

For immediate release:

March 25, 2008

Contact: Jan Brown

Executive Director, YBP

(208) 528-0269

(406) 579-3853

jbrown@yellowstonebusiness.org

Call for Participants to Help Solve Regional Issues

Bozeman, Montana – The Yellowstone Business Partnership (YBP), a business coalition dedicated to environmental stewardship and shaping sustainable economies in the Greater Yellowstone area, has \$10,000 to invest in the Billings region. Educators, business owners, and members of local agencies, chambers of commerce, professional organizations, and economic development groups are being asked to help decide how best to spend the money.

“We’re looking for business and community leaders who want to address socioeconomic challenges that are shared by multiple counties and states in the Yellowstone-Teton region ,” says Janice Brown, executive director of YBP. “The selected projects should strengthen cross-boundary relationships and help us find solutions that transcend local and state jurisdictions.

The Billings region, one of six subregions involved in YBP’s Seasonality Project, consists of Yellowstone, Carbon, Stillwater, and Sweet Grass counties in Montana and Park County in Wyoming. Participants from those counties are all invited to meet from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm on April 3rd at the Laurel City Hall, 115 West First Street.

The critical issues participants will discuss for the Billings region are: affordable housing, rapid population growth, workforce shortages, lack of inter-city public transportation, and income disparity. A qualified agency or academic institution will then be chosen to receive \$10,000 to conduct the necessary research and create an action plan.

These planning activities in the Billings subregion are part of a year-long effort by the YBP to leverage social, economic, and natural assets to jump-start the region’s non-summer economies. Funded by a \$150,000 USDA Rural Business Opportunity Grant, the project aims to address tri-state growth patterns and associated problems and opportunities identified in the YBP report *Turning on the Off-Season*. The report’s principal investigator — Dr. Larry Swanson, Director of the Center for the Rocky Mountain West — kicked off the project by videoconference at a joint meeting of the six subregions involved on February 28.

All six subregional groups will come together to discuss their research and planning results at the YBP Seasonality Summit in Cody October 6-7, 2008. An equally important focus of these gatherings will be a \$40,000 parallel study to develop a “Concept of Operations” plan for connecting public and private transportation providers across the tri-state region. Funding for this regional networking effort is being provided by the Idaho Department of Transportation and USDA Rural Development.

Outcomes of the socioeconomic and transportation studies will be summarized in a final report to the USDA in December. The report will serve as a strategic plan for implementing cross-boundary projects and as a tool to attract more funding for Greater Yellowstone as a whole.

“What we’re doing here will help sustain the way of life we enjoy in the Greater Yellowstone,” says Brown. “By working together, we can apply the resources and ideas of our far-flung lands and communities to enjoy summer prosperity in every season.

For more information, call Jan Brown at 1-888-583-8283. To download a copy of the *Turning on the Off-Season* report or to review the mission, values, and membership of the Yellowstone Business Partnership, visit www.yellowstonebusiness.org. In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability.