

eSynchronist will have the ability to generate reports that will allow the EDO to track issues and trends such as:

- emerging technologies/growth companies
- corporate barriers
- companies at risk
- community strengths and weaknesses
- expansion opportunities
- workforce evaluation/skill gaps

eSynchronist also includes a component for tracking and responding to questions and issues raised by businesses – an extremely important part of a BR&E program. A network of partners, including city staff (for issues within municipal jurisdiction) and contacts at external agencies such as educational institutions, Chambers of Commerce and BIA's, and the provincial and federal government would be utilized for this purpose.

In simple terms, Surrey's BR&E program will consist of the following elements:

- **Business Visitation** - face to face, on-site visits by EDO staff with senior company official(s) where pre-defined information is collected along with spontaneous feed back from the company representative
- **Data Entry** - information collected at the visit is entered into database by EDO staff
- **Issues Follow-up** – through a network of City staff and external partners
- **Report Generation** - to track business trends and provide deeper insight into the business community and the local economy

Using existing staff resources, it is expected that approximately 150 companies will be visited and their information entered into the eSynchronist database by year's end. This will provide enough critical mass of information to start generating reports.

Information collected will be treated as confidential and no company specific data will be published or disclosed.

The focus of the first phase of business visitations will be on the advanced manufacturing sector.

CONCLUSION

Studies have proven that existing businesses generate between 60% and 80% of business growth and new local employment opportunities. A Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) program will facilitate proactive outreach with the dual purpose of gaining insight into the changing dynamics of our business community as well as helping identify how the City, and supporting partners, can enhance the future viability and success of individual businesses.

Donna Jones
Manager, Economic Development Office