



THE TOOLBOX

WYOMING
ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
ASSOCIATION

May 2011 • A NEWSLETTER FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUPPORTERS

President's Notes

In March of this year I gave a brief WEDA update for the Wyoming Business Council Board meeting. WEDA is appreciative of the opportunity to periodically share our perspectives with the Business Council. It seemed appropriate at this juncture not to get into detail about specific programs but to talk about the relationship between WEDA and the WBC.

WEDA is an association of local economic development entities all across the state. WEDA represents the people doing the work "where the rubber meets the road." The relationship between the Business Council and WEDA is an important one for state-wide economic development. The Business Council brings the authority and resources of the state. No local economic development agency has the clout or standing nationally like the State. WEDA members, on the other hand, bring the local knowledge base and access to local governments, businesses and resources in a way that the Business Council cannot.

Working with the Business Council, WEDA provides educational forums to upgrade the skill-sets and capabilities of those doing economic development in every corner of the state. WEDA believes that the better and more professional that local economic development folks are, the more successful the entire state will be in its economic development efforts.

WEDA also has a more general education role state-wide and that is to inform the Wyoming public about economic development. One of tools we use – and which wouldn't be possible without WBC support – is our annual publication of WEDA's "Success Stories." The old adage that "nothing succeeds like success" is absolutely true and this publication is one way to help citizens and legislators see, in a comprehensive way, what is actually being accomplished on a county by county basis. It was gratifying this year to see "Success Stories" on legislator's desks at the capitol and being referenced in legislative committee hearings.

And then there is the actual legislation. Here again the relationship between WEDA and the WBC is critical. While the Business Council can only inform but cannot, as an entity, lobby for specific outcomes – WEDA can.

And we do. Over the past years as WEDA has committed time and energy to tracking and lobbying legislation we have enjoyed quite outstanding success on those bills that we have identified as critical to the WBC and to state-wide economic development. This year for example, we had a 100% success rate on those issues to which WEDA committed time and resources.

We believe the partnership between the Wyoming Business Council and WEDA is important, is delivering results for the State of Wyoming and warrants continued "care and feeding."

Randy Bruns,
President, WEDA

Economic Development Success Highlighted 2011 Legislative Session

By Joe Randall

The 2011 session of the Wyoming Legislature was a good one when economic development issues are concerned, but it pointed out, once again, that a lack of verifiable data is making the promotion of business-friendly legislation more difficult.

"This was a good session and the bills we were closely following were all approved," said WEDA Legislative Co-Chair Scott Sutherland. "The biggest hang-up we faced was the lack of information on showing how effective the manufacturing and data center tax exemptions, and others, are in recruiting new businesses and diversifying the economy."

Sutherland, the Vice President of Cheyenne LEADS, said WEDA and others can provide plenty of anecdotal information, but he said there is no methodology to provide verifiable third-party information. "I can't really blame the legislature for wanting to know if what they are doing is effective," he said.

Help is on the way.

In passing HB 143, the Manufacturing Exemption on Sales Tax Used In Production bill, lawmakers inserted a reporting requirement, so some data will be collected, he said. "It's a start." Sutherland also noted that the Wyoming Business Council would begin collecting and reporting data "to answer legislative questions on manufacturing and data center impacts, for example, beyond what the Department of Labor and the Legislative Service Office can do."

WEDA Lobbyist Lynn Birleffi called the past session excellent. "Economic development professionals will have additional resources for securing development funding through Industrial Development Bonds, manufacturers tax policy remains on an equal footing with other states, and funding to attract data centers that provides new opportunities for Wyoming's economy was put into place," she reported. "We could not have done this without your help," she said in a memorandum to WEDA members.



