Ocean Grove
Business Expansion And Retention Program

Strategy And Planning
Interim Report
February 2013

A. Introduction

One characteristic of a vibrant local economy and community is visible appreciation, understanding and support for its existing business base. Existing local businesses represent the engine for continuing economic activity and new jobs in any local economy. Evidence shows that they are responsible for:

- creating between 60-80% of new jobs;
- providing most of the investment for new community economic initiatives and infrastructure;
- generating ideas about possible new businesses; and
- often acting as an attraction for outside businesses to relocate or establish within the community.

It is vital to have community initiatives which focus on listening to, and helping existing businesses to do better. The Business Expansion and Retention (BEAR) Program is one such initiative. Created in the USA over 20 years ago, the BEAR Program now operates throughout USA, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa and in most states of Australia.

A key element of the BEAR Program is a systematic visitation of local businesses by teams of Community Volunteer Interviewers who gather information about business concerns, perceptions and ideas.

B. Ocean Grove BEAR Program Overview

Goal

To stimulate local economic and employment development by growing and retaining existing businesses.

Objectives

Short term:
- To demonstrate and communicate community support for local business.
- To raise the profile of Ocean Grove businesses.
- To discover the concerns, successes, needs, issues and aspirations of local businesses.
- To better understand the business needs and expectations of the community.
- To encourage new ideas in terms of business, community and employment development.
- To respond to immediate business concerns.

Long term:

- To enhance the appeal of local businesses and minimise economic leakage from the local economy.
- To identify windows of opportunity for new business creation, growth, matchmaking and networking.
- To design and implement strategic action plans for community and economic development.
- To create a broad based community coalition to sustain long term economic and community development efforts.

Methodology

(Methodology will be modified and expanded as the Project evolves)
- To formulate, conduct and analyse a Business Visitation & Survey project as recommended by BEAR Program guidelines.
- To identify themes, issues, problems and opportunities arising from this initial project.
- For each major theme identified, establish a working party to respond to the issues, problems and opportunities relevant to that theme.
- To identify and conduct other appropriate actions to meet the Program's goals and objectives.

Description

The Business Expansion and Retention (BEAR) Program begins with a gigantic community dialogue with owners and operators of local businesses about what helps and hinders their business activities and ideas they have to improve the local business environment. It involves the formation of a local Taskforce to lead, design and oversee the implementation of the dialogue, and the use of Community Volunteer Interviewers and a structured interview questionnaire.

