Bridging Brown County

United States
Clarice Platz
Website:
http://www.bridgingbrowncounty.org

Project Summary

Concise Summary: Help us pitch this solution! Provide an explanation within 3-4 short sentences.

BBC was formed to strengthen the Brown County communities by building bridges of communication and understanding. In the past Brown County was rather divided by east / west communities. In order to overcome this we developed the Network Brown County Leadership Program. This is a nine-month educational program that brings 15 - 24 participants from across Brown County together to learn more about the businesses, industries, and communities within Brown County. This is achieved by touring each community in the county, meeting with city officials, industry leaders and learning about the history of each community. Participants meet people with diverse backgrounds, discover new places, broaden their knowledge of community resources and increase their understanding of the issues and challenges facing the communities in the county. We learn about our differences and celebrate our uniqueness. By doing this we have learned to work together for the betterment of the whole county; more people have become involved in their communities by serving on boards, volunteering their time and talents. It has strengthened or expanded connections among people, groups and organizations. There is a greater involvement and diversity in civic activities and increased access to resources and influence to achieve community goals. This program continues to have strong impacts across the board - bridging cohorts have a big payoff in terms of public value of the program. Creating "networks" is an important strategy for success with businesses, organizations, volunteer work and politic action.

About You

Organization:
Bridging Brown County

First Name
Clarice
Last Name
Platz
Country

About Your Organization

Organization
Bridging Brown County

Organization Phone
507-794-4733

Organization Address
115 Second Ave NE, Sleepy Eye

Organization Country
, MN, Brown County

The information you provide here will be used to fill in any parts of your profile that have been left blank, such as interests, organization information, and website. No contact information will be made public. Please uncheck here if you do not want this to happen.

Your Story

Country your work focuses on
, MN, Brown County

Tell us about the community in which this collaboration took place

Brown County was organized in 1856 and has maintained a rich history over the years. Brown County strives to be a leader in economic
development, public safety and modern transportation. It supports its 28000 residents and is proud of its safe neighborhoods and environment. As businesses and industry continue to plan for their futures, they strive to increase opportunities in a variety of fields.

Partnership

Who was involved in co-creating or implementing your collaboration (other organizations, leaders, community members, etc.)?

BBC was created out of a perceived need for better communication and networking of the communities with-in Brown County. New Ulm, Hanksa, Sleepy Eye, Springfield, Comfrey, and the townships have all come together to share and learn to work together for the betterment of the whole county. University of MN Extension Educator Katie Rasmussen was an important part of this coming together.

To what extent does your collaboration involve partnerships that are outside or cross traditional organizational or sector boundaries?

The networking program brings together people from a variety of backgrounds. We may have CEO's, county employees, bankers, and assembly line workers in the same networking program. The groups are a diverse mix of education backgrounds. We have developed a county-wide economic development board that is supported by all the communities of the county. We believe in promoting the whole county.

Innovation

What makes your locally-based collaboration innovative and unique?

We are one of the first county's to apply for a Blandin Community Leadership Program that involved all communities in the county to work together. We have had three successful groups complete the Blandin Leadership Program. The majority of the attendees are still very active throughout the county, serving on boards, working with non-profits and building relationships of understanding and communication. They continue to network and share the vision with others in their communities.

Did you take risks in establishing this collaboration? Explain

Absolutely! Very few communities are willing to work together to make their neighboring town a better place. We believe that what is good for one community in the county is good for the others - perhaps bringing in new industry, new families, new ideas. By working together we make each other stronger and better.

How did this collaboration differ from the normal way of doing your work?

This collaboration did not exist before Bridging Brown County was formed. It was a "new" concept to the people of Brown County and we continue to grow and develop each year. We do not know of too many communities (or counties) that work together the way we do here.

Progress and Impact

How do you know your collaboration has been effective?

An impact study of the Network Brown County Leadership Program was conducted by the University of Minnesota in 2009. The study showed that the stakeholders (people living in the communities) saw the value of the leadership program more than the participants. The stakeholders had stronger positive opinion than the participants about the program impacts/public value. BBC had strong impacts across the board - bridging cohorts have a big payoff in terms of public value. Creating networks is an important strategy for success with businesses, professional organizations, in volunteer work, and for political action. The leadership cohort programs should not only focus on leadership developments skills but also be intentional to include activites which build both formal and informal networks.

What progress or impact has been made?

BBC has conducted eight leadership programs. We have 124 people that have completed the program with 13 additional participants in this year's program. All of them are active members of their communities and the county. They have a greater awareness of the assets of the county and each community within the county. They have developed "networks" to share and draw knowledge from.

Next Steps

How would you go about continuing, expanding, or replicating this collaboration?

We would like to add additional leadership components to the Leadership Program. We would also like to offer more scholarships for small business owners. Many of the businesses in Brown County are small employers and it is not cost effective for them to have staff out of the office for a full day each month to attend this program. By offering more people the opportunity with out the financial drain to the business it will make them better business people and broaden their networks and bring them new opportunities.

Describe the current stage of implementation and desired next steps

We continue to develop new strategies for fund-raising and public awareness of Bridging Brown County. We have developed an Annual Sponsorship Program to raise revenue as well as we are working on developing an Alumni Fund. The BBC Board of Directors is made up of 3 people from each region of the county - thus giving us great representation from all communities and townships throughout the county. The Board is a volunteer board that donates their time and expertise to keep Bridging Brown County focused on the vision, goals and mission statement. The board spent two days together to review the who, what, why and mission statement. We have formed two sub-committees to focus on the strategic plans and goals that came out of this time together. These goals are marketing and fiscal responsibility. They are working on better publicity tools for Bridging Brown County. We continue to offer the BBC Leadership Program, conduct quarterly County Congress of Elected and Appointed Officials, we keep in touch with past Leadership participants and work together to build up the relationships of understanding and communication by sharing information across the county.

Source URL: https://www.changemakers.com/node/167307