



Small Business Strategies Group

Agenda

Thursday, July 21st

6:00pm – 8:00pm

Discovery Center – Chisholm, MN

Room TBD

1. **Welcome & Introductions (15 min)**
2. **Purpose & Roles (10 minutes):**
 - Our charge as a group – Develop and implement some small business strategies to “recharge the range”.
 - Roles – Facilitator, Co-Chair, IRRRB, organizations in the room.
3. **Review Key Themes & Ideas to Date (10 minutes):**
 - June 6th Kick-off event
 - Community Event
 - Business Event
4. **Share research on the topic of encouraging entrepreneurship (10 min)**
5. **Discuss & Identify topics to implement:**
 - What themes or idea do we want to put into action?
 - Who (or whom) is willing to champion or lead a group to implement?
 - Determine break-out groups
6. **Break-out groups:**
 - What is the goal of our group?
 - Is there anyone else that could be helpful to engage about our goal(s) and work?
 - What are the actions we need to do?
 - What is our next step before our next meeting
7. **Summary & Recap:**
 - Next Steps
 - Next Meeting Date

Recharge The Range: Small Business Group

Thursday, July 21st; 6:00 – 8:00pm

Meeting Notes

The group came out with the following initiative(s) as early front-runners and the assigned champion of that initiative:

- Launch a Makerspace (Andrew Hangeman)
- Start a Score Chapter on the Iron Range (Elaine Hansen & Dave)
- Raise awareness & change the Fiscal Disparaties Tax (Dan Chase)
- Launch a “Recharge the Range” type conference that follows-up on key topics generated by connecting people on specific topics.

After discussion, it was determined:

- The first 3 items will happen on their own, with or without this group.
- Building & strengthening small business and community networks is a proven strategy.
- One of the highlights of recharge the range is connecting & engaging stakeholders. There is continued interest.
- The success of the Ely Small Business Conference highlights what these connections can do.
- The last initiative will allow some of the top topics to continue to grow in interest (and action) if we continue to convene people in a way that build networks.

It was decided to take on the last initiative, as drafted below:

Purpose:

Build networks of do-ers, experts, and resources that promote action on the small business topics identified from Recharge the Range.

Long-term Goal:

A 1 ½ day Iron Range Regional Conference by December 31, 2017. The conference will cover the areas of interest identified from the Recharge The Range meetings to-date. The conference will:

- Convene people who have experience, expertise, or interest on a common topic identified from Recharge The Range related to small business strategies.
- Have break-out session in TED Talk style or panel-style sessions on topics. For example:
 - Small Business Successes & the new narrative of iron range entrepreneurs. Tell stories of recent small business growth, new start-ups, and/or innovation. Highlight resources available.
 - Re-developing downtowns & historic building’s – Who, How, What. Feature successful downtown community, property developers, experts on historical tax credits.

- Invigorating the arts & downtowns: Feature success stories on the Iron Range, state/national experts, and arts-groups.
 - Realities & Challenges of the Fiscal Disparity Tax: Making real change. Raise light of the issue and its impact. What is needed to change it.
 - New initiatives on the Iron Range: Feature Makerspace, SCORE, others.
- Evening social time to network and connect around areas of interest.
 - Ways for resource providers to connect with people & projects.

Short-term Goal:

An evening session in winter 2016-2017 that will feature one topic in a one-time event.

Action Plan to Accomplish:

- Assemble Core Group to lead and execute.
- Refine and finalize our goals.
- Set a budget.
- Define and assign roles

Next Steps:

- **Assemble a core group to lead and mobilize the work.** IRRRB, UMDCED, ReGen, and the Entrepreneur Fund committed at the meeting. Group will invite Itasca Economic Development Corp (IEDC). It was agreed that we need a broader group of stakeholders (small business & community) but that the core group can provide the logistics & upfront work. Use others as features for sessions, bring participants, etc so that we don't bog them down in meetings. Shawn Wellnitz will reach out to IEDC.
- **All group members will bring 2-3 session ideas AND who would be featured panelists/speakers.**
- **Next meeting set for Thursday, August 25th from 6:00pm to 8:00pm at the Discovery Center.**
We will:
 - Present and decide on session topic for first event.
 - Determine format/style of event.
 - Determine tentative date for first event.
 - Name the event(s)
 - Name our group

Small Business Strategies Focus Group

July 21st, 2016

6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Mineland Reclamation

In attendance: Mary Finnegan, Sara Ferkul, Andrew Hanegmon, Jared Sabin, Shawn Wellnitz, Betsy Olivanti, Dan Chase and Steve Peterson

Shawn started with the presentation. Would like 1-3 things out of this group. Also presented some information from the Kauffman Foundation:

How to Encourage Entrepreneurship (2 Handouts)

Convene Entrepreneurs and Organizations

Encourage Diverse Participation

Listen to Local Entrepreneurs. Root your strategy in their needs, not top down.

Publicly Celebrate Entrepreneurial Success

Unproven Strategies:

Traditional Small Business Incubators

Public Investment Funds

Top Down Approaches

Celebrating entrepreneurs and not bringing people down that don't succeed – talking about each failure.

