

Rural Louisiana

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Louisiana Tech University

In This Issue: Resources to Help Communities Respond to Change

In our role as community members, policy makers, and employees we may be called upon to assist our community or organization anticipate and respond to change. This issue of Rural Louisiana describes some of the resources and tools for visioning, planning, and assessment that are available to assist in our efforts.

Visioning, generally the first step, is a technique that brings a group of stakeholders together to develop a shared description of what an improved situation would look like for the issue that is of concern to the community or organization. One of its main benefits is that it is a way of engaging stakeholders on an issue in a structured, creative, and neutral environment.

Visioning results in a description of what, ideally, we would like to achieve; planning defines how we will get there. A plan describes the steps and tasks that move us from the current state to the improved future that we envisioned. A good planning process will engage stakeholders, will incorporate resources that are already in place, will

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Participants work in small groups at the 3rd Annual Rural Development Conference at LA Tech.

LA Tech Center for Rural Development Holds 3rd Annual Rural Development Conference

“Planning for Change in Rural Communities”

Fifty people from around the state gathered on Louisiana Tech's Campus on June 9th, 2003 for a full-day conference on techniques to facilitate and manage change in their communities. Included in the group were mayors, town employees, economic developers and other technical assistance providers.

The conference included three sessions and brought experts to LA Tech from Kentucky, Mississippi and Louisiana to share their knowledge and experience with the participants.

Session 1: Conflict Management

The first workshop was a half-day training on conflict resolution techniques for groups. Dr. Ron Hustedde, an Associate Professor in the Community and Leadership Development Program at the University of Kentucky Lexington was the instructor for the session. Dr. Hustedde shared with the group some of his experiences as a facilitator in communities that were divided over issues.

Dr. Hustedde told the group that when they are in a situation in which they are facilitating a dispute in a community, the first step that they should take to manage conflict is to make sure that question that is being addressed is the “right” question. A

good question gets to the heart of the matter and leaves room for the group to come to creative solutions. A poor question locks people into positions such that there is only a winner and a loser.

Dr. Hustedde had the group work through a scenario in which the starting question presented to them was “whether or not to replace the current bridge to the island portion of a community with a multi-lane highway bridge.”

As they worked through the exercise, it became apparent to the group that the real issue for the community, that all sides were concerned with, was “how can we address access and safety to the island portion of the community”, as the current bridge left residents vulnerable. The re-framing of the question from “yes or no to the bridge proposal” to “how do we solve the problem of safety” (which was the rationale for the bridge replacement) allowed for more solutions and more meaningful engagement from stakeholders.

Resources:

The training guide for this session, *Turning Lemons into Lemonade: Public Conflict Resolution, SRDC Series #221* is available on-line at <http://srdc.msstate.edu/training/trainingcurricula.htm>.

Dr. Hustedde can be reached by e-mail at rhusted@uky.edu or by phone at (859) 257-3186

Session 2: Asset Mapping

The second workshop was on Asset Mapping. Dr. Bo Beaulieu, Director of the Southern Region Rural Development Center, was the instructor for the session.

According to Dr. Beaulieu, community development efforts generally start by assessing what a community lacks. This is described as a needs-based approach.

Asset-based community development, in contrast, starts with a community's strengths. Development takes advantage of, and

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L A T e c h i n t h e C o m m u n i t y

utilizes these strengths. Asset Mapping is a technique that is used to identify resources in the community that can be used for development.

Resources:

The training materials for this session, *Mapping the Assets of Your Community: A Key Component for Building Local Capacity-SRDC Series #227, June 2002*, is also available on-line at <http://srdc.msstate.edu/training/trainingcurricula.htm>

Dr. Beaulieu can be reached by e-mail at ljb@srdc.msstate.edu or by phone at (662) 325-3207.

Session 3: Economic Development Planning

The final workshop was on Take Charge, a program for assessing appropriate economic development. This session was led by Dr. Deborah Tootle, Director of the LSU Ag Center's Community Economic Development Team and Dora Ann Hatch, an LSU AgCenter Community Economic Development Specialist based in Homer, LA.