Governor Matt Mead signed the Manufacturers Equipment Sales Tax Exemption Bill, which extends the tax sunset by six years. Senator Marty Martin and Lobbyist Lynn Birleffi watch the signing. (photo credit Renny McKay)

In addition to HB 143, other important legislation that passed the session included the sales tax exemption for data centers (HB 117), and a bill allowing the State Treasurer to increase investment dollars in Industrial Development Bonds from \$100-million to \$600-million, with any project over \$100-million in size to be approved by the legislature.

Several anecdotal examples that helped pass the manufacturing exemption on sales taxes came from the state's north-east and timber rich area in the shadow of Devils Tower. Jim Neiman, the CEO of Neiman Enterprises, Inc. of Hewlett, told lawmakers that the exemption saved the Devils Tower Forest Product Co. almost \$20,000 per year which he said was critical to maintaining his workforce by keeping costs low. "With the cost of all inputs to the manufacturing process increasing at a much more rapid rate than the value of the product, the margin is shrinking rapidly," he wrote in a Nov. 1, 2010 letter to lawmakers. "Therefore we must tighten our

SEE LEGISLATIVE, WEDA-3

"Economic development professionals will have additional resources for securing development funding through Industrial Development Bonds, manufacturers tax policy remains on an equal footing with other states, and funding to attract data centers that provides new opportunities for Wyoming's economy was put into place."

Business Recruitment Work is Never Done

Kim Sears, Wyoming Business Council

For over a decade, the Wyoming Business Council has invested significantly in business parks, infrastructure, and programs and partnerships in communities around the state to help make them attractive to both existing and new companies. While the Business Council continues to provide this assistance, it has expanded its focus to support communities' efforts in actively filling available locations; this expanded focus is beginning to produce fruit after many years of consistent investment and labor.

Using the state's resources and capabilities as a guide the Business Council created a

"short list" of targeted industries that made sense for the state. Data centers, wind energy manufacturing, component manufacturing, and distribution/warehousing were considered a natural fit.

In the last year and a half, the Business Council has aggressively sought companies in these industries, attending industry trade shows and site selector events, making per-

These decisions to locate to Wyoming have fostered a symbiotic business-state relationship that is reaping rewards for both parties. The companies will take advantage of the many business incentives available, and the state, among many obvious benefits, will profit from the increased recognition generated by these industry hard-hitters deciding to move here.

sonal connections, and launching advertising campaigns in markets where companies are feeling the pressure of increased government

regulation and taxation.

Business Council staff, along with local economic development organizations from several Wyoming communities, have logged many hours and pounded the pavement at trade shows such as WestPack for manufacturing and packaging companies; Windpower 2011 for wind energy businesses; SHOT (Shooting, Hunting and Outdoor Trades) Show; and Data Center World, a goldmine of possibilities for that industry.

Their efforts have not only resulted in several long looks Wyoming's way, but in a few serious commitments from names easily recognized in their respective industries. Gestamp Worthington Wind Steel, LLC, a Spanish firm and Ohio corporation, are forming a joint venture to build a wind tower manufacturing facility in Cheyenne. Insultech, a California company that develops and manufactures a wide range of insulation products is relocating to Evanston.

These decisions to locate to Wyoming

SEE RECRUITMENT, WEDA-2

MARK YOUR
CALENDAR

2011 WEDA Events
Sept. 7 & 8, 2011 WEDA Fall
Conference, Hilton Garden
Inn, Casper

2012 WEDA Events
February 16 & 17, 2012
WEDA Winter Economic
Development Conference,
Little America, Cheyenne
February 16, 2012 WEDA
Legislative Reception, Little
America, Cheyenne

2013 WEDA Events
January 9 & 10, 2013 WEDA
Winter Economic
Development Conference,
Little America, Cheyenne
January 9, 2013 WEDA
Legislative Reception, Little
America, Cheyenne



Wyoming Business Council News:

The mission of the Business Council is to facilitate the economic growth of Wyoming. The Business Council, a state government agency, concentrates its efforts on providing assistance for existing Wyoming companies and start-ups, helping communities meet their development and diversification needs, and recruiting new firms and industries targeted to complement the state's assets. For more information, please visit www.wyomingbusiness.org.

