



Rural Economic Development (RED) Program

Guide and Forms for Business Retention and Expansion Projects Only

October 2005

Rural Investments Branch, Rural Development Division
Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
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Guelph, Ontario N1G 4Y2
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Applicants' Guide to Submitting a Proposal to Implement Business Retention and Expansion Projects

Building a brighter future in rural Ontario

The Rural Economic Development (RED) program was developed in consultation with people who live and work in rural Ontario. Through the RED program, rural residents, business people and municipal leaders can co-ordinate their activities, resources and expertise to work towards common economic development goals for their community. The actions undertaken as a result will build a prosperous rural economy, and ensure that rural and small-town Ontario remains a viable, healthy and vibrant place to live, work and invest.

The RED program has been assisting rural communities to address barriers to economic growth since the program was announced in 2001. Applications will be accepted on an on-going basis until March 31, 2005. Projects must be completed no later than January 1, 2006. Applicants are encouraged to apply as soon as possible.

Who should use this guide?

This guide has been designed to assist those who wish to apply to the RED program to implement a business retention and expansion project using the Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E) Tool Kit in their rural community. It is intended for use only under specific circumstances (see below) and must be used together with the RED Program Application Guidebook. Unless otherwise specified in this guide, program information presented in the RED Program Application Guidebook **does apply** to business retention and expansion projects. Applications are available in printed form at Ontario Government Information Centres (check the blue pages of your phone book for the location nearest you). Information and applications are also available on the internet at www.ontario.ca/rural.

Use this guide if RED funding is requested to:

- solely implement a business retention and expansion project using the BR+E Tool Kit;
- support only the following business retention and expansion-eligible costs: project coordinator fees; meeting expenses; travel expenses; office expenses; data entry and analysis expenses; and professional development expenses; and
- fund a **maximum** of 50 per cent of business retention and expansion-eligible expenses*.

*As a guideline, eligible expenses to implement a business retention and expansion project using the BR+E Tool Kit in a community should not exceed \$35,000. Please provide justification if your business retention and expansion-eligible budget exceeds this value.

What assistance is available to develop business retention and expansion projects?

Applicants are encouraged to work with provincial staff in developing their projects and must work with provincial staff in completing the BR+E Community-readiness Checklist, referred to in the Needs Assessment section on page 3 of this guide. Contact the Rural Development Division of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs at 1-888-588-4111 to identify the appropriate contact(s) for your community and/or sector.

For more information contact:

Rural Investments Branch, Rural Development Division

Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

1 Stone Road West, Guelph, Ontario N1G 4Y2

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BR+E project applicants may follow this outline to apply for RED program funding in one step.

- 1. Registration Form:** Complete project registration form (BR+E Schedule 1).
- 2. Overview:** Give a brief overview of the project, including its title, location, start date, an estimated completion date and a brief description. Indicate if this is a new project or an existing project being enhanced. If it is an enhancement, please explain how it is being enhanced. Specify the geographic area and/or sector in which the project will be implemented.
- 3. Economic Barrier:** Identify the economic development barrier(s) that the community/sector is seeking to overcome by implementing the project.
- 4. Objectives:** The following are standard objectives for business retention and expansion projects. State any additional objectives that are based on particular conditions and interests in the community/sector.
 - Short-term Business Retention and Expansion Objectives***
 - Provide community support for local business
 - Identify and address, where possible, immediate individual business concerns
 - Long-term Business Retention and Expansion Objectives***
 - Increase the competitiveness of local establishments
 - Establish and implement a strategic action plan for economic development
 - Increase business development and job creation
 - Increase community capacity for economic development
- 5. Partnership:** Provide contact details for each applicant (BR+E Schedule 2). For each partner, provide a detailed description of the organization and its experience that demonstrates ability to attain project results. Provide a summary of the partners' working relationships with one another (e.g. summarize joint projects previously undertaken and their results).
- 6. Needs Assessment:**
 - (a) Provide a completed BR+E Community-readiness Checklist (BR+E Schedule 3) along with the name of the local and/or regional provincial staff member with whom the checklist was completed. Please refer to Appendix 1 for an elaboration on the 20 Community-readiness questions.
 - (b) Describe how the project fits with broader community/sector economic development plans.
 - (c) Describe the steps that have been taken to consult with stakeholders regarding the project and the indications of support that have been received.
- 7. Work Plan:** Submit a summary of the expected project work plan. A work plan template that has been developed specifically for business retention and expansion projects is attached (BR+E Schedule 4). If using another format, review the tasks listed in BR+E Schedule 4 and consider their role within your project work plan.
- 8. Measurable Outcomes:** Describe how the success of the project will be measured in the broader economic and business development context of your community/sector.

