

# Meta-Leadership Summit for Preparedness

## SUCCESS STORY

SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN

### Meta-Leadership Inspires a Forum to Address the Economics of Preparing Small Businesses

Contributor: Cate Rahmlow

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"Small businesses can be seriously impacted by disaster and the extent to which they recover can impact how quickly the local economy is stabilized for community recovery," describes Cate Rahmlow, Economic Development Specialist with the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation. Rahmlow credits her participation in the Meta-Leadership Post-Summit Activity in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in March 2011 as a motivating factor in taking action to increase awareness of economic factors in community preparedness planning.

#### Sharing the Lessons of Meta-Leadership with Business Support Organizations

"Meta-Leadership is a value-added proposition for civic leaders and economic development practitioners. Its value lies in strengthening relationships by providing a common framework for discussion," describes Rahmlow. Following her participation in the Post Summit Meeting, Rahmlow included Meta-Leadership lessons in a scheduled disaster management planning forum that focused on leaders of business support organizations. Collaborators included Southeast Wisconsin Homeland Security Partnership (SWHSP), the Southeast Wisconsin Community Organizations Active in Disaster (SWCOAD) and the University of Wisconsin's Urban Planning Department.

#### Creating an Ongoing Forum to Address a Preparedness "Gap"

The forum's first meeting emphasized forging connections among participants, whereas at the second meeting, participants began to identify gaps in the ability of the business community to respond to and recover from emergencies. Subsequent meetings, which are expected to be held quarterly, will focus on identifying ways to include businesses in information gathering and other activities essential for economic stability.

The forum emphasizes the value of communication and immediate recovery strategies that address small business recovery after disaster. It also encourages Chambers of Commerce and other business membership groups to support community emergency planning activities as well as increase preparedness education training for small businesses. A community's ability to be resilient and recover from disaster depends on the abilities of all community members, including government, non-profit organizations, and businesses. It's notable that, Rahmlow observes, businesses – in particular small businesses – typically lack preparedness, so the organizations that could help them when needed are welcome participants in preparedness discussions in Southeastern Wisconsin. The SWCOAD has agreed to "carry the flag" to ensure a broad range of small businesses are included in this effort.

*The Meta-Leadership Summit for Preparedness empowered business, government and nonprofit leaders to act together in times of crisis. The five-year initiative connected 5,000 business, government and nonprofit leaders in 36 communities. For resources and more information about Meta-Leadership visit the [CDC Foundation Meta-Leadership Website](#).*



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