2011 Wyoming Business Council Advisory Board Meeting Schedule

May 25 & 26 - Buffalo, WY

September 14 & 15 - Cody, WY

November 30 & December 1 - Cheyenne, WY

New Small Business Investment Credit Program Provides Alternative Capital to Wyoming Small Businesses and Entrepreneurs

The Wyoming Business Council (WBC) is excited to introduce the Wyoming Small Business Investment Credit Program, which was implemented on January 3, 2011 and was enacted by the Wyoming Legislature in 2010. The program is designed to provide an alternative source of capital to Wyoming small businesses and entrepreneurs.

Wyoming is a business-friendly state that thrives on the success of small businesses and entrepreneurs. In the current economic climate it can be difficult for small businesses to access capital, especially with limited venture capital resources available. Success of the program will not happen overnight; however, it will pave the way for a brighter economic future in Wyoming. The program will stimulate job creation and will provide an alternative source of capital for the use of Wyoming businesses.

In order to enter the program, venture capital companies must receive certification by the WBC to act as a Wyoming Small Business Investment Company (SBIC) to invest designated capital into qualified businesses. The SBIC's investments should stimulate job creation by making capital available to Wyoming businesses. Participating investors in SBIC's are insurance companies with premium tax liability to the State of Wyoming. The insurance companies in turn receive a tax credit equal to the amount of their investment. In 2010, the Wyoming Legislature set a limit of \$30 million for this program.

To receive certification, the proposed SBIC will file an application with the WBC, and needs to be located, headquartered and licensed to conduct business in Wyoming and have at least five years of experience.

When the SBIC receives certification and funding, they will invest money into "qualified businesses." The money is invested in the form of a debt instrument or equity purchase.

Qualified businesses:

- Are headquartered in Wyoming, its principal operations are located in Wyoming, at least 60 percent of the employees are employed in Wyoming or the business has committed in writing to move to Wyoming as a condition of the investment

- Have provided evidence acceptable to the WBC of its intent to remain in Wyoming after receipt of the qualified investment

- Have 100 employees or less
- Are not a franchise
- Are not predominately engaged in:
 - Professional services provided by accountants, doctors, or lawyers
 - Banking or lending
 - Insurance
 - Direct gambling activities

It is the responsibility of the SBICs to make the investments into the qualified businesses. Therefore, the WBC does not fund the capital needs of the small businesses, but acts as a regulator to the SBICs. Specifically, it is the WBC's responsibility to ensure that the SBIC and qualified businesses comply with Wyoming Statute and the designated capital is invested in Wyoming. Further, the SBIC program manager will monitor the qualified business on a regular basis including site visits to verify their operations. The SBIC program manager will annually report to the Wyoming Legislature the results of the program including dollar amount of investments, number of jobs created, and the number of jobs retained per investment.

A potential SBIC is currently in the process of preparing their application and is interested in reviewing mature business plans that could lead to investments into qualified businesses. Completed business plans and questions about the program can be forwarded to Ryan Whitehead, SBIC Program Manager:

Ryan Whitehead, Wyoming Business Council Business & Industry Division; 307-777-2882; Cell: 307-274-5300; ryan.whitehead@wybusiness.org

BUSINESS READY COMMUNITY GRANT MANUAL TO BE A RESOURCE FOR GRANT WRITERS

The Wyoming Business Council (WBC) recently called upon IDEA Inc. of Riverton to assist with creating a user guide for the Business Ready Community Grant (BRC) program. IDEA Inc. has completed several WBC BRC grants and has developed an internal document to help them with future projects. The WBC was aware of the IDEA document and asked if IDEA could expand the document to cover more aspects of the program. IDEA developed the document based on some of the many experiences that they have had in writing BRC grants and then managing the associated projects. "Most of the guidelines and rules that IDEA Inc. uses in our document came from failures and problems more than they came from successes," said Alan Moore, president of IDEA Inc. "Every time something went wrong we would write it down so that we wouldn't make that mistake again."

