

Ohio Business Retention and Expansion Program

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Business Retention & Expansion Program

Situation: Local communities lack an understanding of issues related to their economy. Local officials lack knowledge of existing business needs and resulting expansion strategies. Relations among community stakeholders (businesses, residents, local leaders/officials) are fragmented.

Description of the Activity (Program Response): Engage community stakeholders in a formal dialogue in order to empower local development officials and the community at large to act on community and economic development issues of strategic importance. Help local communities learn how to systematically gather information critical to understanding local development needs.

Assumptions: community stakeholders are desirous of cultivating relationships; local officials and community decision-makers value research-based information

Description of the Target Audience: local development officials, community volunteers, Extension professionals (direct); community stakeholders (indirect)

Current BR&E programs (started in 2012/2013):

1. Point Place (Lucas County)
2. Fayette County
3. Wyandot County
4. Van Wert County
5. Weinland Park (Franklin County)
6. Strongsville (Cuyahoga)

Ohio Business Retention and Expansion Program



NO BR&E



BR&E SINCE 2003

INPUTS

Typical BR&E Program Inputs include: **time** of Extension professional staff and community volunteers; **expenses** associated with mailings, meeting refreshments, required program software, Extension professional time, travel, and program maintenance; **equipment** such as projectors, computers, and software, and; **program research base** including creative and scholarly work presented and consumed by Extension professionals.

OUTPUTS

Typical BR&E Program Outputs include: BR&E training, on-site workshops and one-on-one consultation, volunteer organizational efforts, continuous update of BR&E hard copy and web-based materials such as questionnaires, reports, and presentations in cooperation with development officials, elected officials, businesses, and community stakeholders including Extension professionals.

Output Measures - Activities (2012):

1. 6 formal training workshops
2. 25 one-on-one consultations
3. Countless communications among community stakeholders
4. Re-creation of web presence
5. 3 web-based questionnaires
6. 2 hard-copy questionnaires
7. 5 scholarly publications

Ohio Business Retention and Expansion Program

Output Measures - Participation (2012):

1. Program planning and implementation volunteers (27), volunteer hours (189) at \$19.23/hour (most recent estimate available 2010): \$3,600
2. Persons participating in BR&E programming (2012 RIV): 4,400
3. Multi-state partnerships : 2

Overview

The Business Retention and Expansion Program (BR&E) is one of the original Signature Programs of Ohio State University Extension. To date, Business Retention and Expansion Programs have been conducted in over 77 counties and 150 communities in Ohio (see above map).

Since being established as a Signature Program, a packaged curriculum has been developed to include three workshops, programmatic templates and turn-key software to support a comprehensive BR&E program on the local or regional level. Marketing materials, including a workbook and brochures have been professionally developed to promote the program. A trained team of professional Extension Educators and Specialists are also prepared to deliver the program throughout Ohio.

In 2011, Community Development Leadership identified 3 Field Specialist Positions to focus on State-wide community economic issues. In 2012, changes and enhancements to the BR&E Signature Program were identified and incorporated. In fact, two of the three Field Specialist positions primary focus was identified as Community Economics with a focus on Business Retention and Expansion. An additional focus identified is to expand into different venues while at the same time continuing to conduct traditional BR&E (Industrial and Commercial surveys) programs.

In February 2012, Nancy Bowen and David Civittolo were hired as Community Development Field Specialists focusing on Community Economics with an emphasis on Business Retention and Expansion. To re-create, re-define and re-brand the Business Retention and Expansion Program, Bowen and Civittolo applied for and received a grant (\$6,000) from the Assistant Director, Community Development. The title of the grant is: "Elevating and Expanding the Business Retention & Expansion Signature Program".

The purpose of the grant is:

- Create a new web page and developed social media announcements
- Develop curriculum (Fact Sheets, Bulletins, PowerPoints)
- Develop survey questions for niche economies
- Develop a new marketing brochure and pricing structure for the BRE Program
- Present BR&E program to JobsOhio and other interested entities

Ohio Business Retention and Expansion Program

While some of the goals above have already been completed in 2012, it is the intention of the BR&E team to complete the remaining goals by end of the 2013.

Extent to which the program is implemented across the state (e.g., who, where, how, how many, how long, etc.)

When the Co-leaders of the Business Retention and Expansion Team reviewed the data provided by the Program and Development and Evaluation (PDE) Office as well as information from the 2012 North Central States Impact Indicators Report, it becomes apparent that the BR&E program was conducted throughout Ohio and by Extension Educators from three of the four Program Areas (Community Development, Agriculture and Natural Resources, and Family and Consumer Sciences). In 2012, the data indicates that 96 programs, 101 events, almost 4,400 individuals (1,909 contact hours), 27 volunteers (189 volunteer hours x \$19.23= \$3,600) participated in Business Retention and Expansion program.

In Wyandot County, the Community Development Educator, Greg Moon, conducted a BR&E survey for the industrial sector. The purpose was to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the local Wyandot County economy while creating a means of communication between local business, community leaders, and public officials. Data was collected through the survey, which was distributed by electronic and physical means. Armed with the data results, trends were examined and new directives and policy were created to combat the local issues. Some of the outcomes include: educating local business leaders on the new state and federal level programs and on pre-existing programs that apply to their current needs. Changes in awareness were identified as some of the program participants utilized available local and state level programs.

As the Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension Educator in Tuscarawas County, Chris Zoller understands the importance of small farms to the local economy. To that end, Chris conducted a program titled: Annie's Project. The goal of the program is for women in agriculture to understand key business concepts relating to farming. During the six week course, participants focus on a wide variety of farm management topics such as: Communication, Mission Statements, Financial Analysis, Farm Transition Planning, Marketing, Managing Production Risk, and Managing Stress. A post-program evaluation indicated that as a result of their participation:

- 70% feel more connected to the business
- 100% have used at least one new idea.

