An economic development program guide from Associated Electric Cooperative
The goal of the program is to help cooperative staff address current economic development interest and encourage member systems to become involved with economic development in their service territories.
Learning

Basics of Site Selection
Learn economic development trends that affect the corporate site selection search process. Participants will grow their understanding of how companies decide where to locate new facilities and learn to work successfully through a process of preparing and working with industrial prospects and community leaders. This one-day course helps staff identify resources and an effective procedure for packaging community information. David Kolzow, president of Team Kolzow Inc., an economic development-consulting firm in Franklin, Tenn., instructs the course. After your staff attends, you may schedule this course for local business partners at your cooperative office.

Principles of Community Development
This one-day course identifies key principles that make community development effective, including how to engage communities successfully in the development process. Examples include identifying a community’s strength and opportunities to overcome barriers, techniques to effectively work with local leaders and volunteers and how to build leadership capacity. John Gulick and Johanna Reed, University of Missouri Extension, will instruct the course. After your staff attends, you may schedule this course for local business partners at your cooperative office.

Key Accounts Management
Learn the process of establishing a Key Account Management program, including how to identify and meet key accounts, techniques to work effectively with them and how to create an engagement team. Brian Singletary, president of Practical Energies, instructs the one-day course.

Building a Key Account Culture (Touchstone Energy cooperative members only)
Associated staff will provide training to Touchstone Energy cooperatives, educating ALL employees on the importance and unique challenges of serving industrial, commercial and agricultural accounts.

The 90-minute session will include:
• What is a key account?
• The cooperative business model and key accounts
• Importance of key accounts to the cooperative and the community
• Your role is vital
• The power of human connections
Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant Program

This program administered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) offers funding for rural projects through cooperatives. Approved loan applications may receive up to $1 million. Approved grants may be up to $300,000 for 10 years at a zero percent interest rate.

Associated staff will provide information on the application process for funding from USDA/Rural Development. This includes advising on the preparation of the cooperative’s program application, guidance on the creation of a revolving loan fund and explaining methods to alleviate risk.

Associated staff can attend meetings with prospective businesses, banks and other interested organizations to explain the loan and grant programs. In addition, Associated staff can provide a presentation, with information describing the loan or grant application process, eligibility and program limits. The presentation can be tailored for cooperative boards, employees or other groups. You may also request the presentation if you choose to give it yourself.

More details on this program are included in a fact sheet in the economic development section of the members’ website.

Matching grant program

Member systems can apply for up to $5,000 in matching funds annually to support future economic development/key account projects. A three-person committee made up of staff in the system (one distribution cooperative manager, one G&T representative and one distribution cooperative staff representative) will review all applications. Receipts for reimbursement are required for all approved projects.

The program application form, guidelines and other program information is on the members’ website.
Promotional material
A website describing the cooperative’s development resources, impact on the local economy and three-three tiered system will be available. This is to promote your cooperative as a valuable business partner interested in economic development. To utilize this on-line resource, co-ops must submit current information such as revenues, taxes paid, meter data and more. Associated will provide a questionnaire to each co-op in the fourth quarter of 2017 to meet a launch date of first quarter 2018.

In addition, two versions of a one-page template providing system information will be available. One aimed at existing businesses looking to expand, the other for new businesses recruitment. The documents will drop in your co-op logo.

Location One Information System
The Location One Information System (LOIS) is a national database of available industrial and commercial properties. Members can list sites and buildings, which are viewable by corporate real estate executives or consultants looking for a new business location. In addition, a Request for Proposal Builder provides useful demographic information to respond to a Request for Information quickly and accurately.

Training for this service will be provided by Associated, and membership accessibility will be available after the training. Associated will pay membership fees for all interested cooperatives for five years.

Project support
Consultation is available to help cooperatives be competitive when preparing requested information for an industrial or commercial prospect for new or existing business expansions.

Company research
Information on a business’ operation, sales, management, location, product category and North American Industrial Classification System code to profile key accounts is available. Associated staff will help conduct the research, using Dunn & Bradstreet state industrial directories when needed.
Networking

National Rural Economic Developers Association
This regional membership program will be provided to all member cooperatives at no cost until Dec. 31, 2018. To continue as an active member, cooperatives must pay their annual dues starting January 2019.

Membership provides access to professional development seminars/webinars, bimonthly newsletters, grassroots advocacy and reduced costs to NREDA’s annual meeting. Members are primarily electric and telephone cooperatives that provide rural economic development services to their members.

Economic Development Practitioners/Key Account Management meetings
Quarterly meetings with system members provide the opportunity to discuss their programs with other system members. Associated staff also presents business and other technical information.

NET Conference
The NET Conference is Touchstone Energy’s signature business-to-business conference that brings together national and regional energy managers with co-op key account and energy services professionals from around the country. With more than 17 years of programming, the NET has become an incubator for showcasing innovation, providing national perspective on important industry issues and demonstrating how businesses and co-ops are embracing the future.

NOTE: You do not need to be a Touchstone Energy member cooperative to attend, however TSE member cooperatives do receive a discounted registration fee.

The 2018 Conference will be Feb. 5-7 in St. Petersburg, Fla. Visit the NET Conference website for more details: net.touchstoneenergy.com.
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