

Community Focus Statement D: Provide a thriving and vibrant local small business environment.

D4

Action Statement D.4: *Coordinate with the San Bernardino County Economic Development Agency (EDA) and Lake Arrowhead Communities Chamber of Commerce to expand strategies to improve communications with businesses and develop a Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E) program.*

Benchmark: A Business Retention & Expansion Program is developed.

Champion: Volunteer group or person or can be identified by the community

Estimated Cost: Volunteer time.



Lake Arrowhead shoreline. Photo source: Alissa Walker

Communities and cities can become too focused on attracting new investment and development to the area. This focus causes them to be unaware of the needs and concerns of existing business owners, which increases the likelihood that they will not renew leases and either move or close altogether. Improving business relations and communication between existing business owners and the Chamber of Commerce can improve the business climate and accelerate job growth.

A Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E) program works to focus local economic development efforts on improving relationships with existing businesses, developing a working partnership with these businesses, and helping to connect businesses with

available local and state resources. This program places the Chamber of Commerce in the position of liaison between business and local government and can open the door to potential incentives, workforce training opportunities, capital sources, or business coaching. An effective BR&E program works to:

- Show existing local businesses that they are appreciated and their value to the local economy is recognized
- Assist in solving problems that businesses face where local resources are available
- Match businesses with educational opportunities and technical assistance programs to improve their competitiveness

A good BR&E program should have the following components:

- An economic development official that is specifically focused on the needs of existing businesses
- A formal visitation program that includes face-to-face meetings between the economic development official and business owners to build trust

- An annual survey program to reach all business owners and identify problems appearing across businesses
- A follow-up visit to ensure solutions are working effectively and address additional problems if necessary

Because of the time and resources necessary to successfully implement this type of program, it is often possible to bring in a group of community volunteers who have business experience to assist in outreach efforts. Surveys also help to track trends from year to year and make further outreach possible when resources are limited.

Action	Action Leader	Timeline	Resources
1. Create a separate email address specific to questions and comments from business owners. Designate someone to respond to business-related issues.	Champion with Lake Arrowhead Communities Chamber of Commerce	Month 1	Lake Arrowhead Communities Chamber of Commerce http://lakearrowheadchamber.com/
2. Coordinate with the San Bernardino County Economic Development Agency regarding existing business retention and expansion resources.	Champion with Lake Arrowhead Communities Chamber of Commerce	Months 2–3	San Bernardino County Office Economic Development Agency, Incentives, Services, and Programs http://www.sbcountyadva ntage.com/For-Site-Selectors/Incentives-Programs.aspx
3. Coordinate and distribute a survey to existing business owners to ascertain their biggest challenges.	Champion with Lake Arrowhead Communities Chamber of Commerce	Month 3	
4. Create a report documenting barriers, with steps to address each one if possible.	Champion with Lake Arrowhead Communities Chamber of Commerce	Months 3–9	Business Retention https://onregionalecdev.com/tag/business-retention/
5. Work to resolve two barriers per year, and update the list as necessary.	Champion with Lake Arrowhead Communities Chamber of Commerce	On-going	BRE.guru http://www.bre.guru/BRE