Above are just two of the business programs that were offered by Extension Educators in 2012. It should be noted that a Business Retention and Expansion program often takes more than 12

Ohio Business Retention and Expansion Program

months to complete so some of the data for programs started in 2012 have not been incorporated because the project will be completed (final report to the community) in 2013.

Extent to which the program achieves the anticipated short-term, mid-term, and/or long-term changes in knowledge, attitudes, skills, practices, or conditions

The Business Retention and Expansion Program is guided by the following outcomes:

SHORT TERM - Local leaders and community residents will:

1. Improve their understanding of the concept of economic development and appreciate the need to better understand existing businesses.
2. Be more familiar with the concept of an ongoing Business Retention & Expansion program.
3. Be more willing and able to play an active role in the development of their community and be more aware of the roles they can play in the development of their community's economy.
4. Devote time necessary to develop a working relationship with existing businesses in their region.
5. Be more familiar with different ways of analyzing data and more capable of interpreting data needed to make important community decisions.
6. Track key indicators specific to their community.

MEDIUM TERM - Local leaders and community residents will:

1. Use BR&E data and other secondary data available to make better-informed community decisions.
2. Adopt one or more recommended practices for retaining and/or expanding existing businesses as a result of formal BR&E efforts.
3. 'Donate' volunteer hours in undertaking the BR&E program in their community.

LONG TERM

1. Jobs will be retained and created by existing businesses.
2. New businesses will be created.
3. Community leaders, residents, and businesses will engage in ongoing, meaningful dialogue.

Ohio Business Retention and Expansion Program

When one reviews the data from Research in View (RIV), some of the short term examples include:

1. Wyandot County. Through local BR&E visits, Extension Educator Moon educated local business leaders on the new state and federal level programs available that are applicable to their business, and on preexisting programs that would apply to their current needs. Changes in awareness were seen as some of the program participant's utilized local and state level programs available.
2. Tuscarawas County. A post-program evaluation indicated that as a result of their participation:
 - 81% believed they have an impact on the business
 - 100% saw the value in having a mission statement
 - 100% are more aware of where to find information

Medium Term examples include:

1. Wyandot County. Many local employers become aware of various resources available to their business. Once these businesses successfully take advantage of those resources and programs, their view of the value that OSU Extension provides is strengthened.
2. Van Wert County. BR&E fostered improved relationships among local development organizations, individuals and businesses. Coordination leads to more effective communications and working partnerships resulting in more cooperative policy and decision-making.

Some Long Term examples:

1. A new business was created
2. 2 multi-state partnerships were created

Extent to which the program elevates the public's knowledge of OSUE

As indicated earlier, report data indicate that three of the 4 Extension program areas use the Business Retention and Expansion Program to foster community economics in their respective county/region/eera. Data indicates that:

- 2100 individuals have been contacted via regular mail
- 393 BRE materials have been distributed
- 12 media appearances by Extension personnel
- 65 telephone contacts

Ohio Business Retention and Expansion Program

Based on the above numbers along with the geographic coverage of the BR&E program, it becomes obvious that the public is quite aware of the impact of OSUE on their county and on the entire state of Ohio. The BR&E program is focused on using trained educators to conduct a community economics program, BR&E specifically, in communities throughout Ohio. The team engages the local Extension Educator (or Extension Office if there are no Extension Educators), a local community volunteer to serve as a coordinator, and local committee members to conduct the program. The team then assists with survey development and survey analysis.

In 2012, The BRE team completely revamped our web presence. The new, updated site can be found at: <http://comdev.osu.edu/programs/economic-development/business-retention-expansion>. In addition, all previous communities that conducted a BR&E program were contacted to determine if they were interested in participating once again. Lastly, the grant received from the Community Development office allowed the BR&E team to re-develop marketing material that has now been distributed to over 100 communities with the goal of increasing the number of BR&E programs in Ohio in 2013 and beyond.

Extent to which proposed program marketing, communication, implementation and evaluation methods and strategies are followed

As indicated throughout this report, BR&E program has continued in its current state to produce traditional programs with Extension Educators throughout Ohio. As we move into 2013, it is imperative that we continue to brand our product and create additional opportunities to further enhance the Community Economics Program.

The BR&E team has developed and followed specific objectives for the program. The data provided indicates that BR&E survey is following specific implementation and evaluation methods originally designed by the program leaders. That is, pre-post evaluation tools as well as follow up end of the year surveys indicated specific outputs and outcomes are being met on a yearly basis.

To that end, The BR&E team has introduced the program into new venues. For example, the team has worked with Heritage Ohio (Main Street Programs) to develop a survey specifically designed for rural downtowns that are currently struggling in today's economy.

In addition, The BR&E Co-leaders have worked with our colleagues at Purdue University to develop specific programming for entrepreneurial communities.

Finally, OSU Extension was invited to work with the University of Florida to share with them our program and to assist them in developing a similar BR&E program in their State.

Ohio Business Retention and Expansion Program

2013 and beyond

The BR&E team has recently been awarded a grant (\$18,500) from the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development (NCRCRD). The goal of this project is to build a multi-state (partners include Iowa, Indiana, Minnesota, and North Dakota) effort that will improve the BR&E program and approach to positively impact rural economies through business retention and expansion. The program will be elevated and expanded for replication throughout the NCRCRD region to grow businesses that help grow local economies.

As one can see from the above report, the Business Retention and Expansion Program continues to be a viable program for Ohio State University Extension. The report details specific objective/goal/outcomes that have been accomplished in 2012. Through grants and new partnerships, The BR&E Leadership is prepared to move this signature program into the next generation of community economics.