

INTRODUCTION

A healthy local economy and an improved business climate are the goals of the Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) Visitation program. The program promotes job growth by helping communities identify the concerns and barriers to survival and growth facing local businesses. This approach focuses on existing businesses. Studies show forty to eighty percent of all new jobs are created by existing firms rather than by attracting new businesses to communities. Furthermore, business attraction efforts are less likely to be successful if existing businesses are not happy with the local business climate.

OBJECTIVES

Short-Term

- Provide community support for local business
- Solve immediate individual business concerns

Long-Term

- Increase the competitiveness of local establishments
- Establish and implement a strategic action plan for economic development

In the long-term, the BR&E Visitation program can make local businesses more competitive by evaluating and addressing their broader needs and concerns. Businesses that stay competitive are more likely to remain in the community and possibly expand. The program establishes an economic development plan for the local community. The process creates a broad-based community coalition to sustain long-term economic development efforts.



BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION VISITATION PROGRAM

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Firm Visits: Local community leaders receive training on how to conduct the local BR&E Visitation program. After receiving training, *Volunteer Visitors* call on businesses and interview the firm manager or owner. A proven survey tailored to local communities is used for the interviews. The survey pinpoints business needs, concerns and development plans. Individual firm data is kept confidential.

Immediate Follow-Up: A local *Task Force* reviews the survey results and responds to the needs and concerns expressed by businesses. Support from resources within and outside the community becomes mobilized.

Strategic Planning: University faculty or other experts computerize the information and prepare an initial draft report for the *Task Force*. The report includes data analysis and suggests recommendations for improving the local business climate. The *Task Force* uses this report, its knowledge of the community, and a strategic planning process to develop an action plan.

Implementation: The action planning process fosters the development of local implementation teams. These teams spearhead efforts to achieve the goals in the action plans. Local businesses and a variety of agencies may be drawn into the process by these teams.

MAIN PLAYERS

The Leadership Team introduces and promotes the program in the community, coordinates task force meetings, and organizes immediate follow-up to the survey results. The *Leadership Team* serves on the *Task Force* and also arranges for the training of the business *Volunteer Visitors*.

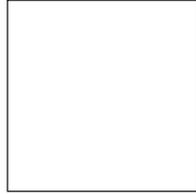
The Task Force is a broad-based group of local community leaders. The *Task Force* should include representatives of local Economic Development Councils, Industrial Development Authorities, Chambers of Commerce, local government, area utilities, community colleges, and other well-respected, influential community leaders.

Business Visitation Teams consist of two persons per team. *Visitation Teams* will visit from two to four firms. These teams can be made up of *Task Force* members, educators, business people or retirees.

HOW WE HELP YOU

- Inform you about the most effective local strategies
- Train *Volunteer Visitors* and local leaders
- Facilitate local *Task Force* meetings
- Trouble-shoot
- Analyze survey information and suggest recommendations
- Produce Community Strategic Action Plan report
- Inform you about state and federal programs that could strengthen local business

FOR MORE INFORMATION



BUSINESS
RETENTION AND
EXPANSION
VISITATION PROGRAM



BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION
VISITATION PROGRAM

*A community-based
program to encourage the
growth of local business*

**Support for development of these
materials was provided by:**

- *Business Retention and Expansion International*
- *University of Minnesota Extension Service*
- *Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development (NERCRD)*
- *U.S. Department of Agriculture*
- *West Virginia University*



*Programs of the regional rural
development centers are
available equally to all people.*