The original IDEA Inc. document was developed to hand to businesses and others who want to pursue a Business Committed grant from the WBC. The paper would help the business to understand the benefits and obligations that come with participating in a BRC grant and using public money in a construction project. IDEA's General Operating Guidelines for BRC grant projects further outlined what the duties, obligations, responsibilities and requirements would be for IDEA Inc. and for the City or County that sponsored the grant.

One of the main ideas covered up front was the requirement from the Wyoming constitution to recapture the grant funds so that a private business or individual is not enriched with public funds. IDEA's recapture model has IDEA owning the land and building, and collecting lease payments at market rate from the business for use of the building. The business provides funds for the match and any excess funds above what the grant provides for the project. Using this model IDEA Inc. has become self-supporting, not needing assistance from city or county government or from grants. This is a good deal for the business; their lease amount is based on the amount of the grant, not the entire cost of the project so they actually get a good break on the lease rate. This is a good deal for IDEA Inc. – they are able to generate significant funds for operations while building their portfolio and holdings. This is a good deal for the WBC, as they are able to help business grow and expand while recapturing the grant funds. This is a good deal for the public in general because more jobs are available, and businesses grow and expand in their communities.

The IDEA Inc. document is fairly complete, and has been shared with other economic development groups around the state as they have asked for it. The WBC and IDEA discussed expanding the document several times and finally circumstances arose that encouraged both organizations to move forward with the document. Phil Christopherson, the Executive Director of IDEA Inc. who had authored IDEA's document, was asked to write the new document. Phil was asked to provide a document that would cover a larger aspect of projects and include information on Community Readiness grants as well. In addition, the document discusses different methods of

managing projects and many of the issues that arise in writing grants and managing the associated construction project.

One very important emphasis of the document points out that a lot of work goes into obtaining a BRC grant and there is usually a big celebration when the grant is approved. However, that is only the first part of the entire project, and actually the smallest part of the project. There are at least two more phases of the project – design and construction – which will take a lot more time and effort in order to complete the project. There have been many projects over the years that focused on obtaining the grant. So much effort was put into obtaining the grant that everyone forgot that the grant's purpose was to obtain funding for the project. There had been very little thought on the project beyond obtaining the grant. Once the grant was obtained many projects fell apart and the grant ended up being turned back to the state, not because of a bad grant, but because of other issues that came up that the business, the economic development entity or the community were not prepared for. The WBC document written by Christopherson attempts to help everyone understand that the project has many phases and that planning and preparation go far beyond obtaining the grant.

Phil has recently completed his portion of the document and has turned it over to the WBC for finalization. Molly Spangler, Investment Ready Communities Director for the Wyoming Business Council, oversees the Business Ready Community Grant program and said this about the document: "I'm interested in the future phases. I think Phil can really bring some expertise to the construction side of the projects." Once the WBC makes their changes and additions, the document will be complete. Shortly after that the WBC will make it available for economic development groups around the state.

RECRUITMENT, FROM WEDA-1

have fostered a symbiotic business-state relationship that is reaping rewards for both parties. The companies will take advantage of the many business incentives available, and the state, among many obvious benefits, will profit from the increased recognition generated by these industry hard-hitters deciding to move here.

As Ben Avery, director of the Business and Industry Division at the Business Council puts it, "They're certainly making our recruiting efforts easier."

Easier, but not over.

For the Business Council, these most recent successes are what it hopes will be the beginning of many more.

To underscore Wyoming's commitment to growing the data center industry in the state, the legislature passed a data center sales tax exemption. The initiative was put into place during the 2011 legislative session and gives the Business Council a hard to beat card at the negotiating table. The extension of the manufacturing sales tax exemption, enacted by the legislature in 2011 is another tool to help Wyoming stay competitive against other states in the dog-eat-dog world of business recruitment.

