Rural Community Leadership/CED Project Toolkit

Project Description & Objectives

The overall goal of the Rural Community Leadership project is to enhance the sustainability of rural communities in Alberta by

- developing and implementing a leadership program and
- developing and implementing a Community Economic Development (CED) program.

In order to foster sustainability, this leadership and CED program addresses three of the four pillars under Alberta's Rural Development Strategy:

- **Economic Growth** – providing opportunities for rural communities to develop strong economies and benefits from the Alberta Advantage;
- **Community capacity, quality of life and infrastructure** – ensuring that rural communities have the capacity, the quality of life and the infrastructure necessary to remain vibrant and attractive places to live, work and visit; and
- **Learning and skills development** – providing excellent schools, access to the best possible education and expanding opportunities in local communities for people to acquire the skills they need to compete and succeed in the marketplace.

The project will also foster environmental sustainability wherever possible.

Examining Key Terms

Rural

The Senate report, *The Challenge of the Rural Poor* (2006), identifies 3 major trends in rural Canada

- A stagnant or declining rural population (and aging population)
- The substitution of capital for labour
- Falling transportation costs for goods, but rising transportation costs for people

Canada's share of the rural population, according to 2006 census, is below 20% for the first time.

These trends result in a vicious circle of 5 outcomes:

- Low population density
- Lack of critical mass for services and infrastructure
- Low rate of business creation
- Fewer jobs
- Out-migration and aging

While the rural demographic is similar to that of urban populations, the lack of services in rural areas means that rural people have to travel greater distances to access services enjoyed by populations in larger centres.

A Senate report released in June of 2008, entitled *Beyond Freefall: Halting Rural Poverty,* researched issues, challenges and potential solutions to rural poverty. The Senate Committee held two years worth of hearings with hundreds of witnesses including experts & everyday citizens.

The Committee concluded that it is a misleading perception that "rural" means "agriculture." This has not only resulted in fewer services for the rural population but also has created a "two solitudes" of rural and urban.

The Committee's research was guided by 5 basic policy principles:

1. Need to respect rural diversity
2. Need to help those who help themselves
3. Need to be place-based
4. Need to recognize that rural Canada doesn't necessarily *want* to be urban
5. Need to stop looking for magic bullet solutions

The Committee argues that: "It is time to put rural Canada on top of the national policy agenda."

It also concluded that there was a need to reinvigorate rural economies rather than merely creating a new institutional framework in Ottawa or moving offices to rural Canada.

The report states that polices should

- Support key rural industries
- Address the serious rural infrastructure deficit, and
- Introduce social policy.

Key industries include agriculture, forestry, fisheries and tourism sectors. Rural infrastructure includes the "digital divide" and rural transportation. Social policy includes income gap, education, rural housing, crime and justice, immigration and health & health care.

The Committee, in its report, takes a "healthy community" approach to rural development: housing, education, income, environment, economy and transportation are all key elements. It points out that it is critical to emphasize what rural citizens and rural communities can do *for themselves*, rather than what the federal government can do for rural citizens and communities. It also focused on health small businesses and support for a robust volunteer sector.

The following recommendation made by the Committee speaks directly to the support of Community Economic Development. Other recommendations touched on aspects of cooperative development.

> RECOMMENDATION 13-1: The committee recommends that the federal government restore funding to the Social Economy Initiative and direct its regional development agencies to immediately begin work on creating patient capital funds similar to La Fiducie du Chantier de l'économie sociale in Quebec.

Based on the findings of these Senate reports and our work with community development at the Alberta Community & Co-operative Association, we have identified the following critical issues/opportunities as the initial focus of this CED project:

- create opportunities for inter-generational wealth transfer and keeping the wealth in the community
- deal with the outward migration of young people and families
- counter the loss of small family farms through being engulfed by mega-farms
- empower local leadership within the community
- identify the benefits of affordable rural housing in attracting and retaining youth/business opportunities
- develop post-secondary education in rural communities
- attract new industry/business in the community.

As the project is implemented in Phases II and III, the Taking Stock and Planning/Benchmark processes will uncover issues specific to each community in the program.

Community Economic Development

Mike Lewis of the Center for Community Enterprise (CCE), in his seminal paper "Common Ground: CED & the Social Economy - Sorting out the Basics," provides a ready distinction between Community Economic Development (CED) and the Social Economy (SE):

> Herein lies the most basic distinction: CED has a primary focus on *territory*; the social economy has a primary focus on *enterprise development* that aids the achievement of social goals [italics added].