Key Themes:

1. Develop and encourage investment of physical spaces for entrepreneurs.
2. Strengthen and expand entrepreneur networks.
3. Strengthen the vibrancy of downtowns.
4. Regional entrepreneurship competition(s) to spark new entrepreneurial activity.

5. Create and communicate a new narrative about entrepreneurs.

Andrew mentioned that at this point in time he is already working to start all 5 key themes. Mike Jugovich (Mayor of Chisholm) and Andrew are trying to work together to have MakerSpace acquire the back Chisholm City Hall, 53,000 square feet. Hoping to eventually expanding to additional floors. Proposing to economic agencies for assistance with upgrades to the facility. United Way already said they would put in \$50,000.00. They also applied for additional grant funding. Discussion of opening a daycare facility (youth makerspace). All would be city assets, everything would revert back to the city of Chisholm. Andrew would like to sit down with the planner, believes the city will wait to do anything with the building until after he meets with them. Intent to expand considering more space that would be available. Andrew is hoping to do something like this on a smaller scale. Hopefully the 2nd Tuesday in September – one day event. Doing a long term vision of MakerSpace.

Possibility of doing a competition for entrepreneurs – May also help with building MakerSpace. Would need a facilitator. Entrepreneur Fund did sponsor competition in the past. Competition and Recognition – gave away \$5,000.00 to 3 winners as well as an additional 0% interest loan opportunity.

ReGen is working with Elaine Hansen and Dave Setnicker to start a SCORE (Service Core of Retired Executives) chapter. SCORE chapter is currently more active in Duluth and Brainerd areas. They have started discussing who could be mentors from this area and they will develop from there. Commitment from mentors is one of the biggest issues that they will face. Need support for entrepreneurial work. Mentors will sit down with the entrepreneurs initially to have a meeting that is similar to an interview. The more mentors that are willing to participate the better.

Discussion on issues that new businesses may face:

Fiscal Disparities - Government taxes businesses at 40% on any capital growth – is there a way that the percentage can be lowered?

After having a certain amount of employees that they will then have to offer insurance. They will then have an additional expense.

Not having a space to test things out. (Andrew – MakerSpace)

In regards to fiscal disparities – would have to work against state regulations. What can this small group do to combat that? Suggestion of speaking with local representatives and senators. Dan Chase mentioned an article that was in the Grand Rapids Voice with information from the University of Minnesota. (I have not been able to find that article)

Is there an activity or activities that bring people in to show at small businesses?

Art Walk in downtown Grand Rapids (1st Friday of each month) Vendors set up along a section of main street. Hosted by Chamber of Commerce and city of Grand Rapids – Who is advertising this event? No one was aware of this event.

Try and get a 4 wheeler ride together that brings people through small business area. Mentioned was the Ed Wahlberg ride (Great River Energy Ride), however, it would need to be a legal version of this ride (no alcohol). Does Eveleth still do the grass drags?

Large Informational Conference:

How do we get all these different groups together at one time? (TED type conference)

Group from Virginia, Ely, Hibbing etc.

Build on the event that Ely put on in April – Ely's Small Business Conference. Bringing groups together to help them with resources that are available. Need to provide resources and try to get everyone together, making a connection.

Who to invite: Communities and Entrepreneurs

Where to have it? Would try for a central location – possible 2 or 3 day event? Keynote speaker the night before and education the next day.

How do we get the correct information to the correct people?

Larger investors may see something that interests them, which leads to them investing in a smaller business.

Something similar to a TED talk? Bring in speakers to speak on one topic and then have additional people there showing how it worked for them (testimonials). Following the speakers have a Q & A section or discussion between everyone. Hopefully the speakers will be able to stay around following the function for networking as well as general discussion with the audience. Make it educational. Cities of a difficult time knowing where to start and where to go once they have started.

Would like small breakout groups: focused on goals – Short Term

Recharge the Range Type Conference: Steve Peterson, IRRRB, Andrew Hanegmon, Entrepreneur Fund and Jared Sabin (ReGen-Marketing) will all participate. Try and bring in IEDC, Arts Unlimited (speaker?), additional members of ReGen.

Using Recharge name may bring people back to this event. What worked or didn't work at the past Recharge events? May speak with Ely since they did have a successful event.

What type of information do we need to touch on? Tax disparities, historic building reuse (building inventory – keep, delete and renovate), financials, how to manage the courage to start again after rejection, marketing – keeping people engaged.

Send out a survey to find out exactly what information people do need. Then we can build on speaking topics. And then build networks based on these topics.

Assemble a planning group, session goals, budget and goals.

**Goals – expanding the networks of entrepreneurs. Education and resources available.

Timeline for event:

Fall 2017

When do we get the core group together?

Where to have it? Will depend on the time of year we have. Possibly Minnesota Discovery Center?

Start a series of events, smaller class type of events to build up to the main event Fall 2017.

NEXT MEETING:

Thursday, August 25th, 2016

Mineland Reclamation

6-8 p.m.

Everyone come back with 3 subjects for the smaller education groups

Name of event

Format (how will this all work)

Smaller groups – not at one location but move around the range to make it accessible to a larger range of people.

Try and find a speaker that would like to talk.