

Beyond the Borders

COMMUNITY, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT and LEADERSHIP NEWSLETTER

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Building Communities

"Practical Tools and Information"

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This newsletter is meant to share practical tools and information to assist you in your important role in community and economic development work. We welcome comments on current letters plus encourage your advice for future articles.

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Rural Entrepreneurship

Editorial

Community Dividend, a publication of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, had a very interesting article in Issue No. 2 of 2001. It discusses entrepreneurship in rural communities and gives a wonderful review of what entrepreneurs need from their community to be successful, and also what they give back to a community. The author, Nikki Foster, says that entrepreneurs and communities are interdependent; the challenge for both lies in their ability to recognize each other's unique needs. Communities need entrepreneurs in order to revitalize their economies; entrepreneurs are dependent on the community for resources such as access to capital and other professional services.

Entrepreneurship is one of the major economic development strategies for community and economic development. It creates not just wages but wealth. Most of the money generated stays within the local or surrounding area. Job creation strategies don't necessarily do this because corporate money leaves the area. Entrepreneurship builds social capital as well. Entrepreneurs in rural areas are more likely to become community leaders and reinvest through philanthropy and volunteer work. And entrepreneurship is good for community spirit. Raymond W. Smilor of the Kauffman Center is quoted in the article as saying that entrepreneurs are the ultimate optimists and that their optimism is a remarkably potent resource for building community.

Entrepreneurs need communities that foster an entrepreneur-friendly environment. The entrepreneur needs to be creative and a moderate risk taker, but their community's support is called the cornerstone for success. Through a research project conducted by the Kauffman Center, researchers found several challenges that faced entrepreneurs. The first was a community culture that did not support entrepreneurship. Without an environment that values innovation, entrepreneurs will become discouraged. They found that communities value hard work but can be skeptical of the changes and risks that entrepreneurs introduce.

This study was not conducted in North Dakota, but I believe that if it had been, they would have come up with the same results. It is very easy to see which rural communities support their entrepreneurs and which do not. Just count the number of entrepreneurs in your area and you'll know too.

Gaps in capital availability, distance to market and services and the absence of other entrepreneurs to network and learn from were other challenges faced by entrepreneurs in rural communities as concluded by the researchers.

For additional information on this article and other community development information, *Community Dividend* is available online at www.minneapolisfed.org.

For information on Agri-Entrepreneurship or starting a home-based business, contact your county extension agent or me at ktweeten@ndsuxt.nodak.edu or see the Marketplace resource directory.

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MarketPlace Resource Directory Now Available

The newest version of the Marketplace of Ideas resource directory is now available in hard copy from Marketplace, 411 Main Street West, Mandan, ND 58554-3164 or online at <http://www.marketplaceofideas.org/>

This is a wonderful resource sponsored by Senator Kent Conrad and North Dakota Commissioner of Agriculture, Roger Johnson. The resource is a guide which can be used for business ideas and contacts and information about those providing technical assistance for people who want to start small businesses in the state. It includes information about financing and funding, small business programs, information technology, small and start up business development and management assistance, export information, labor assistance, university and college assistance, planning information and much much more. I would highly recommend that you order a copy or see the online version if you are interested in starting your own small business.

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North Dakota Community Foundation

Source: NDCF 2000 Annual Report

The North Dakota Community foundation (NDCF) was organized in 1976. It is an IRS designated 501 ©(3) statewide public non-profit tax exempt corporation that receives and distributes charitable funds to support a wide range of programs that benefit the people of the state. It has a board of directors appointed by the major professional groups in the state and from the public at large. Its mission is to improve the quality of life for North Dakota's citizens through charitable giving and promoting philanthropy. It now has a web site at <http://www.ndcf.net/> so you can view the Foundation's activities in your community. Take a look at the long list of projects and organizations that it has supported in this past year.

If your community or organization has a project and needs a little assistance in funding, you may want to consider submitting an application. The board accepts applications until August 15. Note: review eligibility guidelines before completing an application. The Foundation awards funding only to non-profit status entities.

The Foundation has a resource center that provides assistance to nonprofit organizations in the areas of planning, fundraising, board training, and organizational capacity building. Cher Hersrud is the director and can be reached toll-free at: 866-889-8265 or e-mail to hersrud@fargocity.com.

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Conducting Effective Meetings

Source: The Community Tool Boxl , University of Kansas, Dole Center

A practical website for information for improving our communities is <http://ctb.ku.edu/>

It's called the Community Tool Box . It's a unique Internet-based service to assist people who want to make their community a better place to live. The information is free. Following is a summary of their chapter on conducting effective meetings.

A truly good meeting happens when attention is paid to the four phases of meeting management:

- Planning for the meeting (agenda and goals)
- Setting up the meeting (logistics)
- Running the meeting (chairing/facilitating)
- Following up (after the meeting ends)

Phase I. Planning the meeting

1. Decide the goal of the meeting.
2. Do your homework. Have all information or research needed for the meeting completed and at the meeting.
3. Decide who needs to be there. If the meeting is only dealing with one event or committee the entire membership does not need to be there.
4. Plan with others. This is a great way to develop new leaders and to get other people more invested in the work of the group.
5. Good agendas count. List the amount of time you plan for each item and stick to it. Send it out at least a week ahead of time and include all items that will be discussed.

Phase II. Setting up the meeting

1. Start and end on time.
2. Sign participants in. Be sure to include all contact information.
3. Make the meeting spaces comfortable and convenient.
4. Have informal time before and after the meeting for people to talk and socialize. That's probably why they joined the group in the first place.
5. Don't meet just to meet. Have a clear goal and reason to meet.

Phase III. Running the meeting

1. Do introductions.
2. Get agreement on agenda and ground rules.
3. Keep the discussion on track.
4. Watch the time.
5. Summarize what you hear.
6. Encourage participation.
7. As chair, don't take sides.
8. Develop new leaders by handing over the gavel.

Phase IV. Following up on the meeting

1. Gather feedback from the group.
2. Make follow-up calls to responsible parties for actions that need to be taken.
3. Summarize the meeting and mail a report to members.

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Put Your Company On The Web

Source: University of Missouri, Sharon Stevens and Susan Henson

It seems that every business needs some kind of a web presence, even if it is as minor as an electronic directory listing. The Web is increasingly replacing the phone book as the place to look for a company's address, phone number and other key information.

If you decide to put your business on the Web it is recommended that you ask the following questions when interviewing a Web developer:

1. What services do you provide?
2. What about maintenance? Do you do the updating, are there charges for this, who owns the site when it's completed, who owns the domain name?
3. What are the hourly rates?
4. Look at the developer's Web site. Is it useful, attractive and easy to navigate? Do you like it?
5. Ask about the other people in the company. Who is on the staff and who will be working on your site?
What experience do they have? Is there a lot of turnover?
6. Ask for references from current and former customers. Look at current Web sites and evaluate them.
7. Ask how much your Web site development will cost. Is the initial consultation free?
8. Does the developer question you about your customers? A good developer knows your Web site must
be personal to your company and work for your customers.
9. Who will provide the content and graphics for your site?
10. Will the developer help you test your Web site and make corrections?
11. Can the developer host the site if you want them to? How much will it cost?
12. Will the developer help you with gathering statistics on visits to your Web site? Will there be additional
charges?
13. What will happen to your Web site if the developer goes out of business?
14. If you decide to use this developer, what are the next steps?
15. Can you get advice from the developer about legal issues?

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