



# **Enhancing the Land Grant University's Role in Creating Economic Opportunity through Community-Based Entrepreneurship**

**Louis V. Bassano**  
**Regional Small Business Educator and Extension Professor**  
**University of Maine Cooperative Extension**

**James C. McConnon Jr.**  
**Extension Specialist and Professor of Economics**  
**University of Maine**

# *Workshop Overview*

- **Entrepreneurship and Economic Opportunity**
- **Community-Based Entrepreneurship in Maine**
- **Creating Strong Partnerships**
- **Strategies for Effective Entrepreneurship Programs**
- **Lessons Learned**
- **Questions ???**

# *Entrepreneurship and Economic Opportunity*

## ❖ **Maine**

- **40,616 businesses with employees**
- **23,433 businesses with one to four employees**
- **109,679 self-employed**
- **133,112 micro-businesses, 21.6% of State's employment**
- **Contributes \$12.9 billion**

## ❖ **Nationally**

- **25.2 million micro-enterprises**
- **18.8% of total employment**

# *Down East Micro Enterprise Network Project Goals*

- ❖ **Improve the availability and access to high quality business skill building programs throughout the two county region**
- ❖ **Improve the business management skills of existing and aspiring business owners**
- ❖ **Strengthen partnerships among business assist agencies**
- ❖ **Create an entrepreneurial climate**

# *DEM N Project Funding*

- **\$164,000 Grant from Maine Department of Economic & Community Development**
- **Part of \$1 million fund established by Maine Legislature**
- **Encourage collaboration, strengthen partnerships, develop cutting edge programs**

# *DEM N Activities*

- Served entrepreneurs across two county region
- Coordinated approach
- Over 300 business owners participating
- 60 business management workshops
- 265 individual consultations
- Washington County Business Conference and Marketplace
- Nearly 3,000 hrs technical advice



# *Long-term Participant Surveys: Selected Impacts*

❖ **97% increased knowledge**

❖ **96% made practice changes**

- **28% stayed in business retaining 43 jobs**
- **28% started a new or expanded an existing business**
- **15% increased sales, profits or efficiency**
- **7% received business loans totaling \$361,000**
- **The average respondent valued skills and knowledge acquired at \$1,500**



# *Washington County Business Conference & Marketplace Goals*

- ❖ **Improve opportunities for success for Washington County's small and micro-business owners**
- ❖ **Develop or improve business management skills**
- ❖ **Showcase local entrepreneurs and their products in the marketplace**
- ❖ **Celebrate the entrepreneurial spirit of Washington County**



# *Conference Planning Team*

**Selected from the following groups:**

- ◆ **Business owners**
- ◆ **Business assist agencies/organizations**
- ◆ **Potential sponsors**
- ◆ **Community officials**
- ◆ **Chamber of Commerce**
- ◆ **Educational institutions**

# *Conference Benefits*

- **Provide up to 250 perspective and current business owners with ...**
  - **Access to skill building workshops to build or strengthen business management skills**
  - **Facilitated business to business networking**
  - **Marketing venue to display products**
  - **Opportunities to interact with business support agencies**

# *Conference Impacts*

## *Selected Survey Results*

- **95% increased their knowledge of starting a business**
- **90% used their knowledge to improve some aspect of their business**
- **35% increased sales or improved profits**
- **50% started their first business or expanded an existing business**
- **The average value placed on the knowledge and skills acquired by respondents who attended the WCBCM was an estimated \$1,295.**



# *Governor's Regional Conferences on Small Business & Entrepreneurship*

- **One-two day conferences held in four locations across the state**
- **Conferences were organized by regional planning teams**
- **Statewide steering committee provided support to regional teams**
- **Conferences were held at Community Colleges**



# *Governor's Regional Conferences on Small Business & Entrepreneurship Goals*

- **Provide cost-effective, critical, accessible training and information**
- **Establish long-lasting, local and regional networking system**
- **Provide direct access to policy makers**
- **Facilitate networking opportunities**
- **Enhance leadership capacity within the business community**
- **Strengthen business support networks**

# *Partnership Opportunities*

- Develop partnerships on many levels
- Leverage resources
- Improve cost effectiveness of programs
- Expand program & services
- Foster leadership development



# *Funding*

**Funding Required = \$55,000**

- **\$15,000 seed grant**
- **\$15,000 raised by regional planning team**
- **\$5,000 for host community college**
- **\$20,000 in-kind generated by local planning team**

# *Regional Planning Committee*

## ❖ **Committee make-up:**

- **Business owners**
- **Business-assist organizations**
- **Potential sponsors**
- **Community officials**
- **Chamber of Commerce members**
- **Educators**

## ❖ **Subcommittees:**

- **Program content**
- **Financing**
- **Promotion/advertising**
- **Website development**
- **On-site logistics**



# *Statewide Steering Committee*

## *Key Activities*

- ✓ **Assist the regional planning committees**
- ✓ **Secure \$15,000 seed grant for each regional team**
- ✓ **Orientation of regional planning team**
- ✓ **Assist in design of conference**
- ✓ **Assist in securing qualified trainers**
- ✓ **Conference Evaluation**

# *Key Results*

- **Four regional conferences held reaching 800 business owners**
- **Partnerships were strengthened at state and local levels**
- **Business support networks were enhanced**
- **Improved access to state leaders and decision-makers**
- **Spurred business activity**
- **Contributed to job creation**
- **Enhanced leadership capacity within the business community**

# *Creating Strong Partnerships*

- **Form an entrepreneurship working group comprised of leadership of State's business-assist organizations**
- **Organize quarterly business assistance round tables**
- **Seek opportunities that make programmatic sense**
- **Identify shared program goals and partner contributions**
- **Discuss organizational norms, policy and procedures**
- **Maintain open communication**

# *Strategies for Effective Entrepreneurship Programs*

- **Identify shared goals and strategies for success**
- **Multi-county or regional focus**
- **Develop/promote comprehensive website**
- **Organize workshops into modules**
- **Offer training at different times and locations**
- **Provide individual business consultations**
- **Create networking opportunities**
- **Track inputs, outcomes and impacts**

# *Lessons Learned*

**Extension can enhance the Land Grant's role in economic development by partnering with key business-assist agencies to support community-based entrepreneurship**

- **Facilitate new and effective approaches to program delivery**
- **Extend limited state/university/agency resources**
- **Create new funding opportunities**
- **Strengthen business-assist network**
- **Provide professional development opportunities**

*For more information contact:*

**Louis V. Bassano**  
**lbassano@umext.maine.edu**

**Jim McConnon**  
**Mcconnon@maine.edu**