Yet he goes on to say that the two are intertwined. In order to achieve a robust local economy, the development of social economy enterprises are important for three main reasons:

1. social economy enterprises are locally owned and therefore keep wealth in the community
2. social economy enterprises often hire workers who have difficulty finding employment elsewhere, and
3. social economy enterprises perform key social tasks such as child care, recreational activities, affordable housing, etc.

Lewis argues that it is this combination of a territorial focus and the social component of enterprise development that is the key to successful community economic development. These benefits of social economy enterprises also tie in with the issues and challenges identified by rural communities. Social economy enterprises, then, hold some promise for meeting the challenges of rural communities.

A number of features of effective CED that are relevant here are outlined by Stewart Perry in his article "Terminology and Definitions in the Field of Community Economic Development":

- CED is multi-functional strategy rather than focusing on an individual enterprise development
- it encompasses a basic range of functions:
    - specific operations for equity investment in venture and property development

    - lending or other credit assistance for local businesses
    - human resource development
    - local capacity building.
- it merges social and economic goals
- it involves activities that empower community residents, and
- it uses a business-like financial management approach.

Lewis categorizes these features into 10 Key Tasks that we must have, do or create if communities are to thrive:

The social tasks:

1. affordable housing & food security
2. social supports
3. health and safety
4. access to quality education
5. culture and recreation

The economic tasks:

- local equity and ownership
- accessible credit
- people who are prepared to make a contribution
- physical infrastructure
- planning, research & advocacy.

He suggests that the Core Tasks are Planning, Research and Advocacy; Equity and Local Ownership and People.

In this Rural Community Leadership project, we have focused on developing a toolkit for the following strategies that address these Core Tasks :

1. Taking Stock
2. Planning and Setting Benchmarks
3. Opportunity Assessment

Leadership

Amal Henein and Françoise Morissette, authors of *Made in Canada Leadership* (2007), interviewed leaders from across Canada to determine what makes a leader and how can we develop leaders. They state that

> Leadership is like a chain whose ultimate purpose is service. The person who accepts the role must ascribe their whole being to serve it. Through the process of seeing a desired future, believing in it passionately and taking action, leaders and followers create a new reality and reinvent themselves.

This concept of servant leadership dovetails well with community economic development. Leaders that are prepared to forego individual gain for the greater good of the community will motivate others to contribute to the development plan and enterprise projects.

Henein and Morissette report that the apprenticeship model is the most effective approach for developing new leaders as it evolves progressively and recognizes that development is something that occurs from the "inside out" but also in concert with external information such as frameworks, guidance, advice and feedback. This is the approach taken with this Rural Leadership project. Community Economic Development Practitioners will work as coaches and mentors with community leaders to enhance and expand leadership capacity for economic development. Combined with the CED Toolkit (see Appendix) as the "outside" information, CED Practitioners will provide the support and guidance required to nurture the heart-based servant leadership qualities required to carry out the tasks of social and economic development in the community.

The role of leaders on this project is to form the Task Force and organize the work for the project, to champion the project and to be its enthusiastic cheerleaders, to mobilize the community to join in, particularly at the Taking Stock stage, and to encourage capital investment in the selected projects and enterprises.

Project Toolkit

The Rural CED Toolkit provides CED Practitioners and community leaders with a set of tools adapted to facilitate the work of community economic development in rural communities. The Toolkit, found in the Appendix to this report, addresses three key stages for nurturing leadership for CED projects:

- **Taking Stock** - identifying community resources and assets: people, infrastructure and capital
- **Planning and Setting Benchmarks** - determining desired outcomes and setting goals (benchmarks) to help achieve them
- **Opportunity Evaluation** - identifying and assessing possible projects and enterprises to reach the benchmarks

1. Taking Stock

The impetus and resources for CED must come from within the community. While outside capital and expertise and government policy and programs can help, communities often underestimate the strength of resources held within. These tools are designed to tease out an awareness of these resources so that participants can bring this new, shared knowledge forward into the Planning and Opportunity stages. Ideally, the community and the CED Practitioner will hold a Process Planning session to determine the most suitable public participation process.

Outcome: The purpose of Taking Stock is to build a profile of the community that includes an analysis of the regional economy, an historical profile, a social profile, description of entrepreneurial assets and an inventory of infrastructure assets.

