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Launching your Smart Start Initiative

After the work of plotting out the schedule and timeline for your Smart Start Initiative, Launching the program is exciting! You’ll likely meet new businesses as you reach out to folks to participate in your kickoff conference. Use our sample Conference Agenda (Document M3-5) as an example, but feel free to develop a format suited to the size and needs of your group.

For the pilot, we sent invitations via email at about 5 weeks ahead, and followed that up with phone calls. Our sample conference invite is provided in the Module 3 folder as a .png file so you can see what we shared (file M3-2).

The two region maps are somewhat self-explanatory—we were interested in improving awareness of who everyone was and where they were located, so it seemed logical to have folks put their businesses literally “on the map” as they arrived. This was a fun way to see the depth and breadth of our respective attendees. File M3-3 is print-ready in case you’d like to do something similar, and file M3-4 shows you what our map looked like after our attendees placed their flags.

Near the end of the pilot kickoff conference, we handed out evaluations to receive feedback on how useful the conference was for our group. We also made time in our format for filling out the Benchmark Assessment (Doc M3-7) to take a broad view of their business. Businesses that were interested in continuing with the program were also invited to complete the Executive Training application (Doc M3-8). We also made these documents available electronically so they could be emailed and completed.

Because the information on the Assessment and the Application are good reference for the businesses themselves and important metrics for planners to serve them in the program, it is important to ensure that physical or electronic copies of these forms are returned to the businesses.

Looking towards your evaluation of your program, it’s a good idea to provide for some photographic documentation of the conference proceedings.