- 9. Human Resources:** Include details on the knowledge, skill and expertise of project staff and management including their key project roles and responsibilities.
- 10. Financial Plan:** Prepare a financial plan for the project that is reasonably detailed. Clearly differentiate between contracted third party and partners' work by completing the following schedules:
- (a) Sources and Uses of Funds (BR+E Schedule 5) - Detailing the sources of funds for the project, clearly differentiating private versus public sources, cash and how funds from the Rural Economic Development program will be used.
 - (b) Milestone Report (BR+E Schedule 6) – Milestone reports are used to determine when you will submit claims for payment to the Rural Economic Development program, as well as what the value of these claims will be. For each milestone, itemize the eligible project expenses associated with each activity. Also indicate the expected results and any information which may affect the project's success. Milestones must be chronological. ***A partially completed BR+E Schedule 6 is attached for your use; it has been divided into two projected milestones (based on a schedule of quarterly reporting).***
- Where applicable, the method for calculating each activity contributing to a milestone should be illustrated.
- Please note the following items may be requested:
- (a) Proof of ability to raise other funds; and
 - (b) Copies of the most recently reviewed or audited financial statements for all project applicants.
- 11. Declarations:** Each applicant must complete a separate General Company Information, Consent and Certification Form (BR+E Schedule 7).
- 12. Support:** It is recommended that any individuals or supporting organizations that endorse the project in principle should submit letters of support. Project applicants which are organizations should obtain and provide a resolution approved by the organization.
- 13. Other Information:** Applicants must obtain and submit as part of the application proof that required permits and approvals are obtained.

All applicants for approved projects must sign an Agreement with the Province which specifies the terms and conditions of funding. A copy of a sample of the Agreement is available from the Rural Investments Branch upon request. *Applicants are strongly advised to have all partners review the sample Agreement prior to approval and to seek legal counsel regarding the terms and conditions of the Agreement.*

Where the value of sub-contracts for work or services **exceeds \$25,000**, applicants must demonstrate that a competitive process has been used. At least three written tenders must be obtained. If sole or single sourced, the applicant must provide written rationale that the supplier provides specialized expertise not otherwise readily available and request to waive the tender requirement.

Please submit one (1) unbound complete copy of the application package to the Rural Investments Branch (address listed on the title page). Keep a copy for your records.

Applicants are required to complete a project registration form and a project summary as part of the application process.

Title of Project:			
Lead Applicant <input type="checkbox"/> Mr. <input type="checkbox"/> Ms.			
Name of Project Leader/Contact Person:			
Position:			
Organization or Business:			
Mailing Address (street):			
City/Town:		County / Region:	
Province:		Postal Code:	
Telephone:		Fax:	
E-mail:			
Names of all Partners/Co-Applicants (List additional partners on a separate sheet):			
Names of all Co-applicants	Organization Name	Phone Number	Fax Number
1.			
2.			
3.			
Name of Ministry Contact			
Names of Contact	Ministry Name	Phone Number	Fax Number

CONFIDENTIALITY

Application forms and supporting material submitted to the Province of Ontario will be subject to the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. Any information submitted in confidence should be clearly marked "CONFIDENTIAL" by the applicant. Inquiries about confidentiality should be directed to the Rural Investments Branch.

CERTIFICATION

By submitting this application the lead applicant hereby certifies to the Province of Ontario that the application and supporting documentation are true and complete in all respects.

