

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

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Action Statement F.1: Coordinate with the San Bernardino County Economic Development Agency (EDA) and Running Springs Area Chamber of Commerce to expand strategies to improve communications with business and develop Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E) program.

Benchmark: A Business Retention & Expansion Program is developed.

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

Estimated Cost: \$200



*Informal community meetings such as meeting for coffee can improve relationships and lead to new partnership opportunities.
Photo source: Internet Association*

Communities and cities can often 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 they will not renew leases and either move or close altogether. Improving business relations 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 and developing a working partnership with these businesses, and helps to 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 identify problems linking all businesses

- A follow-up visit to ensure solutions are working effectively and address additional problems if necessary

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

Action	Action Leader	Timeline	Resources
1. Create an Economic Development Committee	Champion	Month 1	Running Springs Area Chamber of Commerce
2. Create a separate email address specific to questions and comments from business owners. Designate someone to respond to business-related issues.	Economic Development Committee with Running Springs Area Chamber of Commerce	Month 1	http://www.runningspringschamber.com/ 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.	Economic Development Committee	Months 2–3	http://www.sbcountyadvantage.com/For-Site-Selectors/Incentives-Programs.aspx
4. Coordinate and distribute a survey to existing businesses owners to ascertain their biggest challenges.	Economic Development Committee with Running Springs Area Chamber of Commerce	Month 3	On Regional Economic Development – Recent Business Retention and Expansion Project Reports https://onregionalecdev.com/tag/business-retention/
5. Create a report documenting barriers, including steps to address each one if possible.	Economic Development Committee with Running Springs Area Chamber of Commerce	Months 3–9	Business Retention and Expansion http://www.bre.guru/BRE
6. Work to resolve two barriers per year, and update the list as necessary.	Economic Development Committee	On-going	