

February 2015

Inside the Network



The Business Resource Network (BRN) partnership consists of chambers of commerce, workforce and economic development organizations, postsecondary institutions, community and government agencies that all offer services to the business community. The BRN creates POWERFUL PARTNERSHIPS that work together as a team to share ideas and leverage resources that deliver comprehensive solutions for your business.

PARTNER PERSPECTIVE: DAVE WHEELER



Representing AEP through the BRN process has provided many opportunities for financial reward and professional development. Having been engaged in Economic Development for over 30 years, I have had the opportunity to witness and experience numerous economic development/work-force development programs and initiatives. These past experiences have provided me with an

expansive background knowledge and historical perspective that allows me to effectively compare the BRN process with multiple other R&E programs conducted by both governmental entities and NGO's, such as chambers of commerce and business associations. The BRN has created great value for AEP in three basic areas important to the company: increased energy efficiency programming participation, identification/resolution of customer complaints, and early identification of potential economic development projects.

The BRN has provided numerous businesses and business owners access to AEP Ohio's Energy Efficiency Programming by promoting it as a potential solution to reducing their electric bills. AEP Ohio is mandated to achieve established goal thresholds for implementing energy efficiency. The BRN process has added participants to that programming, helping AEP Ohio reach its goal thresholds, reducing CO2 emissions by reducing power generation needs, and saving AEP Ohio customers money in the process.

It's a given that most customers don't like paying their electric bill, but it is important to AEP Ohio that our customers have the best experience possible when interacting with us, either through the reliable delivery of safe, economical electricity or to being provided a consumer friendly method of bill payment. Customer relationships are paramount to AEP. The BRN process identifies customers that have issues with AEP (billing, reliability of service,

ability to easily contact us, etc.) and allows us to reach out to them to resolve or mitigate the problem or issue. It allows us to be more proactive than simply waiting for the customer to contact us.....thus, improving the customer's experience.

BRN client interviews can uncover potential growth/expansion projects of which AEP has no prior knowledge. Uncovering these projects allows AEP to better plan for electric service upgrades and to better forecast electrical capacity needs in client's local area. Better forecasting allows for a higher utilization of assets and helps keep electric rates lower.

Participation in the BRN has allowed me to better understand the service offerings of those other organizations within the partnership group. In my economic development work across NE and Eastern Ohio, having an expanded knowledge of where resources exist for struggling or growing businesses allows me to better serve those communities within AEP Ohio's service territories. I have also benefited from developing new relationships with other partners and have been personally more effective in my business interactions outside the BRN.

My 30-year experience has involved interacting with numerous local, regional and state governmental organizations as well as many private business associations. My goal has been growing jobs and expanding the local tax base in AEP-served communities. In my evaluation of the BRN process, I have benchmarked it against numerous other R&E programs and found none to be as effective as the BRN. The accountability and measured expectations designed within the BRN process effectively ensure that these potential services get placed before the client and that the partnership stays engaged and delivers those services as defined by the client. AEP continues to benefit from the activities of the BRN in Districts 6 and 16 and would strongly urge its implementation in Ohio's other Workforce Development Areas.



Here's a look at our BRN Partners:

<i>Alliance Area Chamber of Commerce</i>	<i>Kent State University at Tuscarawas</i>
<i>Alliance Area Development</i>	<i>Malone University</i>
<i>Alliance Career Centre</i>	<i>Massillon Area Chamber of Commerce</i>
<i>American Electric Power</i>	<i>North Canton Area Chamber of Commerce</i>
<i>Buckeye Career Center</i>	<i>ODJFS Veterans Program</i>
<i>Bureau of Workers' Compensation</i>	<i>OhioMeansJobs Stark County</i>
<i>Canton City Schools ABLE</i>	<i>Ohio MeansJobs Tuscarawas County</i>
<i>Canton City Schools ACTE</i>	<i>Ohio Department of Job and Family Services</i>
<i>Canton Regional Chamber of Commerce</i>	<i>Ohio Department of Transportation</i>
<i>City of Canton-Community Improvement Corporation</i>	<i>Ohio Development Services Agency</i>
<i>City of Alliance</i>	<i>Ohio University PTAC @ Akron</i>
<i>City of Canton</i>	<i>Ohio Small Business Development Center</i>
<i>City of Massillon</i>	<i>R.G. Drage</i>
<i>City of Dover</i>	<i>Small Business Development Center</i>
<i>City of New Philadelphia</i>	<i>Stark Development Board, Inc.</i>
<i>City of North Canton</i>	<i>Stark State College</i>
<i>Community Improvement Corporation of Tuscarawas County</i>	<i>Tuscarawas County Chamber of Commerce</i>
<i>Dominion East Ohio</i>	<i>Tuscarawas County Community and Economic Development Office</i>
<i>Economic Development and Finance Alliance of Tuscarawas County</i>	<i>Twin City Chamber</i>
<i>First Energy</i>	<i>University of Mount Union</i>
<i>Jackson-Belden Chamber of Commerce</i>	<i>Walsh University</i>
<i>Office of Governor John Kasich</i>	
<i>Kent State University at Stark, The Corporate University</i>	

Ohio International Market Grant for Exporters (IMAGE)

The IMAGE grant, funded by the State of Ohio and the U.S. Small Business Administration, offers financial assistance for small businesses to promote their products and services in international markets. IMAGE funds will reimburse companies a maximum of \$10,000 (50 percent on expenditures up to \$20,000) for participation in the following activities:

- International trade show exhibition: booth space rental and construction, freight costs to ship booth and materials and trade show registration fees. (Travel expenses and domestic trade shows are not eligible).
- Approved trade missions listed on the IMAGE website: participant fees, market research and appointment setting fees, economy-class airfare in accordance with the Fly America Act, per-diem lodging. Travel expenses limited to two people.
- Individual market visit supported by the state of Ohio in-country support, U.S. Commercial Service Gold Key Service or Food Export Market Builder: economy-class airfare in accordance with the Fly America Act, per-diem lodging. Travel expenses limited to two people. (Participation fees not eligible)
- International advertising: cost of production and placement of advertisements in magazines, newspapers, posters, billboards, direct mail, on TV, radio and international websites. (Printing costs are not eligible)
- Translation services: website and marketing material translations and localizations, label and packaging translations and technical manual translations. (Printing costs are not eligible)
- Global Target Program: Cleveland State University and University of Toledo.

For more information or to apply, please visit

IMAGE.development.ohio.gov



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