Take Charge is a three-day workshop that is offered through the LSU AgCenter to communities in Louisiana. The Community Development Specialists can assist communities in assessing their community, developing economic development alternatives based on their assessment, setting goals and creating action plans to reach those goals.

Resources:

The LSU Ag Center staff offer the Take Charge program in Louisiana. A listing of regional rural development agents is available on the web at <http://www.lsuagcenter.com/economic/>

Participants at the Rural Development Conference



Facilitation:

Facilitators are a key component in visioning and planning activities. Their role at the start of a meeting is to ensure that there is understanding and agreement on the expected outcomes of the session, to go over the agenda, and to set the groundrules.

During the meeting, facilitators are, first and foremost, traffic coordinators for communication. They make sure that everyone has the opportunity to contribute to the discussion. Almost every group contains people who, for various reasons, are disruptive to the process. The facilitator's role is to keep the process moving along and to protect participants from attack.

When a meeting is well-facilitated, the end result should be a session in which everyone felt they had a fair chance to air their thoughts, in which participants generated a lot of creative energy and produced a lot of interesting and useful ideas, and in which all of the ideas were captured for later use.

agents.asp or contact Deborah Tootle at (225) 578-2367 or by e-mail at dtootle@agcenter.lsu.edu.

The training manual, *Take Charge: Economic Development in Small Communities*, is also available for \$25 from the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development.. To order, send check, money order, purchase order, or MasterCard or VISA information with your request to Kristi Hetland, NCRCRD, Iowa State University, 107 Curtiss Hall, Ames, IA 50011-1050; (515) 294-9768, (515) 294-3180 fax, khetland@iastate.edu.

For more information about this conference, or on future conferences, please contact Elizabeth Higgins at the Louisiana Tech Center for Rural Development (318) 251-0205 or by e-mail at ehiggins@latech.edu.

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Federal and State Programs

Four Federal and State Programs that Assist Communities with Visioning and/or Planning Activities

Resources: continued from page 1

U.S. Commerce Department's Economic Development Administration

The Economic Development Administration offers several grants that can be used by local communities (as well as regions and states) to develop plans for economic development.

The program that is probably the most useful at the local level is the **(Local) Technical Assistance Program** which supports a variety of planning activities.

The EDA website for grant programs is: <http://12.39.209.165/xp/edapublic/intestmentsgrants/pgmguide.xml>.

U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service

The Forest Service has a Rural Community Assistance Program which assists communities organize, develop broad-based action plans, and take actions towards sustainable solutions. The Forest Service offers some grants and technical assistance through this program.

The main website for this program is <http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/programs/eap/index.shtml>.

State of Louisiana Main Street Program

Louisiana Main Street is a comprehensive and incremental program that combines preservation of historic areas with prudent business practices. A key component to the program is stakeholder involvement and planning. Communities that make a commitment to the program are eligible for grants and other financial incentives and technical support

Louisiana Main Street's website is: <http://www.crt.state.la.us/crt/ocd/hp/lmsintro.htm>.

LSU AgCenter Community Economic Development Team (CED)

The Community Economic Development Team promotes sustainable economic development in Louisiana. Agents can assist communities with visioning and strategic planning and offer expertise in facilitation.

Their website is: www.lsuagcenter.com/economic/education.asp.

include short term and long term goals and objectives, and will set clear timelines and assign responsibility to tasks.

An assessment or evaluation process is a critical piece of the puzzle. Because we rarely begin a project with full information, an assessment process allows us to adjust the project to account for factors that we did not anticipate in our vision or initial plan. Assessment allows us to define the progress that we have made, and to see what goals are being met and what goals are no longer relevant. It also provides opportunities for external input into the process.

