SPD Gazette

Information, Measurement, Analysis, Improvement

Collection, analysis and use of information are critical elements in a successful SBDC program. Here is the question the ASBDC reviewers want to answer: How does the SBDC gather, manage, analyze, and use its data to improve the performance of the organization? Of course, the reviewers will probably not ask it as one long question. They will look for the answer in your answers to shorter questions. For example:

Q: What information is collected by the NYS SBDC?

A: Most of the information collected by the SBDC relates to counseling and training activities, brief interactions with customers (we call them inquiries), customer satisfaction (from client evaluations), and outcomes - the results of our activities.

Q: What things does the program measure?

A: The program measures information important to the strategic objectives of the SBDC and its stakeholders. The key measurements include dollars invested in the enterprises of clients; jobs created and saved by clients; new businesses started by clients; and clients in target markets counseled and trained (e.g. Veterans, women, ethnic minorities, socially, economically and physically disadvantaged individuals). The SBDC also measures other information useful in managing operations such as the number of clients, hours advisors spent in counseling sessions, client needs by topic, and number of attendees at training events.

Q: How is information collected?

A: The NYS SBDC uses a Web-based, transaction-based system called WebMQS that is accessible by SBDC staff throughout the state. Advisors, directors and others can enter information from any computer with Internet access. The system is used to capture information relating to clients. Other information such as regional business trends, activities of other technical assistance providers, and small business training and assistance needs is collected from "listening posts" such as campus meetings, business forums, meetings with a local Chamber of Commerce or business association, and similar events attended by SBDC staff. The SBDC Advisory Board also shares information about regional business issues.

Q: How does the SBDC use information to make decisions and improve operations?

A: The regional center directors and senior staff at the Central Office routinely analyze reports from WebMQS to support operational decisions. The WebMQS reporting function is still in development, but once all the report options are complete, staff throughout the network will be able to retrieve specific data. In the meantime, requests for information from the system beyond a handful of standard reports are handled by Central Office staff. At regularly scheduled directors meetings, center directors and senior program staff discuss data significant to strategic and operational objectives, in a document called the "Administrative Summary," which is produced by the Central Office. Statewide and regional center policies and procedures are often revised after these discussions. At the directors meetings, regional center directors also share best practices with their colleagues.

Q: How does the NYS SBDC share information?

A: The Central Office maintains the Internal Web site, which contains staff information, forms, the Strategic Plan, professional development information, and more in a readily accessible location. Senior program staff and regional center directors exchange emails on a daily basis. Statewide Committees investigate specific issues related to strategic objectives, generate recommendations, and present them to the network at large. The Central Office compiles and distributes a quarterly newsletter called Bizline with information about program activities. The Research Network publishes a blog to share information about small business resources with the network. The program conducts an annual staff development conference with educational sessions and networking opportunities.

The ASBDC reviewers also will evaluate the consistency and reliability of data collection and management, as well as the security and confidentiality of the information. WebMQS and our Conflict of Interest policy will confirm that the SBDC is collecting and managing information consistently and protecting the confidentiality of client information.

Do You Have a Comment About SBDC's Strategic Planning Process?

What can we change to improve your opportunity to contribute to the Strategic Planning process? Send your comments to mary.hoffman@nyssbdc.org.

What's New This Week

Marketing

The **Corning SBDC** staff met with a regional vice president from M & T Bank and the new manager of the Corning branch bank along with a representative from a local Revolving Loan Fund. They discussed the local economy, lending services, the SBDC program and services, and a referral process for loan packing assistance.

A **Stony Brook SBDC** Advisor participated in "Family Day," an event hosted by Senator Kenneth LaValle on October 21st at Suffolk Community College in Selden. The event was held to introduce members of the community to resources available, many free of charge. The SBDC hosted a table and educated participants on basic information relative to starting a business.

The **Canton SBDC** provides brochures to area banks, economic developers, one-stop career centers, the USDA office, Chambers of Commerce, and the county clerk's office on a routine basis. This provides public offices with information and a point of contact for assistance for entrepreneurs and small business owners that might be interested in working with the SBDC.