Figure 1: Graphic depiction of Community Assets

Tools (items in **bold** are elaborated on below in the Toolkit):

1. Activity chart - plotting people's activities each day or each week. Useful for understanding divisions of labour, roles and responsibilities within a community.
2. **Asset mapping** - developed by the Canadian Rural Partnership to develop a common view of what is important to residents in the community, but also celebrates differences both within the community and between rural communities across Canada.
3. **Historical profile** - identifying and listing key events, beliefs and trends in a community's past and their importance for the present.
4. Household livelihood analysis - comparing sources of income and support with expenditure patterns and looking at coping strategies for times of hardship.
5. Informal walk - walking in a group without a definite route, stopping to chat and discuss issues as they arise.
6. **Mapping** -making maps showing various characteristics, e.g., public buildings, residential buildings and commercial assets, greenspace, etc.
7. **Personal history/storytelling** - recording detailed oral accounts of individuals' lives, perhaps asking them to emphasize specific issues.
8. **Questionnaire** - formal survey asking residents or a target group specific questions to gain information to round out the community profile.
9. Skills survey - an inventory of skills and talent in a community; this could be handled as a questionnaire or checklist.
10. **Transect walk/Reconnaissance trip** - systematic walk through an area to observe and record key features. A reconnaissance trip involves a direct inspection of an area by a mixed team of community members and technical experts to familiarize everyone with the physical environment and key issues.

11. Wealth ranking - assessing levels of well-being of different households

2. Planning and Setting Benchmarks

The Planning stage of the project will involve identifying core issues, based on the information gathered during the Taking Stock stage, and formulating a set of benchmarks based on the issues and needs of the community. The Benchmark process is modeled on the Oregon Benchmark process where Oregonians developed a 20-year vision that they planned to realize through a series of "benchmarks" -- targets and actions to address social, economic and environmental factors affecting their quality of life.

At the heart of the approach, as shown in the diagram below, is the Strategic Vision. Three goals were then developed that drive this overall Vision, which in the Oregon case were broken out into 7 major Benchmark categories. For the purpose of this CED project, we determined that the three pillars of Alberta's Rural Development Strategy were the most appropriate for the Benchmark categories. By establishing Benchmarks, the goals are constantly measured and evaluated, forming a "report card" for progress on the Vision.

The Oregon Benchmark process is a complex system for setting strategies that involved partnerships with levels of government and agreed upon projects and outcomes. For the purposes of CED, this system of goal and vision setting, along with identifying benchmarks, can be adapted to a community-wide, rather than public sector focus.

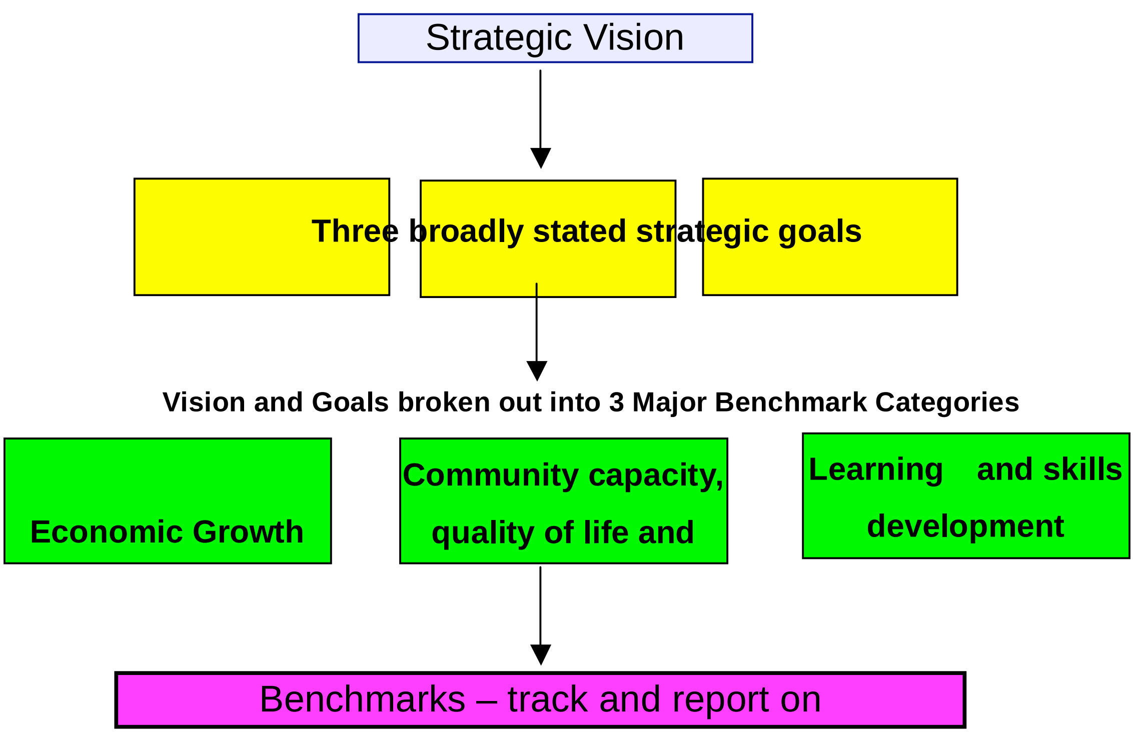

Figure 2: The Oregon Benchmark system with Benchmark categories revised to reflect the current CED project.