Bob Jensen, Business Council CEO, says the work is never done.

"We are continually trying to target smaller companies, meaning those with less than 100 employees, who fit the size of workforce prevalent in Wyoming," said Jensen. "For example, we are currently working with a small medical device manufacturer who is looking to relocate from California. They employ about 10 people and their product is easily shipped by UPS. These types of companies can operate from virtually anywhere in Wyoming."

The Business Council is also making headway with key players in company recruitment: the site selectors who are often a company's eyes and ears when it comes to places to locate, and who can make or break a location's place in the lineup.

Staff have attended site selector events such as the Industrial Asset Manager Conference (IAMC), a biannual conference of asset managers and corporate real estate managers; the Area Development Consultants Forum, where a limited number of economic development professional can learn and interact with site selection consultants; and CoreNet, the association conference for corporate real estate executives.


Taking what it has learned, the Business Council, along with WEDA, will sponsor a site selection boot camp Sept. 7-8, in Casper, featuring training from Ed McCallum of McCallum Sweeney Consulting in Greenville, S.C.

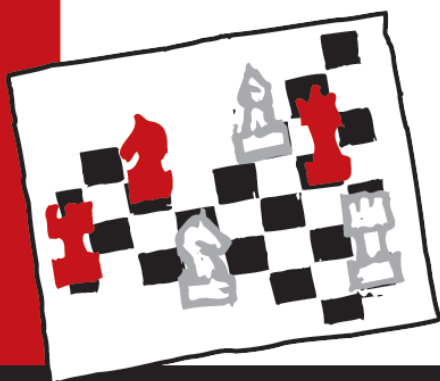
"We're very pleased with the direction we're going," said Jensen. "The successes are starting to add up and it's good to see the hard work of this team effort paying off. There's always more to be done, however. Consistent teamwork and investment are the keys to long-term success. We're just getting started."



Conference Bulletin Board

 **June 9th – 10th**, 2011 7th Annual Governor's Summit on Workforce Solutions, Central Wyoming College, Riverton, WY

 **June 8th - 11th**, 2011 Wyoming Association of Municipalities (WAM) 56th Annual Convention, Sheridan, WY



WEDA Fall Economic Development Conference

September 7 & 8, 2011 • Hilton Garden Inn, Casper
1150 North Poplar Street, Casper, 82601 • 307-266-1300

Hosted by Wyoming Economic Development Association and Wyoming Business Council
Sponsored by Rocky Mountain Power

To Register: www.wyomingeda.org/conferences.htm

or contact WEDA at 307-332-5546 info@wyomingeda.org; FAX 307-332-5336

Professional Training Fall Conference Scholarships Available: www.wyomingeda.org/scholarships.htm

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS:

WEDNESDAY, September 7

9:00 am - 5:00 pm

Winning the Relocation Game

Presenter: Ed McCallum of McCallum Sweeney Consulting (MSC)

Mr. McCallum will provide a full day of "Boot Camp" training on the site selection process and how to prepare proposals and site visits. McCallum Sweeney Consulting provides economic development consulting services to leading organizations worldwide. They help economic development organizations at the state, regional, and local level with an array of services that leverage their position as one of the world's leading site selection firms. They bring the perspective of the investment decision maker, combined with the considerable economic development experience of their staff, to benefit the economic development clients. MSC's expertise, as well as their presentation and training experience, covers a wide array of topics including: The Site Selection Process, Incentives 101, Marketing to Site Selection Consultants, and Prepared Communities Win.

MSC has designed and managed many of the nation's most significant site certification efforts. This experience enables them to know the challenges of establishing a successful program – they know what works and what does not. MSC knows what the sponsoring organizations need to do to create the buy-in and participation necessary to make the program a success.