Lead Applicant Name (print): _____

Position: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____



BR+E Schedule 2

Contact Information for Applicants

Eligible clients include partnerships / strategic alliances between (any combination of) individuals, businesses, community organizations (including not-for-profit) and municipalities with an arm's length relationship from each other. Individuals and individual businesses are **not** eligible under the program as sole applicants. Under the Rural Economic Development program all applicants must share in the risks of the project, invest in the project, and have a vested interest in completing the project. A partner cannot be a contractor of goods or services by the project. **All applicants for approved projects must sign an Agreement with the Province** which specifies the terms and conditions of funding. A copy of a sample of the Agreement is available from the Rural Investments Branch upon request. *Applicants are strongly advised to have all partners review the sample Agreement prior to approval and to seek legal counsel regarding the terms and conditions of the Agreement.*

Lead Applicant:

Project Representative (if different):

Name: _____
 Organization: _____
 Title: _____
 Address: _____

 Postal Code: _____
 Telephone: _____
 Facsimile: _____
 Email: _____

Name: _____
 Organization: _____
 Title: _____
 Address: _____

 Postal Code: _____
 Telephone: _____
 Facsimile: _____
 Email: _____

Other Applicants (list on back if necessary):

Name: _____
 Organization: _____
 Title: _____
 Address: _____

 Postal Code: _____
 Telephone: _____
 Facsimile: _____
 Email: _____

Name: _____
 Organization: _____
 Title: _____
 Address: _____

 Postal Code: _____
 Telephone: _____
 Facsimile: _____
 Email: _____

Name: _____
 Organization: _____
 Title: _____
 Address: _____

 Postal Code: _____
 Telephone: _____
 Facsimile: _____
 Email: _____

Name: _____
 Organization: _____
 Title: _____
 Address: _____

 Postal Code: _____
 Telephone: _____
 Facsimile: _____
 Email: _____

Is Your Community Ready for a Business Retention and Expansion Project?

Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E) is a community-based, volunteer-driven economic development tool to encourage growth and stability of local business. BR+E works to improve the competitiveness of local businesses by evaluating and addressing their broader needs and concerns. This is crucial to the sustained viability of communities since businesses that stay competitive are more likely to remain and expand in their community.

BR+E projects are working and becoming very popular in communities throughout North America. Communities are recognizing the need to focus on business as a key element in the health and prosperity of the community. Understanding and acting on the issues to help keep existing businesses, and removing barriers to their expansion, is key to building a more vibrant community overall.

Is your community ready for a BR+E effort? Even when the need for a project is obvious, its success will depend on the strength of the “human resources” in your community. People get things done; not plans, not processes, and not technology.

Consider the following to determine the strength of your community’s human resources, its interactions, and its networks:

- Leaders
- Citizen involvement
- Community support and volunteerism
- Organizations working together
- Community-based planning
- Community communications

The following worksheet is a Community-readiness Checklist to help you assess the status of the human resources in your community. The explanations given in Appendix 1 will help you to understand why each question is being asked and why it is important.

As you answer these questions, your level of satisfaction with the current situation will become evident. Write out your responses to better express your concerns.

One of three conclusions will emerge from the discussions:

1. *High* satisfaction with the existing human resources — proceed with BR+E
2. *Medium* satisfaction — could proceed but should work on filling the gaps identified
3. *Low* satisfaction — delay starting a BR+E project; instead, work on filling the gaps identified in the worksheet

Of course, even with low to medium satisfaction with the existing human resources and networks, you could proceed with a BR+E project. With strong commitment, passion and energy, all barriers can be overcome.

Please refer to Appendix 1 for an elaboration on the 20 Community-readiness questions.