Outcome: to develop a set of benchmarks that reflect a common vision, broad strategic goals and 3 Benchmark categories (Economic Growth, Community Capacity/Quality of Life/Infrastructure and Learning & Skills Development).

Tools:

- **Future Search Conference**
- **Open Space Workshop**
- **Planning & Benchmark Setting Day**
- **Ideas Competition**
- **Prioritizing**

3. Opportunity Evaluation

The evaluation of opportunities occurs on three levels:

1. an assessment of all ideas and whether they help meet the Benchmarks,
2. an assessment of the community's entrepreneurial or business readiness to develop the opportunity and
3. an enterprise evaluation that determines the feasibility of the business idea in the marketplace.

At this Phase in the CED process, expert consultation is required rather than just tools that can be applied by the community itself. For example, while it is possible to assess entrepreneurial and business readiness using a tool designed for that purpose, understanding the relative importance of each of the criteria for readiness and knowing how to enhance or augment the resources already existing in the community are areas that require specific consulting expertise. Similarly, while feasibility assessment of enterprises can be supported by work in the community such as secondary data collection, feasibility studies done "in-house" are most likely to result in a subjective assessment. Use of third party, neutral consultants can help avoid this outcome. CED Practitioners may already possess these skills. For those that require further assistance, two excellent assessment resources are listed below.

Outcome: a final assessment of the previously identified/desired projects and the community's readiness to implement the projects successfully.

Resources

- *Community Futures* - help to develop and implement community-based economic development and diversification strategies. These strategies result in the growth within rural communities.
- *Centre for Community Enterprise* - a source of expertise and resources in starting and strengthening CED organizations, revitalizing communities, developing community-minded businesses, CED curriculum design and delivery and publishing CED articles and magazine.

Tool Listing

1. Taking Stock (items in **bold** are described in detail in this Toolkit)
    - Activity chart - plotting people's activities each day or each week. Useful for understanding divisions of labour, roles and responsibilities within a community.
    - **Asset mapping** - developed by the Canadian Rural Partnership to develop a common view of what is important to residents in the community, but also celebrates differences both within the community and between rural communities across Canada.

- Historical profile - identifying and listing key events, beliefs and trends in a community's past and their importance for the present. One approach is to have people describe and explain their life history with respect to particular issues. Mark information on a map or charts to build a comprehensive time line of events and issues in the community.
- Household livelihood analysis - comparing sources of income and support with expenditure patterns and looking at coping strategies for times of hardship.
- Informal walk - walking in a group without a definite route, stopping to chat and discuss issues as they arise.
- **Mapping** -making maps showing various characteristics, e.g., public buildings, residential buildings and commercial assets, greenspace, etc.
- **Personal history/storytelling** - recording detailed oral accounts of individuals' lives, perhaps asking them to emphasize specific issues.
- **Questionnaire/survey** - formal survey asking residents or a target group specific questions to gain information to round out the community profile.
- Skills survey - an inventory of skills and talent in a community; this could be handled as a questionnaire or checklist.
- **Transect walk/Reconnaissance trip** - systematic walk through an area to observe and record key features. A reconnaissance trip involves a direct inspection of an area by a mixed team of community members and technical experts to familiarize everyone with the physical environment and key issues.

2. <u>Planning and Setting Benchmarks</u>
    - **Future Search Conference**
    - **Open Space Workshop**
    - **Planning & Benchmark Setting Day**
    - **Ideas competition**
    - **Prioritizing**

Asset Mapping

Description

Develops a common view of what is important to residents in the community, but also celebrates differences both within the community and between rural communities across Canada.

Purpose & Outcomes

- to identify important community assets
- to build an understanding of the group's appreciation of these assets
- to identify the threats to these assets
- to plan how the group can sustain and build upon the collective value of these assets

Who should come to the session?