THURSDAY, September 8

8:00 am -12:00 pm

Comprehensive Economic Development Marketing & Attraction

Presenter: Guillermo Mazier, Atlas Advertising – a firm that has worked with 65+ communities in 35+ US States and six countries, this presentation is a must for communities of any size.

Economic Developers have lots of choice today about which marketing and business development programs to undertake. Events? Websites? GIS? Partnerships? All can be effective, if they are tied specifically to the goals economic developers want to achieve.

To help economic developers choose which marketing tactics are right for their organization, Atlas has developed "Comprehensive Economic Development Marketing & Attraction," a look at what metrics matter, and how to drive positive change in your community by using the right mix of marketing tactics. Attendees will walk away with real examples and next steps that they can implement in their own communities immediately. Our approach and experience means that our campaigns generate an average of three to ten times the response of other campaigns.

Guillermo Mazier: Prior to working at Atlas Advertising, Guillermo represented the United States, as an economic development adviser with Peace Corps, Costa Rica, working to develop strategic business, tourism and economic development infrastructure as well as a community brand, for the local population of Tortuguero, Costa Rica. Specializing in business attraction and social media marketing, Guillermo works closely with Atlas' new clients to define marketing goals, metrics and identify targeted channels to reach segmented community, industry and site selection audiences.

Handling Crisis Communications in Economic Development

Presenter: Rachel Girt, Girt Communications

Has a negative story ever hit the media about your board or a decision made by your organization? Or has a natural disaster or some other negative news in your area received national coverage? This one-hour seminar will walk you through the steps of how to navigate to safety once a crisis hits and will provide long-term communication strategies to protect your organization's reputation and brand.

Rachel Girt owns Girt Communications LCC, a media and public relations consulting firm in Cheyenne. She has over 12 years of media and public relations experience, working in Wyoming politics and community and economic development in the state. She has also written for two Wyoming newspapers.



LEGISLATIVE, FROM WEDA-1

belts and cut costs where we can to maintain our production levels." He said the tax exemption had saved his company over \$100,000 over the last five years, and thus had saved some jobs.

Across town, at Bear Lodge Forest Products, company President Dan Neiman reminded legislators that his industry was long on risk and low on reward. "The machinery to build roads, harvest trees, haul logs and well as all the milling equip-

ment is expensive," he wrote in late 2010. He said a recent fire in the firm's pallet manufacturing plant "completely destroyed our assets as well as our income generating capability from pallets." He said passage of the bill would have a "positive effect" on the survival of his business. Ultimately, lawmakers agreed, but inserted another sunset date into the bill's language, and the renewal will come up again in six years.

Birleffi also credited lawmakers with setting aside \$15-million for recruitment of Mega Data Centers, and funding \$45-million for cities and counties, \$35-million of which was

restricted for capital construction. Lawmakers also included an additional \$15-million holding fund for landfill construction.

Birleffi noted that just as one legislative session has ended, work on the next one is underway. Of particular interest on a topic that directly affects economic development, she said, is an interim topic to be studied by the Joint Revenue Committee on Economic Development and Tax Policies. The committee will meet in Saratoga on May 12-13. "WEDA will need to prepare good background information to present to the committee," she said.

SAVE
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DATE

Sept. 7&8
2011

WEDA
Fall
Economic
Development
Conference

Winning the Relocation Game



Hilton Garden Inn, Casper
www.wyomingeda.org

Goshen County Economic Development Tax Supports New "Progress Program"

Five businesses in Goshen County are doing some sprucing up this spring thanks to economic development sales tax matching funds.

Goshen County Economic Development Corporation (GCEDC) started the Progress Program in 2010 as a way to utilize economic development sales tax funds to benefit local communities and existing businesses. The goals of the Progress Program are to help businesses succeed by making their properties more attractive to their

customers, and to make communities more attractive to potential new businesses, employees, residents and visitors.