Community-readiness Checklist 20 Questions	Level of Satisfaction
Leaders	
1. Are there people in the community who are visionaries, action-oriented, and could be recruited to serve on a project-leadership team?	
2. Are there a number of people with skills to lead economic development plans and projects to completion?	
3. Is there an existing organization with a primary focus on economic development?	
4. Is there an organization in the community that will take a lead role and provide support to the project?	
Citizen Involvement	
5. Are many community members involved in developing the community economy?	
6. Are citizens currently involved in organizing and running projects in the community?	
7. Are a variety of people from different walks of life currently involved in community economic projects?	
Community Support and Volunteerism	
8. Is there a strong volunteer force in the community, capable of sustaining a complex project over an extended period of time?	
9. Is there active municipal support for economic development?	
10. Is there active support of economic-development activities from a range of community organizations?	
Organizations Working Together	
11. Have there been successful community projects that involved community groups coming together for a common goal?	
12. Does your community have economic relationships with other communities and development institutions?	
13. Is the general quality of relationships among people and organizations in the community healthy?	
Community-Based Planning	
14. Does the community have a current, comprehensive economic strategy with an action plan?	
15. Does the community have an overall vision of what it wants to be like in the future?	
16. Is the community taking actions to influence its future?	
17. Is economic development activity in the community well-organized and managed?	
Community Communications	
18. Do community members know and understand the vision and the plan?	
19. Is there regular communication among community groups to inform and involve each other?	
20. Do the leaders communicate progress to community organizations, volunteers, and citizens?	

BR+E Area:	_____	Date:	_____
BR+E Community:	_____	Date:	_____
Overall Coordinator:	_____	Phone:	_____
BR+E Consultant:	_____	Phone:	_____

Organizational Phase	Who Will Do This?	When Will This Be Done?
Meet with BR+E Consultant	_____	_____
Assess community readiness	_____	_____
Hold stakeholder meeting	_____	_____
Recruit Leadership Team	_____	_____
Recruit Task Force	_____	_____
Obtain sponsor(s)	_____	_____
Secure endorsements	_____	_____
Arrange publicity/specify: introducing BR+E	_____	_____

Preparation	Who Will Do This?	When Will This Be Done?
Organize Task Force meeting (orientation, training)	_____	_____
Establish overall scope of project (objectives/design/policies)	_____	_____
Develop Work Plan (including plan for monitoring and evaluation)	_____	_____
Establish Resource Network	_____	_____
Gather and organize business resources (e.g., fact sheets)	_____	_____
Develop local questions for survey	_____	_____
Select businesses	_____	_____
Assign identification numbers to businesses	_____	_____
Conduct practice visits (Leadership Team)	_____	_____
Publicize BR+E project	_____	_____

Volunteer Recruitment and Training	Who Will Do This?	When Will This Be Done?
Contact BR+E Consultant	_____	_____
Determine number of Volunteer Visitors needed	_____	_____
Select Volunteer Visitors	_____	_____
Schedule Training Session(s) (place, date, and time)	_____	_____
Notify Volunteer Visitors of training	_____	_____
Divide volunteers into teams of two	_____	_____
Assign teams to businesses	_____	_____
Send letters and surveys to businesses	_____	_____

Public Meeting	Who Will Do This?	When Will This Be Done?
Arrange Public Meeting		
Speakers at Meeting		
• Introduction/History		
• Survey Results		
• Recommendations		
• Arrange publicity		
• Before meeting		
• After meeting		

Implementation	Who Will Do This?	When Will This Be Done?
Establish Action Plan committees		
Action One _____		
Action Two _____		
Action Three _____		
Action Four _____		
Monitor Progress of actions/projects		
Co-ordinate quarterly Task Force Meetings		
Assess (evaluate) BR+E results/impact		
Arrange follow-up Public Meetings		
Publicize BR+E activities, successes		

Sources of Funds

Under the Rural Economic Development program, **applicants must share the costs**. The province will invest a **maximum** of 50 per cent in business retention and expansion projects.

Funding from other federal government programs will be considered in calculating the level of investment from the Rural Economic Development program. **Failure to disclose all funding or possible funding sources are grounds for termination of the application or contract.**

In determining contributions for cost-sharing, **in-kind contributions will not be recognized.**

Sources of Funds Table

Partners/Applicants (list)	Eligible Cash Contributions	In-Kind /Ineligible Contributions	Total Contributions
Other Private Sources			
Other Government Programs* (Indicate all program names)	(B)		
Requested from Rural Economic Development program	(C)		
TOTAL	(D)	(E)	

Percentage Requested from Rural Economic Development program _____%

Per cent of Government Investment in Eligible Costs = $\frac{(B) + (C)}{\text{Cell (D)}} \times 100 = \text{_____} \%$

The per cent of government investment (federal/provincial) in eligible expenses cannot exceed 50 per cent for business retention and expansion projects.