Members of Chamber of Commerce, Community Futures Development Corporation, Business Centre, agricultural organizations, banks, credit unions, cultural groups, churches, co-operatives, libraries, environmental groups, youth groups, non-profit organizations and other active community groups

What you'll need

2 flip charts; markers (multicoloured), 2 boxes; masking tape; 3" X 5" file cards (100); large coloured sticker dots; overhead projector, transparencies & markers

Steps

1. draw a large diagram on flip chart paper that includes the following categories: Natural; Service; Built; Social; and Economic
2. Set the context: review the objectives; discuss and define categories on diagram; focus of session is to share what we value in our communities
3. Reflection (10 mins) - Each participant will brainstorm 6 assets and record on cards 3 key assets.
4. Share your Asset (30 mins) - ask each community member to share what they see as the top 3 assets in the community. Ask each participant to place the asset card on the large diagram in the category it falls into.
5. Break - organize each category & related assets on a separate flip chart paper & post around the room.
6. Large Group Discussion (45 mins) - The group discusses why this list of assets is important. This discussion gives participants an opportunity to think about their own and others' choices. Use the following questions as a guide:
    - Why did we decide that these assets are important?
    - Are there any surprises?
    - What do the surprises mean?
7. Confirming individual work on asset of choice (45 mins) - Participants will choose the most important asset in each category and break into small groups for discussion. Give each participant 5 large coloured sticker dots and ask them to identify the one most important asset in each asset category from the original diagram. Count the number of dots on each asset to find out which is the most important asset attributed to each asset category. Have the large group divide into small groups according to asset category.

8. Small group identification of supports to sustain assets and threats to our assets (60 mins) - Each group will discuss supports and threats to the assets in the chosen asset grouping. Use the following questions as a guide:
    - are these assets sustainable?
    - if so, what supports their sustainability?
    - what are the opportunities associated with these assets?
    - If these assets are not sustainable, identify the threats
    - If you have time, begin to plan how your group can preserve and increase the collective value of these community assets
9. Presentation (45 mins) - Each presenter will share the group's summaries. Ask each presenter to summarize the key points of the group discussion, giving an overview of the threats, supporting resources and opportunities associated with the asset.
10. Wrap up & Evaluation (30 mins) - Participants will evaluate the session and discuss what could be the next steps.

Related Tools

- Personal history/storytelling; Mapping

Resources

- http://www.rural.gc.ca/conference/documents/mapping_e.phtml
- http://srdc.msstate.edu/publications/227/227_asset_mapping.pdf
- http://www.sesp.northwestern.edu/abcd/
- http://www.nhi.org/online/issues/83/buildcomm.html

Mapping

Description

A physical representation and visual display of concepts, assets or built landscape, based on the perceptions of the community. Mapping types include an Activity Map (where people do things, which places they visit); a Hazard map (shoeing natural or environmental hazards); Land Uses and Resources map; Building Assets map. Mapping the same location over time can give an indication of progress with a development project.

Purpose & Outcomes

- to develop a perspective on how people view their community
- to represent site-specific data
- to build an understanding of which features on the landscape the community believes are significant
- to ascertain where differences in perception lie.

Who should come to the session?

Gather people who know the area and are willing to share their knowledge. Decide whether to work individually or in groups. This is a particularly good activity for children.

What you'll need

Choose a suitable surface (the ground; a table; a wall; cloth, paper, etc.) and materials (sticks, stones, chalk, markers, crayons, etc), flip chart & markers.

Steps

1. Explain the purpose of the map and the framework or theme. The framework will help focus people's thoughts. Some common themes are: places people visit frequently, landmarks, boundaries, places you dislike, things you would like to see, things of historical value, etc.
2. An alternate approach is to use tracing paper to build up layers on a base map to capture different information on each layer (e.g., natural resources, built environment, historical buildings, etc.)
3. Encourage the group to be creative and to create something visually interesting, particularly if the map will be displayed in a public place after completion, but also to develop pride in their work.
4. Once the group has started, withdraw to give them time and space to develop their map(s).
5. Have the groups or individuals present their maps and encourage discussion and comparison. Make notes on the flip chart.
6. Make a record of the maps. Take digital photos or scan the maps into a computer. Make postcards of the maps and distribute through local shops or public venues such as libraries and the town hall.

Related Tools

- Asset mapping; Transect walk/Reconnaissance trip

Resources

- http://www.cbr-aimhigh.com/index.htm

Personal history/Storytelling

Description

A verbal recounting of tales designed to share how a particular event was a creative and positive process for the community. This is particularly valuable tool with children.

Purpose & Outcomes

- to develop an understanding of local values, standards, practices and relationships
- to creatively identify community assets, particularly as they relate to human qualities rather than physical assets
- to illustrate that combining resources can develop into a successful project
- to allow newcomers to appreciate both the recent and distant past of their new community
- to help root asset mapping in a local reality
- to identify how groups can solve problems while maximizing opportunities and turn adversity into an advantage that builds community

Who should come to the session?

