LED Means Business
Planning in a World of Information Overload

Presentation to: Local Employment Dynamics Partnership

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Why am I here?

- Many years as a public servant in policy planning, program development & program implementation: workforce development, higher education, human resources, labor law, transportation, health care
- Now doing federal affairs for New York's largest statewide Business Trade Organization
- The more things change, the more they remain the same: issues haven't changed, it's just a different vantage point!
- What is federal affairs at the Business Council: a work in progress, but includes Homeland Security, Infrastructure, Workforce Development, & Immigration (or…labor supply and demand!)

LED: My "old" life (pre-2008)

- Long history of close collaboration with LMI staff: why didn't the data answer my questions? Why didn't it answer my "customer's" questions?

- Long history of using data – and trying to improve data-based decision making (not always successful!): performance and investment are linked – it's a matter of who's defining "performance"

- When they write my obit: "she found a way to break the legislative logjam and get New York into LED"

My "New" Life: Member Services are Where It's At

- It's all about value-added
- Committees drive the policy and program agenda
- Members have limited time: they too are doing more with less – or as the lines blur, they're covering wider ranges of geography or issue areas
- Businesses have more than a casual level of interest; they're using intermediaries like the Business Council to make those views known
- This isn't new or news to you; my challenge today is to ensure you "hear" what it is they have to say

In A Perfect World.....or what can LED do for me?

Things to keep in mind as I present the business perspective:

- Members were asked to go through the LED site and offer feedback to me

- I asked they not sugar-coat their comments; I think LED data is powerful and useful – but my thoughts are not why I'm here

- I'm a data user, not a techie; those I surveyed are likely in a similar position ...so the feedback feels "right" to me but may not be technically viable in the real world

- Business lives in the political realm too ...but their political geography often doesn't share the same boundaries

So What Feedback Did My Request Elicit?

A lot of useful information — but you need to find it, it doesn't come to you

--site organization could improve usability

Target audience not readily apparent from homepage

--"you need to work to get to the things I need"; I like what I see but this site would not have compelled me until you brought it to my attention

--is this for government types to tell me what the data means?

Feedback continued ….

Jargon and acronym overload

--Some of this appears very inside baseball, but no "key" is provided to understand the lingo; can we get this in "clear" speak?

Appears data display and use is intended to be co-brokered with government translators

--while all commented on the power and use of the data, several felt the goal and design of the site was not for ease of individual use, but more for government to "explain" to business what it is they're 'not getting'

Regional Data is Where It's At!

--businesses want regional data – they plan regionally but the data isn't displayed regionally

--county data is interesting to the status quo and fosters local government myopia; government sites and displays of data ought to start "walking the walk"

-- little economic activity in most parts of NYS is contained within the geographic boundaries of a county; this is likely the case in many other parts of the country

Regional would be great; MSA would be even better

--MSA data is hard to find; businesses in planning for expansion, relocation, etc use it for various benchmarking. Why is it hard to find and why should they have to pay for it?

--suggested homepage option: break out data sets regionally or by MSA to allow ease of use: for someone looking for data say on Harrisburg, PA the ability from the homepage to choose " state of PA, then drill down to the regional or MSA data"

Feedback ....continued

More on the homepage:

--homepage trying to appeal to too many audiences

("first thing I noticed was that Ohio Joined the LED ..and I wondered why I was being asked to look at this?")

-- Can't there be a way for policy wonks and researcher types to go their own way, and those of us who just want the "data" to go ours?

--Is it possible to have each region generate its own homepage that has perhaps intriguing data "factoids" about the economy, the workforce, that would present to outsiders an appreciation for some of the nuances of a given region of the country or state?

Easy Access to Useful Data for Business Planning

--data type *by region*: data on labor force, exciting jobs (what's the government buzz word of the month?); commutation patterns; major employers; unemployment and underemployment; available transportation options

--even for those businesses which may not be growing, attracting workforce to their region is critical to their overall success

Feedback...continued

Easy Access to Useful Data for Business Planning

--ability to compare economic industry concentrations among regions

(to evaluate concentrations of like industries, like industries with similar skills, possible competitors as well as suppliers or service providers)

Ability to evaluate workforce education/skill development/employment service options

--believe it or not businesses do appreciate information on government services designed to facilitate business growth or attraction within a region: temporary interview space, job descriptions, workforce education providers, skill levels of existing workforce

Random thoughts that don't fit nicely into a "feedback" loop

- Several businesses reviewed the "older worker surveys":

--"terrible name/title"

--writers/researchers of these reports need to think in what ways this material is relevant to a business audience

--generally these special population categories of worker reports are not overly helpful to an individual business

--some of the material on the site appears targeted to government policy makers and planners (e.g. "older worker" reports); business wonders: when will they listen and plan accordingly? Is this material designed to convince them of something and if so what is it?

Closing Thoughts….

Business Council of NYS Members Found the Data Very Useful

Their recommendation: separate out government policy drivers from business data needs

MSA/Regional Information is Most Useful

How is this being marketed? Are state LMI folks offering this sites' links to regional planning/economic development/states?

Most businesses do not have research staff; their time is limited. Keep jargon to those who know it and need it; bring the data upfront!

Thanks for asking ....

My obit is not yet written; New York's LED data is not yet "uploaded" …..but thanks for asking the Business Council to add a business perspective to your dialog and planning.

How to find me:

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