* Please note that if your project receives **provincial** funding from a source other than the Rural Economic Development program, it is not eligible for program funding.

Uses of Funds

- Eligible expenditures **must** be directly related to the project and would not have otherwise been incurred by the applicants.
- Expenditures must be actual cash outlays to third parties that are documented through paid invoices and receipts. **Proof of the applicants' ability to cash flow this project may be required.**
- As a guideline, eligible expenses to implement a business retention and expansion project using the BR+E Tool Kit in a community should not exceed \$35,000. Please provide justification if your business retention and expansion-eligible budget exceeds this value
- Evidence of payment (e.g., cancelled cheques and/or bank statements) and supporting documentation must be included with milestone submissions to the Rural Investments Branch. **Be aware the ministry will hold back 10% of each milestone payment which will be released upon completion and satisfactory review of the final report.** The final report must include a summary of the results and outcomes to date, key findings from the business surveys, the identification of actions/recommendations to address the survey findings and a description of an action plan intended to address the various recommendations. For business retention and expansion projects, successful applicants will also be asked to submit, in electronic form, the business retention and expansion survey data collected through the survey process. This data is being requested in order to allow for the development of a provincial business retention and expansion database. Communities will be able to compare their data with the provincial database.
- Claims for eligible travel must adhere to the Provincial Government guidelines (available upon request). Satisfactory evidence demonstrating the cost of services does not exceed fair market value may be required.
- Where the value of sub-contracts for work or services **exceeds \$25,000**, applicants must demonstrate that a competitive process has been used. At least three written tenders must be obtained. If sole or single sourced, the applicant must provide written rationale that the supplier provides specialized expertise not otherwise readily available.
- A list of eligible and ineligible costs is available on page 11 of the *RED Program Application Forms*. For the purposes of business retention and expansion projects, eligible costs are listed in the following Uses of Funds table. Project expenses that are not listed in the following table may be listed only as **ineligible** expenses (e.g. BR+E Ontario Tool Kit).

Please note: The totals on BR+E Schedule 5 - Sources of Funds Table must equal those on BR+E Schedule 5 - Uses of Funds Table (i.e., eligible cash contributions cell (D) on the Sources of Funds must equal the eligible expenditures \$ cell (D) on the Uses of Funds). The milestone totals must equal the total of projected eligible expenses (D) on both Schedule 5s.

Uses of Funds Table

Description of Projected Expenditures by Objective	Eligible (\$)	Ineligible / In-kind (\$)
1. Project Coordinator Fees		
2. Meeting Expenses		
3. Travel Expenses		
4. Office Expenses		
5. Data Entry and Analysis Expenses		
6. Professional Development Expenses		
Total Projected Expenses	(D)	(E)



BR+E Schedule 6

Projected Milestone

Use one (1) form per milestone. Make additional copies as required. Milestones must be chronological. For each milestone, itemize the eligible project expenses associated with each activity. Also indicate the expected results and any information which may affect the project's success.

Projected Milestone Dates / Costs / Results Anticipated

Description of Eligible Project Expenses by Objective for Milestone # <u>1</u> Date Completed: _____	Projected Eligible Expenses
Project Coordinator Fees	
Meeting Expenses	
Travel Expenses	
Office Expenses	
Data Entry and Analysis Expenses	
Professional Development Expenses	
TOTALS	
Rural Economic Development Contribution (Based on _____%)	

EXPECTED RESULTS AS OF THIS MILESTONE (Use a separate sheet if necessary):
Business Retention and Expansion Introduced to Community Leadership Team and Task Force Recruited and Oriented Project Design Complete Volunteer Visitors Recruited and Trained Business Visits Conducted Completed Surveys Reviewed and Immediate Action Taken on "Red-Flag" Issues
WHAT HURDLES OR EVENTS CAN AFFECT THE PROJECT'S SUCCESS?

Projected Milestone

Use one (1) form per milestone. Make additional copies as required. Milestones must be chronological. For each milestone, itemize the eligible project expenses associated with each activity. Also indicate the expected results and any information which may affect the project's success.