Gather people who know the area and are willing to share their knowledge. Decide whether to work individually or in groups. This is a particularly good activity for children.

What you'll need

markers (2 boxes, multicolour); masking tape; two flip charts; large coloured sticker dots; overhead projector and prepared transparencies; 3 X 5 file cards (100)

Steps

1. Welcome the group and ask participants to introduce themselves briefly. You may want to have them comment on what makes a good story or storyteller based on their past experience.
2. Review the objectives of the session (see above under Purpose & Outcomes for examples). Explain the agenda and time line. Set a time of 1 to 1 1/2 hours. Limit the session to 15 storytellers. If there are more than 15 attending the session, you may want to hold an additional session on another day or expand the time allotted to the current session.
3. Give participants a few moments of reflection to identify which story they would like to tell. The focus should be on encouraging positive stories about the community; how community members have used resources to build community, and successful projects the community has undertaken together - how and why the community has come together.
4. As each person tells their story, ask the other participants to jot down the key assets/resources used in the story on file cards.
5. After each participant tells their story, prompt with questions to focus the session:
    - what were the key resources or assets in the story?
    - what kind of assets/resources were involved (human and physical)?
    - how did relationships develop?
    - what were the key learnings?

6. Encourage discussion, based on the file card notes, once all the stories have been told. Make notes on the flip chart.
7. Identify ways in which the group would like to collect the stories. They may be on display, recorded in newspaper articles or even compiled in a book.

Related Tools

- Asset mapping; Historical profile

Resources

- The Alberta League Encouraging Storytelling

Questionnaire/survey

Description

A survey which involves the collection of information in the form of written responses to a standard set of questions. Often a starting point for the participation process. The survey can be used for resource, social or other community information.

Purpose & Outcomes

- to collect a broad baseline of factual information and/or opinion regarding the community
- to determine community capacity for economic and social development
- to provide a base for other participation processes.

Who should be involved?

The target for a survey can be broad - i.e., the whole community - or narrowly focused on a specific subset of the community such as seniors, business people, etc.

What you'll need

a means of reproducing and distributing the survey - this could be done by hand delivery in residential mail boxes, through public venues such as libraries and/or through the Internet; sample surveys (see Resources)

Steps

1. Work with a Task Force and determine the purpose of the survey.
2. Identify ways of reproducing and distributing the survey and how you will analyze the data you have gathered.
3. Select the survey questions and implement the survey process (use sample surveys if desired - see Resources).
4. Publish the results of the survey in local newspapers/newsletters, radio and on the Internet, if the community has a website.

Related Tools

- Skills survey

Resources

- http://www.accesscable.net/~infopoll/tips.htm
- http://www.sesp.northwestern.edu/abcd/tools/abcdci/
- http://www.rural.gc.ca/decision/trepassey/appe_e.pdf
- http://www.directionsforourfuture.ca/spanclasssurveyTaketheSurveyspan/tabid/62/Default.aspx

Transect Walk/Reconnaissance Trip

Description

A systematic walk along a pre-determined route through an area to gather information about such things as land-use, social and economic resources or the state of the environment. Usually done with community members and facilitators or technical experts. Information is subsequently recorded on maps and/or as text. A Transect Walk is designed to cut across all zones within a community rather than a Reconnaissance Trip that may focus on only one zone or area of interest.

Purpose & Outcomes

- to see first-hand the assets and/or development opportunities in the community
- to confirm the outcomes of a mapping exercise
- to assess the technical feasibility of an area for development

Who should be involved?

Any interested member in the community, but particularly Task Force members. Also, technical experts with skills matching the focus of the Trip and a facilitator to help keep the group focused on the task at hand. Keep the numbers low (e.g., less than 15). Split into 2 groups if the interest is high. Plan for a cross-section of interests in each group.

What you'll need

Ensure that the route is accessible for those in wheelchairs or with mobility challenges. Plan the route and location for the Trip in advance with the Task Force.

Steps

1. Work with a Task Force and determine the purpose of the Trip (what issues will you focus on? do you want to count certain items such as cafes, apartment buildings, number of people walking, riding bicycles, vacant buildings/lots, etc?), the route, the date, transportation (e.g., bus) arrangements and a budget, if any.
2. Set a timetable or agenda for the day. Include social time at a local restaurant, for example.
3. Identify technical experts that are willing to participate. Ensure that their services are pro bono or within the budget.
4. Promote the Trip through media and by flyer and a website.
5. Identify someone to take notes, and ask the experts to provide a summary of their opinions after the Trip. Make sketches, hold interviews with local community members and take photos on the walk as well.
6. Hold a debriefing session with the Task Force members.
7. Construct a profile, based on the notes, in map, diagram and/or text form. If doing a Transect Walk, draw a line that "transects" the community and place noted conditions from the walk along the transect.
8. Display the profile in the media or a public venue.

