

RDI News and Project Updates

RDI Signs New Agreement with MAFRI

On June 22, 2011, the Rural Development Institute (RDI) signed a new agreement with Manitoba Agriculture, Food, and Rural Initiatives (MAFRI). Present to sign the agreement were Drew Caldwell, MLA for Brandon East, Dr. Deborah Poff, President and Vice-Chancellor of Brandon University, and Dr. William Ashton, Director of RDI. MAFRI's \$545,000 funding commitment will help sustain RDI research efforts and community initiatives over the next five years. The Institute will continue to build on its mandate to strengthen

rural, remote and northern communities through applied research, knowledge sharing, and fostering the development of new generations of community leaders and rural researchers.

"Research undertaken at RDI on immigration, youth migration and community foundations among many other areas helps inform decision-making on rural policy and initiatives," commented MAFRI Minister Stan Struthers in a communiqué about this agreement.

Pathfinder for Communities: Selecting Tools for Community Economic Development (CED)

The aim of this RDI project is to help rural communities with their economic development initiatives through the development of web-based, searchable database of CED tools. The CED Pathfinder project Beta site is ready to be tested in the communities and is anticipated to go live in Spring 2012. The site includes multiple searching paths along with a peer referral system based on reviews of tools on the site. The Beta site will allow users search for CED tools in a variety of ways:

- via general search approach such as keyword
- via phase approach - looking for tools by the specific phase of the CED cycle they occur in along with their particular purpose

- via tool topic or focus - examining those tools that focus on social development, environment, grow economic development or sustainability building.

The CED pathfinder project has been formally presented at two conferences recently, the first being the joint Rural Sociological Society - Community Development Society in Boise, Idaho in the summer and the most recent being the CCEDNET Gathering in Winnipeg in October. Additionally, the RDI team has reviewed the project with some participants at the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) conference in Charlotte, SC in September.

Demonstration and Investigation into Livestock Production

The project, proposed by the Upper Assiniboine River Conservation District, examines lesser-known, environmentally-friendly practices aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions while lowering livestock production costs. By using an integrated approach focusing on livestock systems, cropping systems, and agroforestry, the research will demonstrate environmentally-friendly practices which will reduce agricultural emissions, increase carbon levels in the soil, and enhance cattle production efficiencies. In September, RDI research team con-

ducted several visits to rural communities to test survey instruments. Currently, a new project website is being developed to help distribute and share project findings with beef producers and other stakeholders.

RDI Team

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Recent RDI Research Projects and Activities

Needs Analysis for Developing Social Media Certificate Program at Brandon University

RDI is expanding its learning mandate to include knowledge and skills development programming in the form of professional certificates on a non-credit basis. The topics of social marketing and social media are currently an untapped niche in the province, especially for the public and NGO sectors. The aims of the needs analy-

sis are to determine interest in non-credit professional training and establish institutional capacity and logistics for developing the program. The project will include two half-day sessions delivered by webinar with target audiences in Brandon, Winnipeg and Dauphin.

Labour and Immigration Manitoba (LIM) Portal Initiative

The objective of the new project is to determine recent immigrant population trends in rural Manitoba, based on comparative analysis of eighteen smaller communities. Centres selected for the purposes of this research are representative of three categories: communities demonstrating rapid population growth, centres with stable to modest growth, and communities experiencing population decline. The selection parameters focused on two key indicators: population change and immigrant arri-

vals. The study established that population increase in rural Manitoba centres parallels increase in immigrant arrivals. Population increase in smaller centres greatly impacts future planning strategies and community economic development in these areas as it often results in increased demand for housing, education, health care, land supply, infrastructure capacity, and other services.

Conferences and Presentations

International Comparative Rural Policy Studies (ICRPS) 2011 Summer Institute, Ås & Sogndal, Norway, June 26—July 11, 2011.

RDI Affiliates Robert Annis and Doug Ramsey offered presentations at the International Comparative Rural Policy Studies (ICRPS) institute. The eighth annual summer institute, hosted by The Norwegian University of Life Sciences (UMB) and the Norwegian Agricultural Economics Research Institute (NILF), welcomed graduate and PhD students and professionals from around the world to network and share their knowledge on issues in rural policy.

Connect Locally, Succeed Globally: International Economic Development Council Conference, Charlotte, NC, Sept. 18-21, 2011.

RDI Director William Ashton facilitated a discussion roundtable at the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) Conference, held September 18 to 21, 2011 in Charlotte, NC. The annual conference provided a venue to share and discuss the latest and most innovative ideas, techniques, and methods applied in the economic development field.

Industry Canada Pan-western Management Meeting, October 18, 2011.

RDI researcher Wayne Kelly recently joined Industry Canada's Pan-western management meeting to review rural development issues with the team and identify RDI's role in addressing these issues.

Beyond Surviving: Planning to Thrive. Manitoba Planning Conference (MPC), Brandon University, February 22 –24, 2012.

RDI was appointed to co-chair the Program Committee for the upcoming MPC conference, to be held at the Brandon University in February 2012. The conference is designed to provide a forum for consultations, networking and professional development opportunities for municipal officials, government staff and agencies, professional planners, and other stakeholders.

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