A Guide for Developing BREI Continuing Education Courses

Begin by defining the need that this new course will meet
- Who is the targeted audience and why is it important to educate them on the topic? Questions to be answered might include:
  - Is the course satisfying a specific economic development knowledge need?
  - Does the course enhance the general knowledge of the economic development professional?
  - Does the course improve routines or products already in place?

Identifying and developing course content before designing the actual course layout allows the developer to focus on the information itself rather than trying to fit the information into predetermined formats
- Determine the elements and content that will be included
- Use outlines or concept maps to plan the flow of the content
- Develop a navigation scheme that is based on your outline or concept map
  - Provide simple and consistent transitions between modules and throughout the course

When designing the course, be sure to fully develop the bullet points below:
- **Course title and description**
  Be sure to include a statement of how this course will be beneficial to the economic development professional. Also the course format (face-to-face, online or both) and the estimated length of the course. Online courses utilizing a lecture format are usually conducted in two two-hour sessions while face-to-face courses are usually taught in one eight hour session (the work required by the student to complete assignments is in addition to these normal time requirements). We also have the potential for conducting a self-paced, online course; contact Alan Barefield (alan.barefield@msstate.edu) for further information.

- **Description of course target audience and necessary prerequisite skills**

- **Course goals and objectives**

- **Course outline**
  The course outline should include the syllabus or agenda, the instructor's expectations for the course, learning objectives for each module and a schedule of assignments (if appropriate)

- **Course Resource Materials**
  Be sure to include the course resources in the participant handout packet (none of these are necessarily unique, but they are all mandatory components which should not be overlooked)

- **Instructional materials**
  If appropriate each course should be broken into smaller, learning-manageable pieces that can be referred to as modules. This process makes it easier for students to retain knowledge and be more willing to accept attempts to reinforce the material. Each module should include
  - An introduction or pre-module learning activity/question to demonstrate the concept that will be taught
  - Presentation of new information
  - Assessment or discussion of the
  - Feedback

In developing the modules, make sure that you consider the following points:

- o Each module should be connected to one or more learning objectives. If the module is not directly related to a learning objective, is it supplemental information that is critical to the success of the topic?

- o Identify the instructional, media, and delivery strategies best suited to convey the information (presentation slides, spreadsheets, interactive websites, supplemental reading). However, be sure to choose these tools carefully. You don't want to overwhelm the student with too many stimuli that detract from the educational message, unless various tools truly help better convey the information

- o To the extent possible, include both synchronous and asynchronous activities. Activities that include real-time interactive brainstorming and sharing are often as effective as activities that require students to think, plan, write, and summarize

  This can be thought of as creating opportunities for interactions. It is essential to create a course with plenty of opportunities for meaningful interactions – with the course content, between students, and with the instructor (Moore, 1989). All three types of interactions should be equally present throughout the course.

  - ▪ *Student to Content* – Examples of this include a student reading course materials, completing a questionnaire, reflecting on a topic, analyzing a case study, and writing a paper)

  - ▪ *Student to Instructor* – Examples of this type of interaction include a student asking the instructor a question, the instructor giving feedback on a group project, instructor reaching out to an individual student who stopped participating

  - ▪ **Student to Student** – Examples include class or small group discussions, peer review, forums and group projects

- **Assessment and evaluation tools**
  - o Is the purpose to assess specific topic-related knowledge?
  - o Is the purpose to improve general education?
  - o How will assessment and evaluation results be used to improve the course?