

## Community Focus Statement D: Provide a thriving and vibrant local small business environment.

**Action Statement D.6: Initiate strategies to improve communications with business and develop a Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E) program.**

**D6**

**Benchmark:** Development of a Business Retention & Expansion Program.

**Champion:** Volunteer group or person or can be identified by the community

**Estimated Cost:** \$200



Photo source: [Vanguard Visions](#)

Often communities and cities can become too focused on the attraction of new investment and development in the area. This focus causes communities to be unaware of the needs and concerns of existing business owners, which increases the likelihood that owners will not renew leases and either move or close altogether. Improving relationships and communication between business owners and the Chamber of Commerce can improve the business climate and accelerate job growth.

A Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E) program works to focus local economic development efforts on improving relationships with existing businesses, develop a working partnership with these businesses, and connect businesses with available local and state resources. The program places the Chamber of Commerce in the position of liaison between businesses and local government and can open the door to potential incentives, workforce training opportunities, capital sources, or business coaching. An effective BR&E program works to:

- Show existing local businesses that they are appreciated and their value to the local economy is recognized.
- Assist in solving problems that businesses face where local resources are available.
- Match businesses with educational opportunities and technical assistance programs to improve their competitiveness.

A good BR&E program should have the following components:

- An economic development official who is specifically focused on the needs of existing businesses.
- A formal visitation program that includes face-to-face meetings between the economic development official and business owners to build trust.
- An annual survey program to reach all business owners and discover problems linking across businesses.
- A follow-up visit to ensure solutions are working effectively and to address additional problems if necessary.

Because of the time and resources necessary to successfully implement a BR&E program, it is often possible to bring in a group of community volunteers who have business experience to assist in outreach efforts. Surveys, as mentioned above, also help to track trends from year to year and make further outreach possible when resources are limited.

Action	Action Leader	Timeline	Resources
1. Meet with the Chamber of Commerce to discuss partnership.	Champion	Month 1	Crestline/Lake Gregory Chamber of Commerce
2. Create a separate email address specific to questions and comments from business owners, and designate someone to respond to business-related issues.	Champion Crestline/Lake Gregory Chamber of Commerce	Month 1	<a href="http://www.crestlinechamber.net/">http://www.crestlinechamber.net/</a>  San Bernardino County Office Economic Development Agency, Incentives, Services, and Programs
3. Coordinate with the San Bernardino County Economic Development Agency regarding existing business retention and expansion resources.	Champion Crestline/Lake Gregory Chamber of Commerce	Months 2-3	<a href="http://www.sbcountyadvantage.com/For-Site-Selectors/Incentives-Programs.aspx">http://www.sbcountyadvantage.com/For-Site-Selectors/Incentives-Programs.aspx</a>
4. Coordinate and distribute a survey to existing business owners to ascertain their biggest challenges.	Champion Crestline/Lake Gregory Chamber of Commerce	Month 3	<a href="https://onregionalecdev.com/tag/business-retention/">https://onregionalecdev.com/tag/business-retention/</a>
5. Create a report documenting barriers, with steps to address each one if possible.	Champion Crestline/Lake Gregory Chamber of Commerce	Months 3-9	City of Green, Ohio – Business Retention & Expansion <a href="http://www.cityofgreen.org/business-retention-expansion">http://www.cityofgreen.org/business-retention-expansion</a>
6. Work to resolve two barriers per year and update the list as necessary.	Champion Crestline/Lake Gregory Chamber of Commerce	On-going	BRE.guru <a href="http://www.bre.guru/BRE">http://www.bre.guru/BRE</a>