

Tourism Related Visitation Protocol

TOOLS FOR ENERGIZING ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

The following tool provides a protocol for a visitation program focusing on transfer businesses. This tool has been specifically developed for use in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. This tool is being jointly developed by the National Center for Rural Entrepreneurship, the Nature Conservancy and Northern Initiatives. All rights are reserved by these entities to the use of this tool. TM

Proposed Protocol

The following protocol is proposed to guide the visitation portion of the Nature Tourism Initiative. The elements of the protocol are as follows:

- Focus of the Development Effort.
- Process Steps.

Focus. The focus of this development effort is proposed as follows:

- Nature Tourism Related Enterprises.
- Entrepreneurs Who Embrace Ecological Sustainability.
- Ecological Sustainability is a Key within the Venture Plan.
- Catalyst or Break Out Entrepreneurial Enterprises.

*Refer to Attachment A — *Understanding Entrepreneurial Talent.*

Process Steps. We propose the following stepped process:

Step 1 – Identification and Targeting. The first step involves identification of target entrepreneurial businesses. We suggest the following considerations to guide targeted identification:

Consideration 1 – Compatible Ventures. *Entrepreneurial ventures that embrace compatible development ethics. These are entrepreneurs that are interested in a lower density tourism industry based on higher value nature tourism markets.*

Consideration 2 – Catalyst/Break Out Entrepreneurs. *Entrepreneurial ventures that fit the catalyst or break out types.*

Consideration 3 – Open to Assistance. *The current owners/operators are open to participating in the assistance program to be offered by Northern Initiatives and its partners.*

Consideration 4 – Leadership. *Entrepreneurs with the motivation and capacity to provide leadership within their landscape, cluster and/or industry related to the focus of this development.*

Step 2 – Visitation. The second step is to visit each of the targeted businesses employing a modified Business Retention and Expansion interview process. Addressed in detail in a following section of this tool.

Step 3 – Customized Assistance. The third step involves engaging the entrepreneurs in a customized development program rooted in enterprise facilitation and micro-cluster development.

Step 4 – Tracking. A simple tracking system should be established to annually access each business initially identified with particular focus on those businesses enrolled in the program.

Step 5 – Program Evolution. Each year this economic development program should be critically assessed, determined if it should continue as a strategic part of Northern Initiatives' ED effort, and if continued, evolved to ensure its appropriateness and effectiveness.

Confidentiality. For this program to be successful it must be totally confidential. Any information gained through interaction with business owners must be kept discrete and restricted to a limited number of persons committed to confidentiality. Because of the need for confidentiality we recommend the following:

- *That the program be operated by a committee of no more than three to five persons from the development organization. These persons agree in writing to complete confidentiality of all information gained through this program.*
- *A written confidentiality pledge be provided to each business engaged formally or informally in the program. Any disclosure of information be made with a written permission from the business. Identification of the person or persons recognized by the business to provide such a release should be obtained early in the process.*

Desired Outcomes. (Under Construction.)

Visitation. We propose the following five areas to be probed during the visitation:

- Area 1 – Opportunity and Capacity.
- Area 2 – About the Business.
- Area 3 – About the Entrepreneurs.
- Area 4 – Future Plans
- Area 5 – Development Issues.
- Area 6 – Engagement Attitudes.

Area 1 – Opportunity. *Perceptions about development opportunity are important. We want to gauge where folks are at with respect to their perspectives on opportunities for development.*

As would relate to Nature Tourism.

Q1.1 – In the UP, people see lots of good opportunities for the creation of new business.

Q1.2 – In the UP, there are more good opportunities for the creation of new businesses than people are able to take advantage of them.

Q1.3 – In the UP, good opportunities for new firms have considerably increased in the past five years.

Q1.4 – In the UP, it is easy to get the information required to access nature business opportunities.

Q1.5 – In the UP, opportunities to create growth firms is rare.

Responses would be on a 1 to 5 scale with comment opportunities.

Source: Data Collection – Analysis Strategies Operations Manual, Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Project. Kansas City, MO: Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation. March 17, 2001. Page 144 – Topic K.

Capacity. *This area focuses on perceptions regarding entrepreneurial capacity. The following probing questions might be considered:*

Q1.6 – In the UP, most people believe that the creation of a new or high growth business is very difficult.

Q1.7 – In the UP, many people know how to manage a nature tourism business.

Q1.8 – In the UP, many people have experience in starting a nature tourism business.

Q1.9 – In the UP, many people can react quickly to good opportunities for a new nature tourism business.

Q1.10 – In the UP, many people have the ability to organize the resources required for a new nature tourism business.

Responses would be on a 1 to 5 scale with comment opportunities.

Source: Data Collection – Analysis Strategies Operations Manual, Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Project. Kansas City, MO: Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation. March 17, 2001. Page 144 – Topic L.