Projected Milestone Dates / Costs / Results Anticipated

Description of Eligible Project Expenses by Objective for Milestone # <u>2</u> Date Completed: _____	Projected Eligible Expenses
Project Coordinator Fees	
Meeting Expenses	
Travel Expenses	
Office Expenses	
Data Entry and Analysis Expenses	
Professional Development Expenses	
TOTALS	
Rural Economic Development Contribution (Based on _____%)	

EXPECTED RESULTS AS OF THIS MILESTONE (Use a separate sheet if necessary):
Data Entered in Database Survey Responses Analyzed Task Force – Recommendations Identified Public Meeting Conducted to Present Findings and Recommendations Action Plan Implementation Strategy in Place
WHAT HURDLES OR EVENTS CAN AFFECT THE PROJECT'S SUCCESS?

General Company Information, Confidentiality, Consent and Certification

Each applicant/partner must complete this schedule.

*Under the Rural Economic Development program all applicants must share in the risks of the project, invest in the project, and have a vested interest in completing the project. **For the purposes of this application, individuals or organizations must invest in the project and sign the Agreement with the Province to be considered an applicant/partner.***

To sign the Agreement, each applicant must:

- have joint and several comprehensive general liability insurance with coverage for at least \$2 million per occurrence. This insurance must show the Province (Her Majesty the Queen in right of Ontario) as an additional insured on the policy and contain the endorsements specified by the Agreement and is required throughout the term of the Agreement. A Certificate of Insurance from each applicant/partner will be required to be submitted to the Ministry prior to the signing of an Agreement.
- prior to the signing of the Agreement, provide to the Ministry proof of current status (e.g. Certificate of Status) and constituting documents (e.g. Articles of Incorporation or Letters Patent, By-laws, etc.) which indicate the full and proper name of the organization as well as the proper signatories to the Agreement.

In the event that your business or organization is not incorporated (e.g. sole proprietorship, unincorporated association, etc.), please be advised that the individual who signs the Agreement on behalf of the business or organization will be assuming personal liability for the project. Moreover, this individual would be subject to all the terms and conditions set forth in the Agreement.

Expenditures must be actual cash outlays to third parties that are documented through paid invoices and receipts. **Proof of the applicant's ability to cash flow this project may be required.**

1. Provide the **full legal name** of your company/organization.

2. What type is your business/organization? Provide details.

Sole Proprietorship _____

Partnership _____

Municipal Corporation _____

Other (specify) _____

Incorporated Company/Organization (specify as to type/statute/jurisdiction) _____

3. Do you have a parent company? Yes No If yes, please provide name and address:

4. Do you have other related companies? Yes No If yes, please specify:

General Company Information, Confidentiality, Consent and Certification (Continued)

5. Attach a list of owners and directors (if applicable) of your company/organization (use a separate sheet).

6. Please provide the name and title of individuals legally authorized to sign agreements on behalf of the company/organization.

Name: _____ Title: _____

Name: _____ Title: _____

Name: _____ Title: _____

Name: _____ Title: _____

7. Does your company/organization have an interest in any of the companies/organizations listed as project partners?

Yes No

If yes, please list separately the project partner, the percentage interest, and whether there are consolidated financial statements available.

8. What is your contribution towards the project? Eligible cash \$ _____

Ineligible/In-kind Contribution \$ _____

Confidentiality, Consent and Certification

Confidentiality

Application forms and supporting material submitted to the Province of Ontario will be subject to the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. Any information submitted in confidence should be clearly marked "CONFIDENTIAL" by the applicant. Inquiries about confidentiality should be directed to the Rural Investments Branch.

Consent

All partners/applicants hereby consent to inspection of their premises and/or documents that pertain to this project as described in the Agreement by the Province of Ontario or its designate. Successful partners/applicants consent to having their names, funding amounts and short summaries of their projects and results made available to the public.

Certification

I hereby certify to the Province of Ontario that the application and supporting documentation are true and complete in all respects.

Name (print): _____

Title: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Is Your Community Ready for a Business Retention and Expansion Project?