Later projects are developed as a result of data gathered from this initial project, and are focused on:
- gathering supporting data from other sources (such as customer);
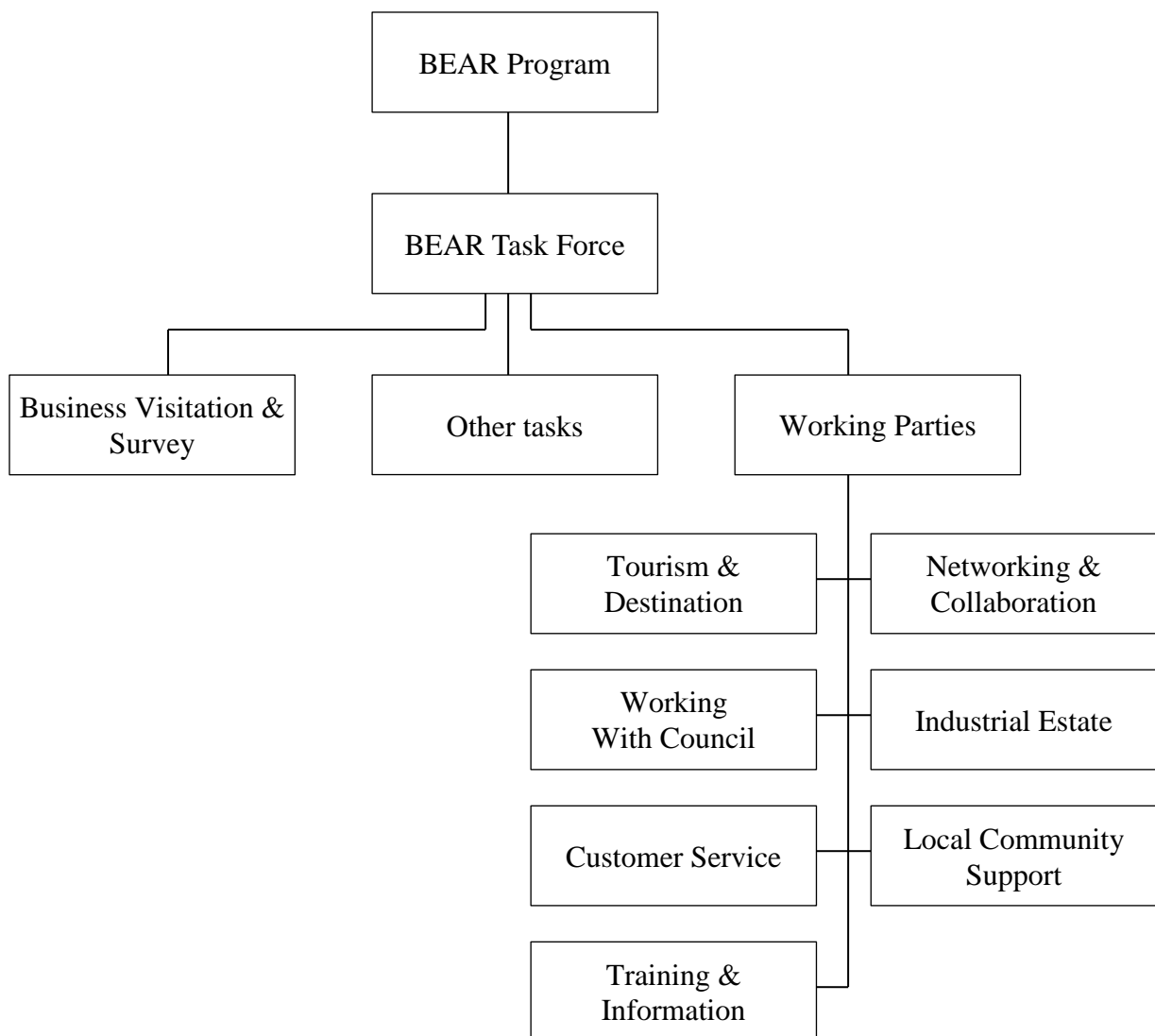- responding to issues raised.

The BEAR Program allows the possible discovery of:
- a picture of local business health;
- local business needs and concerns;
- perceptions by local businesses about what is preventing expansion;
- identification of businesses considering relocation outside the community and why;
- perceptions about government actions that help and hinder local businesses;
- opportunities for match making local businesses;
- current and future labour and market needs; and
- new ideas for improving the local economy and business environment.

The ideas and issues raised through the dialogue and questionnaire provide the basis for:
- actions/referral to address immediate business requests and concerns; and
- the design and implementation of business and economic community development strategies and work plans.

Program Overview

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                        │   BEAR Program   │
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                        │  BEAR Task Force │
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           ┌─────────────────────┼─────────────────────┐
┌──────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────┐
│ Business         │   │   Other tasks    │   │ Working Parties  │
│ Visitation &     │   │                  │   │                  │
│ Survey           │   │                  │   │                  │
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Tourism & Destination	Networking & Collaboration
Working With Council	Industrial Estate
Customer Service	Local Community Support
Training & Information	

C. Ocean Grove BEAR Program Details

Stage	Task	Progress
Setup	Assessing the level of community interest and support for the Program.	✓ Completed
	Forming of a local leadership team (Taskforce) to manage the Program.	✓ Completed
	Agreeing on the scope and nature of the Program.	✓ Completed
	Investigating other community economic development initiatives to gather supplementary information relating to local business life issues.	✗ Not initiated
Project 1	Conduct Business Visitation & Survey project	📖 See Section D
	Identify major themes.	✓ Completed
Working parties	Establish a working party for each major theme. • For Tourism and Destination Strategy Working Party, see Section E • For Industrial Estate Working Party, see Section F • For Working With Council Working Party, see Section G • For Strengthening Local Community Support Working Party, see Section H • For Customer Service Working Party, see Section I • For Business Networking & Collaboration Working Party, see Section J • For Training & Information Sharing Working Party, see Section K	⚑ Initiated

