

LATINO FOCUS GROUP– MARCH 16, 2010

LATINO BUSINESS ASSETS AND CULTURE

Diverse Businesses – construction, flooring, food/restaurant and stores, health care, art, landscape, lodging, cleaning, informal, agriculture, child care, teaching

Money smarts, culture of saving, creativity

Network; leverage networks; relate people to people; child care– vital link

Willing to open businesses, to take risks; willing to sell and buy

Tend not to use credit cards heavily; do not build debt; save instead=keeping the economy going now

Don't have fear – not worried; know they can get a job again if laid off

CHALLENGES

Petaluma is perceived to say 'No' to Latino businesses

Need to know process of opening a business in Petaluma-- requires more information

So---2 separate economies: Informal – number of businesses do not show in data because they do not have licenses; they outnumber formal businesses (licensed); need incentives to get them to register so they can be counted.

Want CA license; want to follow rules; want to get licenses and certification; but need to know rules

Conflicting rules between County and City=>Reach out to community

Seemingly inconsistent application of rules:

- Permit – food sales
- Renting an Apartment – need driver's license? Why?
- Police oversight – tax permits—what are the rules that apply to everyone?
- Finger printing—for every business?
- Health permits—why are they needed? Where do you get one?
- Too many permits and city
- City – too many rules – parking, hours, traffic, food more picky – night time, insurance

Not enough information about process

Language issue – gets in the way

Large Latino community in Petaluma: Hispanic services should be county-wide, not just in Santa Rosa.

Day laborer lots of benefits; do a lot of work for Construction + Agriculture; makes some people uncomfortable; Wages stolen – should be able to file complaint with police; Petaluma Police not understanding; not treat Latinos well; missing outreach relationship

SOLUTIONS

Contract – help open business technical assistance; Services – technical assistance, Mentor

Bring all services together. For instance, County has system – large room, desk for every department, takes you to each department.

Common sense program facilitator: Staff or community member to offer advice to deal with multiple agencies – not bound by rules open to giving advice. Mentors, mentors, mentors

For instance: need explanation for things like why a business needs liability insurance

'Flexible' demographics=Different way to do business; Want Latino business to be welcome, respected; Need a Flexible system; getting a one-day permit is currently cumbersome

Understand for their point of view Explanations, why? Don't just say 'No'; explain why.

Learn – don't understand; need to build trust, Confianza = trust

Need Workshops – insurance, license, taxes, marketing > what the reason for these and rules

Outreach – City pay attention, Latino businesses have money too; can help city with fiscal problems; Latinos have money to make investments in business

Latinos say, 'Let me work'; They don't believe in getting things for free – does not work