

COMMERCE'S REPORT ON Beginning Again North Dakota

October 7, 2008

WORKFORCE COMMITTEE

National Energy Center of Excellence
Room 335
Senator Tony Grindberg, Chairman

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, I am Gordon La France, and I am with the Division of Community Services. As required by North Dakota Century Code 54-60-20, Commerce implemented the Beginning Again North Dakota Program. To accomplish the requirements, Commerce contracted with the NDSU Extension Center for Community Vitality.

The purpose of the program was to develop a data base of skills and other assets of communities and residents to be used to advance the internal and external attitude and image of this state and the communities in North Dakota.

The program was promoted by issuing a statewide news release through NDSU Ag Communications to all newspapers, radio stations; plus the League of Cities and city auditors were also contacted about the program. A number of cities called for additional information but only the cities below submitted applications. One of the requirements of the program was to select one city with a population of 1500 or less and one city with a population greater than 1500 but not more than 3500. Since we did not receive an application for a city in the last category, it was decided to separate the applications that were received into cities under 1000 and cities 1000 and over.

Population under 1000		Population greater than 1000	
City	Population	City	Population
Granville	286	Cando	1342
Lidgerwood	738	Hettinger	1307
Milnor	711	Rolla	1417
Mott	808	Walhalla	1057
Northwood	959		
Stanton	345		
Tower City	252		

The applications were ranked by the Division of Community Services and the NDSU Extension Center for Community Vitality. Tower City and Walhalla were the top applicants. Both cities provided financial resources in the form of volunteer time and other miscellaneous costs. Based on the volunteer time of 350 + hours each community contributed over five thousand dollars of in-kind services.

Beginning Again North Dakota

Report to Legislative Workforce Committee

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Submitted by: Kathleen Tweeten, Director, NDSU Extension Center for Community Vitality, 328-9718

Beginning Again North Dakota, the asset based community planning pilot did work. Pilot community leaders of Walhalla and Tower City successfully inventoried community assets, developed a community based plan and began implementation of projects.

In evaluating the program and process used, participants were asked several questions but the most valuable to this committee may be these:

1. Would you apply again? The answer was yes.
2. Would you recommend the program to other communities? The answer was again yes.
3. What value did the program have for you? The answer to this varied depending on the community's past experience with planning but both saw great value in the inventory of assets, survey results, planning process and the final documents.

Strategies that were implemented include a Farmer's Market in Tower City and an economic impact survey for tourism in Walhalla. While these may not sound like major impacts they are to these communities. Product demand and the social network that the farmer's market created greatly surpassed all expectations. When the grocery store owner was asked if it hurt her business in any way, she responded with an animated no...in fact she said that they may have bought their cucumbers across the street but they came to her for jars, lids, vinegar and everything else they needed. The result is a continuation of the market through the development of an association. Walhalla leaders discovered in their business sector survey that many of the local business owners were not aware of the economic impact of tourism so therefore did not market to nor cater to that clientele. In order to document what leadership believes is a significant impact; they are conducting a one year survey of just one campground. They may expand the scope of the survey to include hotels, other campgrounds, etc.

It is planned to do a quarterly follow-up call or meeting with each community to monitor continued implementation.

The attempt to inventory individual skills did not work. Committee members shared that individuals were very hesitant to talk about their skills or include them in a survey. This objective will need to be revised.

The NDSU Extension Center for Community Vitality worked collaboratively with NDSU faculty and two graduate students in the Sociology department to develop the BAND program. Minor changes and additions to the curriculum and process will be made based on client evaluation. It is planned to post the full document on a website for free community access plus it will be available on CD by request at a

small fee to cover costs. The curriculum will also be used in the community development course at NDSU.

Other than minor changes to the curriculum it is highly recommended that two additional face to face meetings be held with community leaders during the planning process. Even the more experienced community in planning had difficulty pulling together the plan when a coach/facilitator was not present.

Both communities are agreeable to follow-up monitoring and evaluation plus are willing to visit with members of the committee and be mentors for future BAND communities.