This appendix should be used in conjunction with the Checklist in Schedule 3.

Why Are These Important?

Each of the questions in the preceding chart will lead to discussion concerning satisfaction with the current status of the social infrastructure and readiness of the community to start up a community-based BR+E project. Each question is highlighted below, with a brief explanation of its importance. As each question is discussed, a level of overall satisfaction with the community situation will emerge.

1. Are there people in the community who are visionaries, action-oriented, and could be recruited to serve on a project-leadership team?

“Ask a busy person and the job will be done!” This well-known saying implies that someone with a full plate is often well organized and manages his or her time and efforts well. Community members who are not only visionaries but also get things done are the people you should approach to be involved in a BR+E project.

If the community lacks these people, it may be difficult to gather support for a BR+E project.

2. Are there a number of people with skills to lead economic development plans and projects to completion?

The ability to manage projects is critical to the overall success of the BR+E project. All the skills of project management are required: planning and design; implementation and evaluation; and delegation and strong interpersonal skills.

3. Is there an existing organization with a primary focus on economic development?

An existing organization is a potential source of leadership for the project. It is prudent to involve this organization in the project to make sure that the efforts aren't contrary to or duplicating others' work.

Another reason to discuss this question is to understand the power structures and relationships in the community. You'll need to determine if a particular organization that might be considered as the most appropriate (because of its mandate or its name) in fact has the credibility within the community to take that role. Will the community accept the lead role of this organization?

4. Is there an organization in the community that will take a lead role and provide support to the project?

The preference in most cases would be to have an organization with an economic-development mandate take a lead role. If there is no organization with a focus on economic development, there may be another organization that is interested in improving the business climate for a healthier community overall.

No matter which organization takes the lead role, a key element is its credibility in the community, particularly in the eyes of the business people there.

In addition, the organization must bring commitment, energy, and enthusiasm to the lead role, along with resources — time and people.

5. Are many community members involved in developing the community economy?

The BR+E project is community-based. Having citizen volunteers visit businesses in the community, analyze the results, and develop approaches to assist in removing barriers to retention and/or expansion, is most effective because of the overall ownership and commitment to the effort.

If many community members are already involved in other projects, assume that another community-based economic development project will work. You will want to tap that network of community members, looking for potential resources (money and people), and the lessons learned from previous experience in those projects.

6. Are citizens currently involved in organizing and running projects in the community?

If citizens are involved, contact them to learn about the most effective processes, the power structures, key contributors, potential barriers, and influencers in the community.

If the amount of citizen involvement is not significant at the present time, identify the reasons and prepare to spend more time and effort starting a community-based BR+E project.

7. Are a variety of people from different walks of life currently involved in community economic projects?

According to community economic-development principles, the people who will be impacted by the policy being developed or the project being delivered must be involved in the process of planning and implementing it. For example, if people from different backgrounds, age groups, education levels, gender, location, economic status, cultures, etc. will be impacted by the BR+E project, they need to be involved in the Leadership Team, the Task Force, and the business visitations.

If people from different walks of life are not currently being involved in community economic projects, spend time convincing others that their input is critical.

8. Is there a strong volunteer force in the community, capable of sustaining a complex project over an extended period of time?

The BR+E project relies on volunteers. If the community already has a strong volunteer ethic, the project will have a higher potential for success. If it doesn't, and the BR+E project is to proceed, the organizing team may have to spend considerable time and effort in recruiting people to help with the planning, business visits, and follow-up.

If the volunteer force is strong in the community, there may be established expectations as to how to manage volunteers. Good job descriptions, recruiting and training processes, and recognition (celebration of achievement) activities are critical to a successful volunteer program and will be expected by experienced volunteers.

9. Is there active municipal support for economic development?

The municipal staff and elected officials are often the most significant influencers of projects and policies in the community. It is important to get their support so that potential barriers can be avoided, and credibility of the project can be developed in the eyes of the business community.

In addition, the municipality may be able to provide resources to the effort and certainly will be key to any follow-up activities involving local policy, regulation, infrastructure improvements, etc.

