

How Made in Mariposa Has Made A Difference with Leadership from Tara Schiff

Decade: 2010-2019

Why did you get involved in economic development?

After more than 20 years as a marketing and business development professional, although the work was gratifying, in many ways, I felt like I was just making wealthier business owners wealthier. I wanted to make a bigger difference. A long-term difference in a community that would benefit everyday citizens and help create a sustainable economic future for the community. I'm passionate about using my business development knowledge and resources to help an entire community, to help individuals land a mortgage paying jobs, to help a community prosper. I am particularly passionate about rural economic development and helping the small, rural communities become sustainable. As we've seen lately, population in rural California communities are dissipating, which will eventually have a severe negative economic impact on the state of California.

Describe the project/program that you were a lead on (list multiple phases if any)

The Made in Mariposa initiative was conceptualized in 2014 as a collaborative effort between the Chamber of Commerce, the Yosemite/Mariposa County Tourism Bureau and the County of Mariposa. The initial brainstorming meetings helped establish a mission statement, a brand objective and criteria for membership. The mission statement is: "To bring awareness and demand for the high-quality manufactured goods, arts, and agricultural products of Mariposa County, while reflecting regional values and principles of stewardship, conservation, and fair labor practices, for the economic benefit of local industry. The objective is: To create a brand that represents products (created, manufactured, grown, etc) in Mariposa County. The brand was designed to appeal to the primary audience, which would be outside and local consumers, as well as merchants, and be appropriate for a diversity of applications."

What was challenging and/or rewarding working on this project/program?





One of the greatest impacts that the Made in Mariposa Initiative had on the County of Mariposa is the expansion of diversification of the area's economy. Mariposa County's primary economic driver is tourism. The Made in Mariposa Initiative provided diversity by marketing locally-made products not only to visitors, but also to local consumers, as well as other businesses in and outside of Mariposa County. What Made in Mariposa has done, above branding products that are produced and created in Mariposa County, is introduce companies and products in the County that consumers were unaware even existed. Since the campaign, Mariposa County is seeing more economic gardening, where local companies are using other local companies as vendors and to complete services. In addition, the Made in Mariposa campaign is bringing awareness to industries other than tourist-related. Many of the Made in Mariposa members, such as a company that makes mobile auto body rotators, are not dependent on tourism. The exposure of these companies is helping to diversify Mariposa County's economy outside of tourism.

Briefly explain the impact the project/program has had or will have on employment, expansion of local tax base & diversification of the area's economy?

The Made in Mariposa Initiative has had an immediate impact on employment, expansion of local tax base and diversification of the area's economy, in addition to the overall impact on the local business environment, which is beyond original expectations. First, the success stories reported by the members are significant. Members have reported increases in general revenue by networking with other Made in Mariposa members. The initiative started as a branding campaign, but has taken off resulting in sales and increased revenue and demand, which is driving producers to hire more employees. In addition, Mariposa County is experiencing an increase in local tax revenue, which could be a result of the increased sales from producer participants. The producers' increased revenue can be directly related to the Made in Mariposa Initiative, as producers noticed the increases after the launch of the Made in Mariposa branding campaign. In addition, a Made in Mariposa holiday store, which has been opened for three consecutive years, during the holiday season, features more than 1,500 products from more than 80 different Made in Mariposa members and generated more than \$15,000 in sales in 2018.

What advice would you give to other economic development professionals when working on a similar project/program?

For any economic development professional who is considering starting a "locally made" program, I would advise them to look at some of the programs that are already in existence,

such as Made in Mariposa, Humboldt Made, Made in Montana to find a business model/template that works best for that community. Mariposa County has set up Made in Mariposa as a template that could really be used in any community. The foundation of the program was the creation of a mission statement and objective and the catalyst to move the program from concept to initiative was funding. I would advise the professionals to research grants that would fund a branding project and apply for the grant to fund marketing start-up costs, collateral material, website, packaging (tags, labels, signage). The recruitment of membership is the next step. If the jurisdiction requires a business license, that would make recruiting easy. Without a business license, jurisdictions can locate businesses via sites like "Etsy" or via local advertisements highlighting the new program.

Please list any social media usernames and website addresses so that other members can connect with you.

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