

## Margaret Chase Smith Center

**DRAFT-for discussion**

### ***FFA Business Directory Development Process***

Representatives of the Franco-American Centre met with staff of the Margaret Chase Smith Center for Public Policy to discuss processes for data collection which could be used to foster partnerships in economic development and international trade. Specifically, the information needs presented were to identify those Maine businesses which conduct business using the French language or which desire to conduct business in the French language.

The process proposed here is intended to meet the described need of identifying:

- *what Maine businesses have capacity — latent or active — to conduct business in the French language*
- what Maine businesses conduct business using the French language;
- what Maine businesses would like to conduct business using the French language; and,
- what would those Maine businesses need to enhance their ability to conduct business using the French language.

It is expected that the proposed process would result in a data base containing the above information as well as other characteristics of those businesses such as business sector, number of employees, location of business, extent of state and international business conducted using the French language, etc. This data base would be structured to allow for identification of those businesses according to these characteristics as well as to develop hard-copy directories.

Because this information has not been collected previously and has been described as anecdotal, comprehensive and systematic data collection will be dependent on effective "awareness raising" within the larger Maine business community. The actual documentation of businesses will be the result of a process of self-identification and referral by others. Below is a brief description of a process for raising awareness of the project, identification of appropriate businesses, and data collection.

#### **1. Awareness Raising**

The process of awareness raising will be conducted to ensure that as many businesses as possible are aware that the project is being conducted. We view the awareness raising process to be conducted at a large scale, a medium scale, and a small scale.

The large-scale awareness raising should be conducted at a statewide level and directed to all residents of the state at a minimum, this could entail press releases/news stories in all daily and weekly newspapers in the state. The large scale awareness process could also include local television and radio news segments as well as public service announcements. This large scale awareness effort should be conducted over a relatively short time period.

The medium scale awareness raising efforts would include information dissemination through existing organizations and associations to more targeted groups. These organizations would include those such as: Chambers of Commerce; development districts/corporations; regional planning agencies; Rotary Clubs; Richelieu Clubs; the Catholic Church; trade associations; etc. For each organization, appropriate

dissemination methods would have to be identified (e.g, newsletters, meetings, etc.). Because coordinated timing of the information dissemination is important, these organizations would have to be contacted to ascertain availability of space/time as well as deadlines for publication/ presentation.

Since the medium-scale awareness efforts will be directed to more targeted groups, they should include some type of a vehicle through which an organization can indicate interest in being included in the project. In addition to providing phone number(s), a mailing address and an e-mail address, each vehicle should include some type of a sign-up form which can be mailed to a central location. In many instances, the sign-up form would be a brief, postage-paid, self-addressed postcard which could be a publication insert or handed out at group meetings. In the case of newsletters, the form might be a tear-out section of the publication.

The small-scale awareness raising efforts will involve one-on-one personal contacts. It is anticipated that both the large and medium scale awareness raising efforts will result in considerable "spreading of the word " In addition, existing lists of interested businesses will be used for targeted mailings. These mailings will encourage businesses to identify others which could be included in final data base.

## **2. Business identification**

Prior to compiling information in the data base, those businesses wishing to be included must be verified. A preliminary component to the business identification process involves a search of existing state/regional data sources. Many businesses will self-identify by either completing or returning forms or by making direct contact by phone or e-mail. In addition, those businesses identified/referred by others will be contacted by phone or mail to ascertain their willingness to be included in the data base.

## **3. Data collection**

The data collection process for this effort will be the culmination of the awareness raising process and the identification of businesses with an interest in being included in the data base. Those indicating an interest in being included in the data base will be contacted directly in order to collect information in a comprehensive and systematic manner.

Prior to beginning the awareness raising efforts, a telephone number, mailing address and an e-mail address must be established to receive and respond to requests for information as well as to receive requests to be included in the directory. In addition, all response protocols and data collection methods must be in place prior to awareness raising efforts. Further discussions must be conducted among appropriate individuals to specify all possible uses of the data, the types of information to be included in the data base, and the general form of what hard copy directories might look like. Based on those discussions, the structure of the actual data base will be constructed in addition to the development of a directory, this process should form a foundation for further potential research including:

- thorough review of existing data (including related research bases);
- more in-depth interviews of individuals included in the directory, and
- development of goals and objectives of FFA and affiliated research centers.

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**FFA Business Directory Development Process  
Budget Estimate**

It is anticipated that this effort would take approximately six months to complete. Although all specific activities have not been identified, the following is an estimate of the resources that would be required

- One person (at 1/4 to 1/3 time) to manage/oversee the project - approximately \$10,000
  
- One full-time, bilingual employee to receive/return phone calls, conduct mailings, and enter and verify information - approximately \$10,000
  
- One computer and printer with appropriate software to maintain data files and to compose and process mailings - approximately \$3,500
  
- One phone line plus long distance charges - \$750
  
- Printing- \$1,500
  
- Postage costs- \$1,250

**Total Estimated Cost - \$29,000**