The first projects to be awarded Capital Matching Funds through GCEDC's Progress Program include Table Mountain Vineyards in Huntley, Green Acres Nursery in LaGrange, Serendipity/Wine Time in Torrington, Goshen Hole Grill in Yoder and Three D's Coffee in Torrington.

Business projects approved totaling \$18,638.06 are:

- Table Mountain Vineyards, LLC - completion, remodel and renovation of new tasting room
- Green Acres Nursery - wall and roof completion of shrub and equipment building
- Serendipity/Wine Time - storefront remodeling and signage
- Goshen Hole Grill - signage
- Three D's Coffee - landscaping

GCEDC also awarded a total of \$4,500 in Community Enhancement Funds to Fort Laramie Rendezvous Association and Goshen County 4-H for a youth entrepreneur program.

Eligible uses for Capital Matching Funds include storefront remodeling (including windows, siding, doors, signage, etc.), landscaping, screening and fencing; demolition, clean-up, remodeling, etc.; sidewalk and parking lot – construction and replacement; stand alone signs (properly permitted); ADA accessibility; specialized equipment; and other uses approved by the GCEDC board.

Eligible uses for Community Enhancement Funds include capital improvements (i.e. land, buildings, equipment); programs, annual events, special events; operating expenses; marketing; community development and other activities that lead to job creation.

Applications will be accepted quarterly and awards made within 45 days of the due date. Upcoming deadlines are 3:00 pm on June 30 and October 31, 2011. Interested businesses, communities and organizations can obtain Progress Program Applications online at www.GoshenWyo.com or at the Goshen County Economic Development office located at 117 West 22nd Avenue in Torrington. Office hours are 8 am to 4 pm, Monday through Thursday.

Sheridan Technology Incubator Hosting Five Businesses

The new Sheridan Technology Incubator is located at 1981 Double Eagle Drive in Sheridan, Wyoming. The initial Community Readiness grant application to the Wyoming Business Council was intended to provide early stage high-tech companies the opportunity to work together and bring technology to commercial markets. Targeted businesses were data generation, data security, internet-based businesses and bio-tech businesses. Forward Sheridan received a \$978,000 Community Readiness grant, plus a private sector match of \$109,000, to purchase 5,400 square feet of office space within a larger facility.

Forward Sheridan has been in the incubator since November 2010.

Our five incubator companies have accomplished:

- One patent application submitted – another one is pending.
- Two published phone applications on the smart phone app store.
- Two contracted sales for products delivered in Wyoming and Montana for innovative road based stabilizer.
- Three product proposals for contract of compliance software.
- Four new jobs created since November 2010

Forward Sheridan Goes Mobile Through Phone App

Forward Sheridan now has its own mobile phone website through GoExplore Wyoming smart phone application. The smart phone application can be downloaded for free through the app store. The application is currently available for download through the Google® Android™ and the Apple® iPhone®.

Through this mobile phone site, you will be able to see what Forward Sheridan is about, our mission and our vision. In addition, we have provided a description of our five stage business in our High Tech Incubator along with their web addresses.

Web addresses:

- www.ioservices.com
- www.pppwyoming.com
- www.sherprog.com
- www.apollotelemed.com



CDL Training Through Western Wyoming Community College Gets Workers on the Job

The innovative Commercial Driving License (CDL) course recently developed at Western Wyoming Community College (WWCC) has proven to meet the needs of employers and job seekers alike. The program introduces the basics of truck driving and prepares individuals for the CDL test required for all drivers.

The course entails two weeks of online training along with 18-24 hours of behind-the-wheel training. The online component is overseen by a WWCC instructor, however if individuals are confident they can complete the course on their own they may choose to do so. The program is designed to have individuals trained and ready to begin work in three weeks. Individuals have the opportunity to begin the course at their convenience and the program can accommodate 3 to 4 students in the driving sessions per week.

