

Welcome to the 2nd Issue

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In response to the County Board initiative to review the involvement of various organizations in economic development activities, the University Extension Department prepared the following:

MISSION:

University Extension helps the people of Pierce County apply University research, knowledge and resources to meet their educational needs wherever they live and work.

ROLE:

Applied Research & Education
Access to and UW-Extension State Specialists and University Resources

Role and Functions of University Extension in Economic Development

Organizational Development:

- Based on a County Board request in 1986, UW-Extension provided organizational development assistance to create an organization focused on economic development. Research and functions included formation of goals, by-laws, articles of incorporation, organizational policies, board member recruitment, staff recruitment, work plan development, budget formation, and external relations.
- These efforts resulted in the formation of the Pierce County Economic Development Corporation.
- Similar research and development work in the tourism area resulted in the formation of the Pierce County Partners in Tourism, Inc. in 1996.

Leadership Development:

- Local Boards involved in economic development and tourism development rely on citizens and volunteers to become community leaders to help support goals including the creation of jobs, income and tax base. Developing recruitment policies, identifying potential leaders, recruitment and training, and providing institutional support are elements necessary for effective leadership development supported by UW-Extension. With the average 25% turnover annually,

leadership development is a key element of any successful organization.

Labor Study:

- In the mid 1990's due to the low unemployment rate, employers in Pierce County requested assistance in dealing with labor shortages. Pierce County Economic Development Corporation requested assistance from UW-Extension to address the issue which had become a major concern of local employers. We contacted UW-Extension State Specialist Gary Green who provided the format and procedures to conduct an applied research project to assess the labor market conditions in Pierce County. Through the use of local volunteers, on-site interviews were conducted with the 67 largest employers in the county to gather data on employment practices, skills needed, wage rates, benefits, employee turnover, and other employment conditions. The data was compiled into a report analyzing the local, regional and statewide conditions. A series of 5 public meetings were held to present the research findings to employers and community leaders. A printed copy of the report was provided to all participant employers to enable them to make decisions regarding wage rates, benefits, and staffing policies.
- Due to the value of the 1996 Labor Study, the Pierce County Economic Development Corporation requested a subsequent study which was conducted in 2001.

Economic Impact Studies

County Fair:

- In the 1990's the County Board request assistance in determining the economic impact of the County Fair. Through the assistance of UW-Extension State Specialist N. Sumathi, and Fair Coordinator Joan Kratt, an applied research study determined that based on attendance, spending patterns and re-spending by local businesses the economic impact of the Pierce County Fair was estimated at over \$1 Million annually.

Fishing Tournament:

- The Village of Bay City hosted the National In-Fisherman Walleye Tournament in 2003 drawing in professional fishermen from throughout the country for this premier fishing contest awarding \$50,000 in prizes. The Pierce County Economic Development Corporation and Village Officials requested assistance to determine the economic impact of the 3-day event. UW-Extension State Specialist Dave Marcouiller, who is a Resource

Economist, assisted us in designing a survey instrument to collect applied research data from participants and spectators on spending patterns. A written report detailed the study findings to document the significant economic contributions of the event by bringing new money into the local economy to help support local businesses, jobs, income and tax base.

Arts & Crafts Businesses:

- Focusing on the tourism and retail elements of economic development UW-Extension Community Development Specialist Jerry Hembd provided support for an applied research project assessing the economic impact of the artists and crafts cottage industry in Pierce County. A survey was sent to artists and crafts people that sell their creations to obtain economic impact data in the 14 county area of northwestern Wisconsin. The data is currently being analyzed and compiled.

Bike Trail:

- Based on a request from officials from Pierce County, Town of Gilman and the Village of Spring Valley an economic impact study of a proposed bike trail from Spring Valley to Elmwood along the Eau Galle River on the former railroad bed is being conducted. The research project will generate data to determine anticipated economic impact in eastern Pierce County in terms of spending patterns and business growth.

Business Counseling for Entrepreneurs:

- Based on numerous requests for assistance with business planning, individual business consultation is provided to pre-venture entrepreneurs looking for information on business start-up. The "Steps to Starting a Business" 3-ring binder developed though our office is offered for sale as a reference resource to enable prospective new business owners to begin preparing for business feasibility analysis.
- In conjunction with the Small Business Development Center at UW-River Falls, which is another division of UW-Extension, Business Counseling Sessions are conducted with Director Steve DeWald for new or existing businesses. During the last 10 years hundreds of business owners have participated in these sessions enabling them to make investment decisions for business start-up and growth.

Business Retention and Expansion:

- In conjunction with the Site Visitation Committee of the Pierce County Economic Development Corporation business interviews have been conducted with numerous businesses in each municipality as part of an effort to support business growth and expansion and address concerns and needs.

First Impressions Program:

- A First Impressions program was planned and coordinated between the Villages of Ellsworth and Fennimore whereby a group of business owners and community leaders from each community anonymously visited the other community to assess its strengths and limitations. The intent is to help identify the assets of a

community than can be used for growth and development, as well as the areas that can be improved.

Community Economic Analysis:

- Based on a request from community leaders through the Chamber of Commerce, UW-Extension Specialist Glen Pulver provided research and teaching assistance to conduct a Community Economic Analysis for the Village of Ellsworth. The effort involved participation by a group of 20 business and community leaders to identify community and economic development goals resulting in the construction of a community swimming pool and recreation area.
- A related tool that is used with communities is the Community Preparedness Index through which the communities' physical and leadership characteristics are inventoried as a basis for developing strategies to achieve community goals.

Access to Demographic Data:

- Several units within UW-Extension can provide various forms of demographic data as requested for use by communities and business ventures. The Applied Population Lab can generate a wide variety of population characteristics and projections from Census and the Bureau of Economic Analysis sources. The Center for Community & Economic Development utilizes various data sources to generate economic indicators for downtown and business analysis.

Partnerships and Referrals:

- By coordinating with and serving on the Boards of several economic development organizations this involvement provides opportunities to build stronger partnerships for economic development activities. It also facilitates referrals to connect business and community needs with available resources.
- Each economic development organization undertakes a strategic planning process. Participation in these sessions provides opportunities for agencies to complement each other to define their specific mission and roles. Developing partnerships increases efficient use of resources to address community needs.

UW Extension Agricultural and Natural Resource Program Area:

- Extension Agents working in the Agriculture and Natural Resource Program Area including Horticulture Education also contribute in many ways to local economic development activities. The agricultural industry is a multi-million dollar enterprise in Pierce County that provides significant employment, income and tax base.