10. Is there active support of economic development activities from a range of community organizations?

If you have many community organizations currently involved in economic development activities, the BR+E project will receive the support and overall community commitment it needs. Community organizations are the sources of leadership, volunteers, resources, and expertise to make the project a success in your community.

11. Have there been successful community projects that involved community groups coming together for a common goal?

Collaboration among organizations is critical to the success of the BR+E project. If a number of organizations come together and lend their support to the project, businesses and the community overall will see the effort as credible and worthwhile.

In addition, the more organizations that become involved in the project, the more experience, resources, and influence the project will have in improving the community's business outlook. A history of successful collaboration in the community increases the potential for success of the BR+E project significantly.

12. Does your community have economic relationships with other communities and development institutions?

BR+E is more than just a business-visitation program. It is meant to result in actions that will ultimately improve the business climate and help retain existing businesses or help others to expand. It may be necessary to involve other communities in the solutions that come out of your BR+E process (e.g., infrastructure improvements).

If a relationship with other institutions involved in funding, education, or providing a service to the business community already exists, it may be advantageous to involve those institutions in developing BR+E solutions.

13. Is the general quality of relationships among people and organizations in the community healthy?

If people and organizations in the community are getting along, the potential for co-operation, collaboration, and eventual success of the project is increased.

If there appears to be a constant struggle among organizations or people in the community, and you see little or no progress in supporting common goals and projects, a BR+E project may experience similar barriers.

14. Does the community have a current, comprehensive economic strategy with an action plan?

If a plan exists, it may contain a strategy to retain or expand existing businesses. If so, the plan can be used to support the proposal to have a BR+E project in the community. You may wish to take a copy of the economic strategy with you when you talk with the municipality, other organizations, and business leaders.

If an economic plan does not exist, there may not be support for economic development. The need for a new project to improve the business climate may not be well understood, so more effort may be needed to sell the concept to community members.

15. Does the community have an overall vision of what it wants to be like in the future?

As in question 14, having a community vision that includes a strong, vibrant business sector would be a compelling argument to support a BR+E project. The absence of statements about the business community in the existing vision may be evidence of little support for business. In this case, it may be difficult to start a project that is attempting to improve that area of the economy.

If there is no overall community vision, the community may not be organized enough to plan and act. More effort may be required to gain support for a particular project that focuses on the business community, perhaps because priorities and long-term goals are not well known or understood.

16. Is the community taking actions to influence its future?

If the community is already mobilized to influence its future, the key stakeholders and influencers in those activities must become involved in a proposal for a BR+E project. They may have larger strategies that fit with a new project, or they may already have plans for something similar. Or they may have contrary priorities or concerns about the timing of a new project. In any case, consulting with them and involving them in the BR+E project will enhance the project and its likelihood of success.

17. Is economic development activity in the community well organized and managed?

Answering this question will lead you to better understand who is involved in economic development activities, which organizations might have an interest in a BR+E project, and how the project should be carried out. If the economic-development processes in the community are already well established, a new project should try to fit in with those methods, ground rules, and frameworks rather than possibly going against them.

18. Do community members know and understand the vision and the plan?

If the plan is well known, and talked about in the media, among organizations, within the municipality and institutions, the proposal to start a BR+E project will be received with greater understanding. Community members will recognize its significance to the overall plan and its impact on the local economy.

The amount of communication about the plan and the future of the community is a measure of the amount of support and commitment to growth and progress that is in the community.

19. Is there regular communication among community groups to inform and involve each other?

If organizations regularly discuss issues, projects, and common goals, and involve each other in community programs, an overall positive attitude towards collaboration exists in the community.

Organizations that do not communicate probably don't collaborate on community projects, and may, in fact, compete in their efforts. BR+E relies on a collaborative effort to be successful, and it cannot afford to compete with other organizations and their projects or programs.

20. Do the leaders communicate progress to community organizations, volunteers, and citizens?

If the community has a history of regular reports on community projects, it will be easier to continue this process during a BR+E process. BR+E is a long-term and complex project that requires ongoing commitment, ownership, and enthusiasm within the community. Regular reports will show community members that the effort and investment is worthwhile, and their support will be easier to maintain.