Area 2 – About the Businesses. *Second, we want to gain insight on the business or businesses (there may likely be more than one) owned and/or operated by the interviewee.*

- Q2.1 Name of business: _____
- Q2.2 What year was this business started? _____
- Q2.3 What year did you became the owner of this business? _____
- Q2.4 Which best describes how you came to own this business?
- Started the business _____
 - Purchased the business _____
 - Inherited the business _____
- Q2.5 How is your business organized?
- Sole proprietorship _____
 - Partnership _____
 - Subchapter S corporation _____
 - Corporation _____
- Q2.6 Which best describes your primary business activity?
- Service _____
 - Retail (including restaurants) _____
 - Finance/insurance/real estate _____
 - Transportation _____
 - Business and professional services _____
 - Wholesale/distribution _____
 - Manufacturing _____
 - Construction _____
 - Other _____
- Please describe briefly _____
- Q2.7 How many years of experience in this specific business activity do you have? _____
- Q2.8 In an average week, how many hours do you devote to your business? _____ hours
- Q2.9 How many employees do you have? _____ Full-time _____ Part-time _____
- Q2.10 How many family members are employed in your business? _____
- Full-time _____
 - Part-time _____
- Q2.11 How many family members are investors in your business? _____
- Q2.12 What percent of the business do you own? _____%

Area 3 – About the Entrepreneurs. *The third area of inquiry focuses on the owners/operators.*

- Q3.1 Name of owner: _____
- Q3.2 Address: _____
- Q3.3 Phone: _____
- Q3.3 Fax: _____
- Q3.3 Email: _____
- Q3.4 Website (if applicable) _____
- Q3.5 Sex: Male [] Female []

- Q3.6 Marital status:
 Single _____
 Married _____
 Separated _____
 Divorced _____

Q3.7 Number of children: _____

- Q3.8 Highest level of education completed:
 Eighth grade _____
 High school _____
 College _____
 Grad school _____

Q3.9 How many total years of personal business experience do you have? _____

Q3.10 Was either of your parents ever involved in owning and operating their own business?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, identify which parent and briefly describe the business activity.

Area 4 – Future Plans. *We want to gain insight on their personal/business plans.*

Note – The following questions are intended to be a menu to probe for insight. It is best to start with the following open ended question and then use the specific questions for probing and clarification.

Primary Question

What are your plans for your business(es) in the next five years?

Do you have longer-term business plans? If yes, what are they?

Probing Questions

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| Q4.1 Add a new product or service | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Q4.2 Sell to a new market | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Q4.3 Research new markets | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Q4.4 Expand distribution channels | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Q4.5 Expand advertising and promotion | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Q4.6 Invest in new equipment | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Q4.7 Replace current equipment | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Q4.8 Expand current facilities | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Q4.9 Redesign current facilities | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Q4.10 Seek additional financial capital | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Q4.11 Computerize current operations | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Q4.12 Upgrade computer systems | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Q4.13 Redesign operating methods | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Q4.14 Expand scope of operating activities | 1 2 3 4 5 |

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|---|------------------|
| Q4.15 Seek professional or technical advice | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Q4.16 Add specialized employees | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Q4.17 Invest in offsite training for employees | 1 2 3 4 5 |

Area 5 – Development Issues. *Every business faces real and perceived development issues. As humans, often these issues become personal and clouded by emotions. It is important to discover those issues that are core to the development of the (1) entrepreneur and (2) their venture(s).*

Primary Question

Please list and describe the five most important issues facing your business ability to be profitable and/or grow.

Probing Questions

Which of the following business development issues are critical to your business' success and future growth:

Rank on a 1 to 5 scale where one is very important and 5 is not important.

- Q5.1 Access to financing or capital.
- Q5.2 Access to new markets.
- Q5.3 Assistance with business planning.
- Q5.4 Assistance with business transfer or sale.
- Q5.5 Lowering local taxes.
- Q5.6 Lowering state and/or federal taxes.
- Q5.7 Providing benefits to workers.
- Q5.8 Finding motivated and/or skilled workers.
- Q5.9 Lack of community awareness and support.
- Q5.10 Assistance in improving production.
- Q5.11 Access to higher quality telecommunications services.

Area 6 – Engagement Attitudes.

You have a successful business in this community – would you consider giving of your time and experience in any of the following ways:

- Q6.1 Are you willing to mentor other entrepreneurs? Yes _____ No _____
- If yes, are you willing to mentor other entrepreneurs:
- One on one _____
 - Through an entrepreneurs network that meets periodically _____
 - Through an entrepreneurs network on the Internet _____
 - Other _____
- Please describe. _____

- Q6.2 Do you think an entrepreneurial or vocational internship/apprentice program would be useful in helping people gain experience in starting their own businesses?

Communications. Two types of communication are required for this program:

Type 1 – To the Business Owner(s). Creating awareness of the program is important. Such awareness building should create appropriate expectations for the business owners that ensure their enlistment in the program.

Type 2 – To the Community at Large. Informal communication within a smaller community is quick and often inaccurate. It is important that the community be informed about the program to ensure its success. In Ord we recommend that the newspaper be enlisted to run a series of articles that introduce the program and provide progress reports monthly.

Assistance Program Elements. There are four elements to this *Assistance Program*:

Element 1 – Identification, Visitation & Enrollment. Addressed earlier in this tool. Regarding enrollment, we recommend consideration of a formal enrollment process involving the joint signing of a simple agreement that spells out the roles and responsibilities of both parties through this program.

Element 2 – Cluster Development. (Under Construction.)

Element 3 – Cluster & Enterprise Facilitation. (Under Construction.)

Element 4 – Support Infrastructure. A common set of issues will surface that are applicable to most transfer situations. The community should anticipate these issues and commit to building infrastructure to help resolve them. Some of the possible infrastructure needs might include:

About the Center

The Center for Rural Entrepreneurship is a RUPRI or Rural Policy Research Institute national research and policy center with founding support from the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation of Kansas City, Missouri. Our mission is to *enable every rural resident to achieve his or her full entrepreneurial potential*. This mission will be achieved by collaborating with individuals and organizations engaged in the study, practice and policy of rural entrepreneurship. The Center supports research, field work, and policy development through collaborations with national, state and community interests. For more information on the **Center for Rural Entrepreneurship** contact Taina Radenslaben at 402-323-7336 or taina@ruraleship.org.

