



Summary of the Day: Odessa

April 17th, 2015

Morning Session:

We met on April 17th at Any Occasion Banquet Hall in Odessa, WA to attend the live local broadcast of the 2015 Pathways to Prosperity conference which focused on enhancing our local and regional entrepreneurial ecosystem. The morning began with a live broadcast of remarks by Mr. Erik Pages, noted expert in the field of rural economic development and entrepreneurship.

Erik's first session focused on the question: "Who are the entrepreneurs?"

The key takeaways for us were:

- 1) We need to rethink the "Field of Dreams" philosophy. Attracting new entrepreneurs through the remaking of our communities may be less effective than working from within. We need to support those who are already here to become new entrepreneurs. It is time we look at a new regional model of attracting and supporting emerging entrepreneurs. How can our businesses work together to cross promote one another?
- 2) Seventy-nine percent of businesses have zero employees.
- 3) Internet access and a web presence is a must. However, many small businesses lack the time and talent to work in the "on-line" world. How can we support and meet the internet/marketing needs of our local businesses?
- 4) The largest growing segment of the population becoming an entrepreneur is the Boomer Generation.
- 5) Running a business is not often a skill taught in school. How do we increase the amount of education taught and available to potential entrepreneurs?

Following the presentation the group engaged in an activity designed to identify the entrepreneurs in Lincoln County. We identified each entrepreneurial location with a dot on a large map of Lincoln County.

We learned that many of our local entrepreneurs need our direct help marketing and promoting their businesses. They are the future engines of our local prosperity. As a result, we will help them find the workforce talent they need and promote their business.

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Afternoon Session:

In the afternoon we had another live broadcast from Mr. Pages focusing on the **needs of local entrepreneurs and what rural leaders can do to support them.**

Some of the important things we learned from this presentation included:

- 1) We need to customize the services we offer to meet the needs of local businesses. Lifestyle businesses have different needs than High-Growth businesses.
- 2) Entrepreneurs need a supportive community culture that honors and respects them. They need easy access to technical assistance and training. They need capital, talented/skilled workforce, and a way to network with other entrepreneurs (peers).
- 3) The importance of engaging students in entrepreneurial training.

Afterward we met three local entrepreneurs (Andrew DePaula, Shane Gilthvedt, and Jordan Tampien) to glean insight and expertise from their experiences.

The key takeaways for us were:

- 1) These young entrepreneurs are humble, but driven. Rural community members have a greater respect for business owners who see themselves as one of the community, not above the community.
- 2) Rural entrepreneurs, like our panel members, manage the risks of operating a business with the benefits of working in a rural county such as the fact that money goes further in a rural community and they enjoy the quality of life.
- 3) There is a great benefit to shopping local and supporting our local businesses. Beyond the financial gain to the local business who then hires local employees and shops locally themselves, 1.2% of the sales tax generated stays in Lincoln County.

As a result, we ended the day with many additional questions such as:

- 1) What part of our Economic Development Strategic plan do we change to better meet the needs of local entrepreneurs?
- 2) How do we learn about emerging entrepreneurs in the area, and businesses starting around the county?
- 3) How do we get local entrepreneurs to network and share?
- 4) How do we increase cross promotion and interdependence of local businesses?
- 5) How do we learn who is leaving the county to work, and how do we recruit them into local positions?

Please provide a quick collection of attendee data:

1. ___9___ Number of Entrepreneurs
2. ___11___ Number of professionals representing agencies
3. ___8___ Number of elected or appointed officials (City or County government)
4. ___28___ Number of interested community members

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