Professional Development & Staff Retention

The **Canton SBDC** is included in their host campus' continuing education program for professional development. Every year during Administrative Professionals Week, the campus host a special training event for administrative support staff. In April 2006, the event was called "How to Cope with Difficult People." The event showed attendees how to handle customers of all aspects in a courteous, professional manner. The events are open to all college staff within the four college campuses in St. Lawrence County.

On October 24, A **Stony Brook SBDC** business advisor attended an ADDAPT (Aerospace and Defense Diversification Alliance in Peacetime Transition) meeting held at the New York Institute of Technology campus in Central Islip. Congressman Steve Israel addressed the group on the topic of energy security and its impact on national defense and homeland security.

Special Projects

The **Canton SBDC** is in the process of working with **OE2 program** to train the advisors and interns to help clients utilize EntreSkills™, the on-line training course originally developed for high school students. This initiative will enable advisors and interns to make the Computer Resource Center available to clients, who will be supervised throughout the training program. This is the first regional center to develop a plan to use EntreSkills™ to help clients learn the basic concepts of entrepreneurship.

Sponsors, Host Institutions, Partners and Alliances

The Director of the **Corning SBDC** is working with SCOPED (Schuyler County Partnership for Economic Development) to provide business counseling services on a regular basis in rural Schuyler County. Joint press releases, newspaper advertising and Chamber newsletter articles are being developed with the Schuyler County Chamber of Commerce to promote regular hours and a formal referral system.

The Director of the **Corning SBDC** participated in a focus group hosted by STEG (Southern Tier Economic Growth) on Workforce Development for Chemung County's Economic Development Strategic Plan. The group discussed relationships between economic development and workforce development agencies, identified challenges and potential opportunities to strengthen those relationships.

Technology

During 2005, the **Niagara, Jamestown and Buffalo SBDCs** were key players in the Department of Labor's Accelerate New York 32J Program. The SBDCs joined the Western New York Technology Development Center, Inc. (now known as Insyte Consulting, Inc.), The Buffalo and Erie County Workforce Investment Board, Inc. to promote the program to local businesses. The 32J Program was designed to assist businesses by analyzing their operations to identify opportunities for improvement, including technology advances. The focus was on strengthening and enhancing technology to enable businesses to compete more effectively in the global marketplace. The program strengthened relationships with an important technology partner.

The **Canton SBDC** established a "Computer Resource Center" to assist entrepreneurs by providing computer access to help them develop a business plan and/or do necessary research for their project. The CRC center is open by appointment only and is supervised by SBDC interns to maintain a secure environment for Web access.

The **Corning SBDC** Office Manager completed courses in intermediate and advanced EXCEL in order to be more efficient in daily operations and to increase the level of assistance to clients.

What's New This Week (Continued)

➡ Program Development: Products and Services

The **Corning SBDC** staff is in the process of reviewing and revising materials used in counseling clients. This was a result of sharing the new "Business Basics" start-up information book produced by the SBDC at Jamestown Community College.

The director and advisors at the **Albany SBDC** provide guest lectures for several undergraduate business classes. During the period, the SBDC provided instruction for business students at the University at Albany, Cobleskill College, Hudson Valley Community College, and Adirondack Community College. Representation at these venues strengthens awareness of SBDC and SBA programs to future entrepreneurs.

About the Gazette

The SPD Gazette is a brief newsletter distributed via email and posted on the Internal Web Site. It will feature a column to be titled, *What's New This Week*, in which the network will share best practices in strategic objectives. A series of articles in the Gazette will explain the program's statewide approach to strategic objectives in six key areas:

• **Marketing**
• **Professional Development and Certification**
• **Program Development: Products and Services**
• **Special Projects**
• **Strategic Partners and Alliances**
• **Technology, Information and Communication**

For more information or answers to your questions, call Tom Morley at **914-375-2107**or email him at **SPD@Mercy.edu**

Send your report forms to SPD@mercy.edu

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