, Defense, Small Business, Industry, Healthcare and Chamber of Commerce. All members of the committee are unpaid volunteers and serve one-year terms with no term limitations. The purpose of the LEAD Committee is to be an advisory board of the city's Community and Economic Development Departments. The committee is designed to work in conjunction with city staff to evaluate the following:

1. Current community and economic policy and ordinances.
2. Opportunity for financially sustainable economic growth from organizations currently located in McAlester.
3. Opportunities for financially sustainable economic growth from start-ups and early-stage organizations interested in locating to the McAlester area.
4. Opportunities to attract or recruit new businesses or industries from outside of the McAlester area.

Since its creation, the LEAD Committee has seen 5 different Economic Development Directors, including myself, over the past 7 years. The group has also struggled with a clear direction and purpose

for the board, with members often asking why they're there or what they're being asked to do. This has led to numerous issues with quorums during meetings as well as most meetings turning into gossip sessions, wanting information on what new business is relocating or when such and such business is opening.

After taking over the Director position, my goal has been to take this board and give it a new meaning and purpose. With so much of Economic Development being centered around building relationships, strict confidentiality and NDA's, it's hard to use a board like this for new industry or even retail that is looking to invest in McAlester's future. The people serving on this committee are strong figures in the community, stakeholders who have a vested interest in what goes on but they're not part of the direct discussions on who, how or what is needed to bring someone to town. I've felt a better purpose and use of this group would be to connect with already existing businesses and leverage the local relationships that already exist to really establish a true BR&E Program, something I've personally felt we've never fully focused on. After watching the BEAR video and seeing the Logic Model Overview, I felt my assessment and idea of realigning & restructuring the board was affirmed.

Again, many of the people involved on the LEAD Committee are major figures and players within McAlester, but that doesn't exactly mean they're perfect for the vision of this board. For a community like McAlester, existing businesses are the backbone of the local economy. Business needs to feel valued, supported and confident in investing in the long-term growth of the community. Between Choctaw Nation, The Chamber, Eastern Oklahoma State College, Kiamichi Technology Center and the City of McAlester, we have multiple people working Economic Development, yet many of them of are missing from my board. Why are we not leveraging the same people that are doing the work and talking directly with our local business currently? My goal for the program is to strengthen McAlester's economy by supporting the success, retention and expansion of existing businesses through proactive engagement, issue resolution and coordinated community response.

Outcomes

Short-term (1-12 months):

- Businesses feel heard & valued
- Improved trust between businesses & the city
- Clear understanding of common business challenges/barriers to growth
- Faster response to preventable issues
- Stronger coordination among support partners with better alignment between business needs & available tools
- Increase awareness of state resources
- Reduce confusion with navigating government programs

Medium-term (1-3 years):

- Reduced business closures or relocations
- Increased reinvestment by existing firms

- Improved workforce stability
- Enhanced local problem-solving capacity
- More business-friendly policies and procedures
- Stronger state-local collaboration

Long-term (3+ years):

- Stronger, more resilient local economy
- Increased job retention & gradual job growth
- Positive reputation for McAlester as a business-supportive community
- Sustainable, institutionalized economic development practices
- Reduce economic leakage to larger metros

Outputs

- Completed business assessment/interview
- Documented business needs & concerns
- Regular business visits & follow-ups
- Issue referral & resolution actions
- Business resource connections made
- Internal reports summarizing business trends
- Policy & process recommendations
- Business database & resource guide
- Annual BR&E summary for leadership & stakeholders

Activities

Program Design & Governance
- Establish a BR&E steering committee (LEAD)
- Clearly define roles, confidentiality standards & communication protocols
- Align program with existing city & regional (Choctaw Nation) economic development strategies

Business Outreach & Engagement

- Proactive, structured business visits & interviews by trained partners
- Build ongoing relationships with employers
- Prioritize key sectors, major employers and vulnerable small businesses
- Use consistent interview tools to ensure accurate & comparable data

Data Collection & Analysis

- Capture insights from businesses – Qualitative & Quantitative
- Identify recurring themes, challenges & growth opportunities
- Segment findings by industry & business size

Issue Resolution & Coordination

- Connect businesses to relevant resources & assistance
- Establish internal response teams/practices for common business challenges
- Coordinate communication/responses across city departments & partner organizations
- Track progress & communicate back to businesses

Relationship Management & Follow-Up

- Develop regular check-ins with visited businesses
- Celebrate expansions, anniversaries and reinvestment milestones
- Maintain an updated business contact database

Inputs

- A lead coordinating entity (City of McAlester - Economic Development Department)
- Staff or trained volunteers with strong interpersonal skills (LEAD Committee)
- Clear leadership buy-in from city officials, senior stakeholders & regional partnerships (City Council, EOSC, KTC, Chamber of Commerce, Choctaw Nation)
- Standardized business interviews
- Data tracking systems
- Awareness of available state, regional and federal resources
- Working relationships with utilities & infrastructure providers (Water, Sewer, Electric, Fiber, Gas, Railroad)
- Workforce & education partners (KTC & EOSC)
- Increased interaction with regional economic development entities (Choctaw Nation, OKSBDC, COGs – KEDDO, SODA, SERTPO)
- Commitment to confidentiality & trust
- Willingness to address issues & acknowledge areas out of our control
- Long-term perspective rather than quick wins

Implementation Roadmap (Phased Approach)

Phase 1: Foundation

- Reestablish LEAD committee with new board members, clear goals & active mission
- Establish tools, partnerships, means for data collection & analysis
- Identify initial target businesses

Phase 2: Active Engagement

- Conduct Business visits
- Track issues & resolutions
- Share early wins internally

Phase 3: Refinement & Integration

- Analyze trends across visits
- Advocate for change & help adjust policies or procedures where feasible
- Integrate BR&E findings into broader economic development planning

Phase 4: Institutionalization

- Establish BR&E as a permanent function
- Share annual summaries
- Utilize data and insights to guide workforce, infrastructure and recruitment strategies

Rubric

Content Quality 4

Relevance and Focus 4

Organization and Structure 4

Use of Examples ....N/A

Presentation and Language 4

Score 4

Comments

Content Quality
Great job!

Relevance and Focus
No problems with this factor. You stayed on the topic extremely well.

Organization and Structure
You did an excellent job regarding the structure of your response! You have obviously put some thought into this and it shows in your response.

Presentation and Language
Great job!

Response 15

Response 16