

Sweetgrass Development Meeting – February 9, 2010

John Rogers, EDA

Tony Preite, Montana Department of Commerce

Andy Poole, Montana Department of Commerce

In attendance: Brett Doney, Steve Malicott, John Shevlin, Llew Jones, Daniel Jones, Tony Sitzmann, Jerilee Wilkerson, Jim Hodgkiss, Larry Bonderud, Corlene Martin, Deb Brandon, Lorette Carter, Shannon Augare, Lillian Sunwall, Nano McCluskey, Joyce Dickson, Rebecca Engum and Mary Ann Kovacich.

John Rogers spoke on EDA requirements. He explained the primary programs of EDA which include Public Works & Development; Economic Adjustment; and Planning & Technical Assistance. Sweetgrass Development has a Capacity Building Grant. The grant requires staff as without staff it's hard to carry out the capacity building of the organization and very difficult to strengthen the regional approach. He stressed the scope of work of the organization must be derived from the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The agency requires the CEDS be updated every five years, but stresses that a CEDS is a living document with projects, priorities and programs changing and should be reflected in the document. Each organization with EDA funding must also complete an annual report. The report does include new priorities, accomplishments and changes that occurred within the year. The financial reporting must also be conducted during the planned reporting period. John stressed that Sweetgrass Development seek an executive director who is a self-starter; has analytical skills; writing skills; and outreach abilities.

Tony Preite also spoke about the need for an executive director. He felt with the CDBG funding and EDA funding – a solid director could be found. He applauded our regional cooperative efforts and encouraged Sweetgrass Development to continue the work they have initiated.

Andy Poole followed up with the basic services a Certified Regional Development Corporation should provide. A CRDC should be able to (1) manage a revolving loan fund; (2) provide small business technical assistance; (3) manage grants; and (4) provide regional planning (CEDS). He noted that a CRDC must commit to 4160 hours of work related to these four areas of service. He also reported that the RFP for CRDC funding will be published later this year of which Sweetgrass Development will have to apply.

The group continued discussion on the potential of using existing resources of members to continue the work of Sweetgrass with both Tony and John reiterating the need of an executive director to oversee the organization and coordinate the efforts of Sweetgrass Development.

The final charge for Sweetgrass Development was to change the management model and seek staffing to accommodate the new model.