Related Tools

- Mapping

Resources

- http://pcs.aed.org/manuals/cafs/handbook/sessions10-12.pdf

Future Search Conference

Description

Future Search Conferences are structured events, usually held over 2-3 days, during which community members create a shared vision for the future.

Purpose & Outcomes

- to focus on what works rather than what's wrong or problem solving
- to increase trust and organizational alignment
- to foster change
- to develop a shared vision for the community
- to celebrate a community's strengths and passions

Who should come to the session?

A broad cross section of the community: Members of Chamber of Commerce, Community Futures Development Corporation, Business Centre, agricultural organizations, banks, credit unions, cultural groups, churches, co-operatives, libraries, environmental groups, youth groups, non-profit organizations and other active community groups. The ideal number is 64 as it breaks down into groups of 8. For larger groups, run several conferences in parallel.

What you'll need

2 flip charts; markers (multicoloured), 2 boxes; masking tape; large strips of paper mounted on the wall; round tables of 8

Steps

1. **Review the past** - explore key events in the histories of the participants, their community and the world. Have participants share them on three time-lines (e.g., 1870s, 1970s, 2008) using large strips of paper on the walls to make history visible and to discover patterns about the past.
2. **Explore the present** - Explore present trends affecting the community and illustrate them on a mind map. For example, groups can share what they are proud of and what they are sorry about. An alternative is to use the technique "Stop, Start, Continue" where participants share what they would like the community to Stop doing, Start doing and Continue doing.
3. **Create ideal futures** - have participants develop visions in small groups and identify barriers to those visions.
4. **Identify common ground** - identify a shared vision, first in small groups, then by everyone. Also have groups identify projects that could achieve the shared vision.
5. **Make action plans** - self-selected small groups plan projects and make public commitments to action.

Related Tools

- Personal history/storytelling;

Resources

- http://www.futuresearch.net/

Open Space Workshop

Description

Open Space workshops are a democratic method that enable groups to create their own agenda for discussion on any theme of their own choosing without much preparation.

Purpose & Outcomes

- to engage in dialogue on issues in an unstructured, highly democratic environment

Principles and Law of the Open Space Workshop

1. Whoever comes are the right people.
2. Whenever it starts is the right time.
3. When it's over, it's over.
4. Whatever happens is the only thing that could happen.

The 'Law of Two Feet': If at any time you feel you are neither learning nor contributing, move elsewhere (e.g., to another workshop or to have a break, coffee, etc.).

Who should come to the session?

Whoever comes are the right people.

What you'll need

2 flip charts; markers (multicoloured); masking tape; enough chairs for a circle of all participants

Steps

1. Select a theme, venue and time.
2. Prepare a wall with areas marked off for posting workshop information (e.g., Workshop #1, Workshop #2, etc.). Leave room for posting workshop issues as per step #3 and have a sign-up sheet in each workshop slot.
3. Have participants sit in a circle and decide which issues they want to discuss. For example, invite participants to write their issue on a piece of paper. Have each member of the group read out their issue, then tape their paper in a workshop slot. Several issues can be dealt with in one workshop if you have more issues than slots.
4. Invite participants to sign up in a workshop. Allow 15 minutes for this activity.
5. Hold the workshop sessions according to the principles and law of the Open Space Workshop concept. Record the outcomes as a list of actions required and by whom for each issue. Post these on the wall.
6. Break.
7. Hold an open session with all participants to review the results of the workshop sessions and debate the outcomes.
8. In a final plenary circle, participants make any final statements they wish.
9. Circulate a report on the outcomes of the event.

Related Tools

- Future Search Conference

Resources

- http://www.openingspace.net/gallery/agora.cgi?cart_id=4769468.26839*2U1hV3&xm=on&product=Anatomy_of_an_Open_Space_Event

Planning & Benchmark Setting Day

Description

A day (or several days) in which to develop increased focus for the shared vision developed through the Future Search or Open Space workshop.

Purpose & Outcomes

- to identify three broad strategic goals that support the shared vision
- to identify a list of benchmarks that provide strategic focus for the vision and goals
- to brainstorm & select projects that would allow the community to achieve the benchmarks.

Who should come to the session?

It is essential that a broad cross-sects ion of the community attends the planning session. From 20 to 200 people should be involved.