Themes

At the December 2012 presentation, six major themes uncovered by the questionnaire data were highlighted:

- Optimism
- Customer Service
- Business Networking
- Ocean Grove Community
- Ocean Grove As A Destination
- Local Council

Additional themes identified in the data included:
- Geographical parts of Ocean Grove (Industrial Area, Wallington, Collendina, etc)
- Industrial Area
- Transport, traffic flow and parking
- Production and distribution of local produce

plus many others.

From these, seven themes were selected that were deemed appropriate to pursue within a working party:
- Tourism and Destination Strategy
- Industrial Estate
- Working With Council
- Strengthening Local Community Support
- Customer Service
- Business Networking & Collaboration
- Training & Information Sharing

Other themes (for example, Local Council) will be dealt with directly from the BEAR Task Force.

D. Business Visitation & Survey (Project 1)

Stage	Task	Progress
Planning	Assessing the level of community interest and support for the Project.	✓ Completed
	Securing of necessary financial and human resources including a Project Coordinator.	✓ Completed
	Launching and promoting the proposed Project.	✓ Completed
	Identifying and contacting businesses to be visited.	✓ Completed
	Recruiting and training of Community Volunteer Interviewers.	✓ Completed
Visitation	Implementing a systematic visitation of local businesses using the survey questionnaire.	✓ Completed
	Instigating immediate follow up regarding referrals and concerns.	⌕ Initiated
Analysis	Organising data analysis and analysing of survey results.	✓ Completed
	Identifying 'red flag' issues and opportunities.	⌕ Initiated
	Reviewing other information relating to local business life issues.	☞ Working parties ☞ Overall Program
	Formulating action plans to improve the community as a place to do business.	☞ Working parties ☞ Overall Program
	Identifying possible resources to implement action plans.	☞ Working parties ☞ Overall Program
Community Feedback and Action	Sharing of Program results and outcomes via the media and through business and community meetings.	✓ Completed
	Implementing action strategies	☞ Working parties ☞ Overall Program
	Ongoing review of action strategies to assess impact and soliciting feedback.	☞ Overall Program

E. Tourism And Destination Strategy Working Party

Stage	Task	Progress
Planning	Agreeing on the scope and nature of the Working Party.	✖ Not initiated
	Reviewing data gathered from Business Visitation & Survey, and from December 2012 Action Sheets.	✖ Not initiated

F. Industrial Estate Working Party

Stage	Task	Progress
Planning	Agreeing on the scope and nature of the Working Party.	✖ Not initiated
	Reviewing data gathered from Business Visitation & Survey, and from December 2012 Action Sheets.	✖ Not initiated

G. Working With Council Working Party

Stage	Task	Progress
Planning	Agreeing on the scope and nature of the Working Party.	✖ Not initiated
	Reviewing data gathered from Business Visitation & Survey, and from December 2012 Action Sheets.	✖ Not initiated

H. Strengthening Local Community Support Working Party

Stage	Task	Progress
Planning	Agreeing on the scope and nature of the Working Party.	✖ Not initiated
	Reviewing data gathered from Business Visitation & Survey, and from December 2012 Action Sheets.	✖ Not initiated

I. Customer Service Working Party

Stage	Task	Progress
Planning	Agreeing on the scope and nature of the Working Party.	✖ Not initiated
	Reviewing data gathered from Business Visitation & Survey, and from December 2012 Action Sheets.	✖ Not initiated

J. Business Networking & Collaboration Working Party

Stage	Task	Progress
Planning	Agreeing on the scope and nature of the Working Party.	✖ Not initiated
	Reviewing data gathered from Business Visitation & Survey, and from December 2012 Action Sheets.	✖ Not initiated

K. Training & Information Sharing Working Party

Stage	Task	Progress
Planning	Agreeing on the scope and nature of the Working Party.	✖ Not initiated
	Reviewing data gathered from Business Visitation & Survey, and from December 2012 Action Sheets.	✖ Not initiated