Finally, each one of these steps is dependant on having good data (or information) about the issue and the alternatives, having input from all of the people who are affected by the issue, and a facilitation and/or conflict management process. These are all important because they affect the quality of the product that we will get out of each step. Without good data it is difficult to accurately define and assess the scope of the problem. Without stakeholder involvement the project may not meet the needs of the community or have unintended consequences. And without a good facilitation process and a process to manage conflict, the process may stall, or not result in useful output.

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Non-Profits and Other Organizations

Regional Rural Development Centers (RRDCs)

There are 4 regional rural development centers in the United States. They conduct research, outreach, and training on rural development issues. The Southern Rural Development Center and North Central Regional Rural Development Center, in particular, have a great deal of information on their websites on planning, visioning, community engagement and assessment. A map of the regions, addresses, contact information and links to their websites is available at: <http://srdc.msstate.edu/about/rdmap.htm>.

Future Search Network

Future Search is a three-day strategic planning process that helps groups move from vision to action quickly. The Network trains people in facilitating Future Search and offers trained facilitators to work with groups. The website provides information about the method and how it can be used. The website is: <http://www.futuresearch.net>.

Asset-Based Community Development Institute (ABCD)

The Asset-Based Community Development Institute is based at Northwestern University. It conducts research on capacity-building community development

and offers training materials, speakers, and consultants to communities interested in asset-based development. Its website is: <http://www.northwestern.edu/ipr/abcd>.

Sustainable Measures

Sustainable Measures is a private consulting firm that assists communities in developing tools for self-assessment. Its website provides free information and training on developing and using indicators of a community's sustainability. Indicators are defined by the organization as a way of measuring how well a community is meeting the needs and expectations of its present and future members. The website also offers links to many other resources. The address of the website is: <http://www.sustainablemeasures.com>.

Data:

Access to unbiased, high-quality data is critical for the success of a project.

The **U.S. Census Bureau** (<http://www.census.gov>) is the best general source of population, income, housing, employment and business data. The American Fact Finder is the easiest to use portion of the site for people who are not as familiar with Census data.

The federal government collects a huge amount of data. The best single source of information, with links to statistics from all federal agencies is **FEDSTATS** (<http://www.fedstats.gov>).

The Louisiana State Census Data Center's website (www.la.gov/census/index.htm) has links to both federal and state data.

Finally if you are new to using data, a report from the Center from Rural Pennsylvania "**Stats for Scardey Cats: A How to Guide for Rural Data Users**" is a great resource. It is available on-line at <http://www.ruralpa.org/stats.pdf>. It explains Census terminology and common statistical terms to help you better interpret the data that you use.

The Community Informatics Resource Center

Community Informatics Resource Center (CIRC) uses Internet-based GIS and other data visualization and analytic tools to make policy-relevant information available to community-based decision makers.

The site has a function that allows you to create your own map at various scales for various datasets. Because RUPRI (the organization that sponsors this site) does so much work on health policy, these maps are particularly useful. The website is: <http://circ.rupri.org>.

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Resources for Planning



Dr. Deborah Tootle

We have developed the following list of resources for further information on visioning, planning, and assessment.

Planning and Visioning:

The following reports from the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development (NCRCD) are available by sending a check, money order, purchase order, or MasterCard or VISA information with your request to Kristi Hetland, NCRCD, Iowa State University, 107 Curtiss Hall, Ames, IA 50011-1050; (515) 294-9768, (515) 294-3180 fax, khetland@iastate.edu. For more information see their website: <http://www.ncrcrd.iastate.edu>.

Community Visioning/Strategic Planning Programs: State of the Art. 1995. (RRD 170). Ames, IA: North Central Regional Center for Rural Development.

Community Visioning/Strategic Planning Programs: State of the

Art examines strategic visioning programs with a local economic development focus in 10 states to determine their effectiveness.

Detailed information on the delivery format of the programs is presented so that readers know the options available for organizing and presenting these programs. Also, an effort is made to evaluate the successes or shortcomings of programs in working with community leaders and participants. The report is available for \$10.