WWCC has partnered with the CDL College of Denver to facilitate the online courses and live driving training. Assisted basic driving skills training begin in a closed driving environment leading to highway training. A sleeper-cab tractor is used for the training and the course focuses on over the road driving but also includes oilfield and construction environment driving.

After completing the course and driving sessions, individuals are ready to test for their CDL license. WWCC Workforce Training Coordinator Rod Thomas, who oversees the program, says, "The need for this type of training was clear. Companies were coming to us directly requesting a training option and everyday there are multiple listings for CDL drivers in the Classifieds."

Thomas added, "With this being the only training of its kind in Southwest Wyoming, it was important to provide a flexible course format. The partnership with the CDL College of Denver allows for individuals to receive training at their convenience and employers trust that students who have completed the program are to begin the job on day one."

Another benefit for individuals interested in earning their CDL is the financial support available for this program. Wyoming Workforce Services has grants available to help cover the costs of training and there is financial aid available at Western Wyoming Community College for those who qualify. For more information about the program, contact Rod Thomas at rthomas@wwcc.wy.edu or call 307-872-1315.

WEDA Member News:

Albany County Exhibits Low Economic Stress

Economic stress can be described as the pressure people feel when it's difficult to make ends meet. It occurs when we don't have the money that's needed to meet our standard of living or to match our lifestyle.

The Associated Press (AP) has developed an Economic Stress Index, which considers a unique combination of 3 major economic indicators: unemployment, foreclosure, and bankruptcy rates. According to the January 2011 AP index; Albany County, WY is the 14th least economically stressed county with a population of 25,000 or more throughout the nation.

Albany County's Economic Stress Index score was 5.34. That score reflects an unemployment rate of 5% and a bankruptcy rate of .34%. Recent foreclosure rates were unavailable; however, Albany County foreclosures have been historically very low. According to AP data, the foreclosure rate was zero percent in 2007, and Albany County's rate was estimated to have changed by only .01 within the last year.

A higher index score signals more economic stress. The nation's average county stress score in January 2011 was 11.2, an improvement over the 11.9 figure set a year earlier in January 2010. Ellis County, Kansas attained the very lowest index score of 4.16, while Imperial County, California had the dubious distinction of being the most economically stressed county with an index score of 29.32.

Albany County was the only county in Wyoming to make AP's list of the top 20 least economically stressed counties in our country. However, every one of Wyoming's 23 counties compared favorably with the rest of the nation. All Wyoming county economic stress index scores fell below the national average.

Gaye Stockman, President & CEO for Laramie Economic Development Corporation indicated that she was not surprised by the results of the AP analysis. She said, "Albany County is positioned very well within a state that projects a great climate for business. For all intents and purposes, we have not experienced the recessionary pinch to the same extent that the rest of the country has."

Stockman also acknowledged some of Albany County's unique resources. She noted, "Fifty-two percent of our workforce possess a bachelor's degree or higher. That's a huge economic consideration. Closely associated is the fact that we have three major educational institutions that impact our county, and areas beyond. Of course, there's the University of Wyoming, the Albany County Campus of Laramie County Community College, and there's WyoTech. This means we have the educational and training resources immediately available in our backyards to accommodate all kinds of occupations and career paths. These resources not only create a strong and stable economic foundation, but also produce a skilled yet flexible workforce that employers normally seek."

"I'd be remiss," remarked Stockman, "if I didn't mention our peoples' values that are so pervasive, not only in Albany County, but throughout Wyoming. People here display a great work ethic. They demonstrate compassion, even in competition. There's a feeling in our communities that everyone wants to see everybody else succeed. The natural consequence of that is people support each other, and that contributes to an absolutely powerful volunteer base. That's what helps create healthy communities." For more information go to: http://hosted.ap.org/specials/interactives/_national/stress_index



WYOMING ECONOMIC
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ASSOCIATION

W E D A

*WEDA's mission is to:
"Provide leadership and support to
foster economic development in Wyoming."*

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