What you'll need

2 flip charts; markers (multicoloured); masking tape; 5 X 8 index cards & felt tip markers; tables and chairs to accommodate the participants in groups; a shared vision previously identified; results from the asset mapping exercise; signs for each of the Benchmark Categories (Economic Growth, Community Capacity/Quality of Life/Infrastructure and Learning & Skills Development) on a long wall with space under each for index card posting.

What & how to benchmark

Select items that are easily definable, measurable, evaluated and can result in achievable results. Consider also, the available resources and the time line for achieving results. Focus on process and performance and on aspects of the community that need improvement. This may involve comparisons with other communities, or process or assets identified in the asset mapping or storytelling phase.

Steps

1. Have participants in groups of 6-8.
2. Identify 6-10 key stakeholders that will form a Benchmark Team.
3. Review the Community Profile and shared vision from previous exercises.
4. Have participants identify goals that would support the shared vision. Each table should assign a recorder to write the goals on flip chart paper (45 mins).
5. Invite each table to share their goals with the rest of the participants. Post the flip chart pages on the wall (30. mins, depending on the number of participants)
6. Break. During the break, have the Benchmark Team identify areas of overlap on the goals and craft 3 revised goals that best consolidate the ideas represented on the flip chart pages (20 minutes).
7. Present the revised goals to the participants and have them engage in a 'participatory editing' process, where they write comments directly on the revised goals pages using markers (30 minutes).
8. While the Benchmark Team is reviewing the comments and refining the goals further, have the remaining participants start the benchmarking process. Each table should develop as many benchmarks as they can, and write them on individual index cards using felt tip markers. Have participants post index card

Benchmarks under the appropriate category on the wall throughout this step rather than waiting until they have all their Benchmarks identified (1 hour).

9. Have participants move towards the wall containing the Benchmarks. Engage in a clustering exercise where participants agree on whether a) the Benchmark is in the right category and b) whether Benchmarks can be clustered around themes within each category. (15 mins)
10. Have the Benchmark Team work on the final list of Benchmarks for each category.
11. Post the Benchmarks in a prominent place and publish in the community media.

Related Tools

- Future Search Conference
- Open Space workshop
- Ideas Competition

Resources

- http://www.oregon.gov/DAS/OPB/index.shtml
- http://www.cedworks.com/benchmarks.html

Ideas Competition

Description

A solicitation of ideas for ideas for improvement, projects, designs, etc. to stimulate interest in a project and to allow everyone to feel involved.

Purpose & Outcomes

- to overcome opposition to a project
- to stimulate public interest in a project
- to create a sense of inclusion

Who should be involved?

The focus can be on professionals, lay persons or a combination of the two.

What you'll need

some way to publicize the contest; some means for public judging of the entries (e.g., coloured sticky dots); prizes; a way to publicize the outcome

Steps

1. **Prepare a flyer** outlining the purpose, entry format and deadline, judging procedure, eligibility and other relevant details. The purpose or task can involve a specific site, building, project or problem. Ensure that the criteria include the Benchmarks.
2. **Judging** can be done by a panel or through the use of a public voting system (such as sticky dots - "dotmocracy" -- see Prioritizing). Or a 2-stage approach can be used in which a panel prepares a "short list" and the public votes on the idea they like best from this list.
3. **Announce the winner(s)** publicly and publish the results prominently.

Related Tools

- Prioritizing

Prioritizing

Description

A session held in order to determine the most popular items by the participants. Assists in placing projects in order of priority.

Purpose & Outcomes

- to identify which project options should be done first
- to include a broad spectrum of community members in the decision-making process

Who should come to the session?

It is essential that a broad cross-sects ion of the community attends the planning session. From 20 to 200 people should be involved.

What you'll need

2 flip charts; markers (multicoloured); masking tape; sets of sticky dots

Steps

1. Review the vision, strategic goals and Benchmarks/Benchmark categories (15 mins).
2. Have participants divide into groups to brainstorm projects that would address the Benchmarks, goals and vision. Have a recorder for each group write the projects on flip chart paper (1 hour)
3. Post the pages on a wall. Issue an equal number of sticky dots to each participant. Have each participant 'vote' using the sticky dots for the projects they believe will best realize the vision, goals and benchmarks. Alternatively, post the vision, goals, Benchmarks, and project ideas in public venues & media and hold a public 'vote' on the projects. A temporary 'project office' could also be set up to answer questions and engage the community in identifying the best projects.
4. If there are a large number of projects clustered at the top, eliminate the bottom 50% of the items and hold another round of voting with the remaining projects.

Related Tools

- Ideas Competition