Vision to Action: Take Charge Too. 2001. (RRD182). Ames, IA: North Central Regional Center for

Rural Development. ISBN 0-936913-14-2.

This publication provides practitioners with a basic guideline for helping communities and organizations develop a vision, and an action plan for accomplishing that vision. The publication is available for \$25 or on-line at <http://www.ag.iastate.edu/centers/rdev/pubs/contents/182.htm>.

Under Construction: Tools and Techniques for Local Planning. 2002. Minnesota Planning Agency.

This publication, put forth by the State of Minnesota, shows how local governments and those they

Stakeholder Input:

Although stakeholder input is critical, there is no single best method for getting stakeholder input that will work for all situations. Some methods have high costs, some can only accommodate small numbers of people, and some are open but likely to be biased based on who is likely to participate.

The Canadian Centre for Analysis of Regionalization and Health has an excellent website that describes and compares the advantages and disadvantages of various methods of engaging the public depending on a project's needs. It also offers internet links and publications on public participation. The main website address is: <http://www.regionalization.org/PubPartCollect.html>.

On this site there is also "A Review of Public Participation and Consultation Methods" that compares the advantages and disadvantages of different methods in a convenient tabular format. It is available at <http://www.regionalization.org/PPTableeng.pdf>.

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Resources for Planning

serve can work together to develop a good comprehensive plan. According to the foreword, "A good plan articulates the aspirations and vision of a community and provides the policy framework for decisions regarding development proposals, public investments and the delivery of government services." It is available on-line at <http://www.mnplan.state.us/report.html?id=2910>.



Dr. Ron Hustedde

Strengthening Civic Engagement in Community Decision Making. 2001. (SRDC 21st Century Report #19) Southern Rural Development Center.

Civic engagement is crucial for helping community leaders identify issues and make good decisions. This report highlights barriers to civic engagement and presents policy recommendations

to support civic engagement in community decisionmaking. It is available on-line at <http://srdc.msstate.edu/publications/king.pdf>.

Assessment:

Community Economic Analysis: A How To Manual. Revised 1993. (RRD141). Ames, IA: North Central Regional Center for Rural Development. ISBN 0-936913-06-1. Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 93-86303.

This manual is designed to assist individuals who need to bring information to a group of citizens or decision makers concerned with the economic future of a community. The manual addresses non-local markets linkage, strategies for economic development, multipliers, assessing the size and shape of a community's trade area, keeping local dollars in the community, measuring the efficiency of local firms, and other strategies. It is available for \$12 from NCRCRD (see address on previous page).

Measuring Community Success and Sustainability: An Interactive Workbook. 1999. (RRD 180). Ames, IA: North Central Regional Center for Rural Development.

The principal purpose of this workbook is to help communities learn how to measure the concrete results of rural community development and conservation efforts. It is available on-line at:

http://www.ncrcrd.iastate.edu/Community_Success/about.html or a hard copy can be ordered by sending \$10 to NCRCRD (see address on previous page).

Dillman, Don A. 1999. Mail and Internet Surveys: the Tailored Design Method, 2nd Edition. John Wiley Company, New York, NY.

There are times when the data that you need is simply not available. One tool to acquire data, particularly data about feelings and opinions on an issue is a survey. If you are not familiar with statistical methods and survey methodology, this is an excellent resource. It will help you to design a survey that is both effective and defensible. It should be available in your library or through interlibrary loan.



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Announcements:

The fall issue of *Rural Louisiana* will be on grant writing and identifying sources of funding for your projects.

The Delta E-Commerce Connection Project at LA Tech is continuing to hold trainings. Eligible rural small businesses who attend the training can receive a free website and technical assistance for 1 year. Call (318) 257-3275 or by e-mail at deltaecommerce@latech.edu. Their website is <http://www.deltaecom.latech.edu>

The USDA will begin to take applications for Value-Added Producer Grants this fall (2003). The grants pay 50% of the costs of developing a value-added agricultural enterprise. See our website <http://www.latech.edu/tech/rural> for more information about the program.