

Buy Local Meeting Notes – April 15, 2011
Individual & Family Economic Stability Team



Team Goal: Carroll County becomes one of the top three counties in NH by supporting the achievement of individual and family economic security.

Next Buy Local Meeting: Thursday, May 12 at 8:00 am at Tri-County CAP (Note: trying new meeting time)

- Worked on next steps for website & marketing
- Ann will reach out to George Epstein at the Echo group for a meeting with someone from his firm for some neutral input regarding website design/cost and local resources.
- Henry will reach out to Denise Roy-Palmer for a meeting.
- Henry & Cyndi will work on a flyer about the website for business owners.
- Need to have something in place to show people at June 16 Community Meeting (mock up or example of other site.)
- Weave into background and marketing that Team 3 is working on launching Buy Local out of concern of economic stability for Carroll County families. Buy Local will increase the viability of very small “Mom & Pop” businesses and make it possible (not required) for businesses to increase hours, salaries or benefits for their employees.

Conversation about cost for membership. Working on figuring out the balance point of keeping the cost as low cost as possible but having enough revenue to also advertise the website & Buy Local effort such as radio spots, card in brochure racks, newspaper, etc.

Why do membership tiers? Is it possible to have members get all features at one price point? It depends on the costs to build and maintain the additional features such as each member having their own page and being able to post specials or coupons.

Follow up website questions –

- Annual costs (hosting & maintenance) - how much is that impacted by the website size (photos, number of members) and traffic?
- Structure - can it be built in phases?

Membership – look back at the definition of locally-owned businesses. The return to the community on dollars spent is based on the local ownership so that is what the definition/requirements must reflect.

Feature would like on the site – business to business “thank you” or “shout out” for local businesses to thank other local businesses who purchase services or products from them.

Brought Forward from prior meetings: Underlying questions/considerations for the website-Site functions : working on cost options; implement all at once or phase in

- Prefer site design where memberships can grow – not hit a ceiling

- Members control/input/update their own content in an attractively designed framework. (Business description, services offers, photos)
- Would like the option for members to have a “page”, not just a listing on the Buy Local site; especially for small businesses that don’t have a website.
- Would like function for customers to be able to “sign-up” to receive special offers from businesses of their choice.
- Members can sign up on line at any time. (Need PayPal and a way to document that they are a locally owned business)
- Have a site search
- Site that is search engine friendly – comes up in searches
- Have web stats so we that can see the numbers of people visiting the site as a whole as well as various members pages.

Considerations:

- How many members? What is expected growth? Do costs grow as members grow?
- Probably have membership tiers
- Site has two audiences – members and the customers. Ultimately it needs to be useful for both. How do we see customers using it? Looking for local businesses for specific items? Looking for deals?
- Will need a moderator of some kind, someone to tend to the site and respond to questions.
- Need to consider training for members? Can do live trainings as well as have how to directions and how to video clips in the “back room” of the site.
- Can possibly use a college intern to develop the site.
- Possible to apply for a Joint Promotional Program (JPP) grant. These are through the state but primarily focused on travel and tourism.

Some website options:

- Joomla – free, allows multiple users. Need some design experience.
- Word Press – free blogging tool which can be used as a basic website. Functionality limited.
- Word Press (purchased level) has lots of widgets. Website developer helpful.
- Buy Local Portals such as SKEDS, Buy Local Program.com or chamber nation are “canned websites” that are already designed that can be purchased. Would need to analyze costs – both upfront costs and are they charging a per member/per month fee? Can the site be moved?

Attendance: Henry Spencer, Ann Hamilton, Cyndi Paulin.