2010 CRRF/RDI Conference

“On the Bright Side: Rural Canada Works”

Ted Eastley, Executive Director

October 15, 2010
What is MRAC?

• We Support Ag Innovation

• Not for profit agency (Board of Directors + Liaison Officers + Provincial Ex-Officios)

• Administrator of funds provided by the federal government under Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

• Objective is to advance the Manitoba agriculture sector

• Single portfolio agency with an expanded mandate of multiple portfolio funding
Funding Available

• Maximum for a project: $300,000 ($500,000 for Collective Outcome projects)

• 50/50 cash; 85% with broad industry participation - no confidentiality or IPR; 70% with limited industry participation

• Maximum 3 year project

• Matching cash can come from other federal government departments or municipal governments (It cannot come from other AAFC funds)

• APF programming ineligible (including ARDI)

• Funding is not to be considered ongoing, but should be provided for a limited period to help the sector resolve an issue or capture opportunities
Task Force Committees/
Council Led Initiatives

- Human Resource/Infrastructure
  - Vibrant Rural Communities project;
  - Agriculture as a Solution Provider
- Consumer Confidence
  - Agri-Systems Innovation Interface (ASII)
- Leadership/Mentorship
Vibrant Rural Communities Project

Objective

“...to address the current trend of rural community depopulation and identify a model that could be developed into a monitor community initiative to reverse that trend. The outcome of this project could form a template for other rural leaders to catalyze their communities to reinvent themselves”

Colin Hudon, Chair, Human Resources/Infrastructure Task Force Committee
Vibrant Rural Communities Project

**Phase I**
- An analysis of trends that are affecting our rural communities.
- Identification of successful programs that exist in Canada and other countries.

**Phase II**
- Development of an initial framework for an initiative to achieve the vision created by the HR Committee and stakeholders.

**Phase III**
- Identification of potential funding partners and strong collaborative resources to jointly conduct a follow-up project to design a program based on successful programs identified by the environmental scan.
Vibrant Rural Communities – Phase I

“Environmental Scan”
Executive Summary

Indicators

1. Population and demographics characteristics
2. Trends in agriculture and related industries
3. Form and function of the network of rural communities (service infrastructure)
4. Socio-economic linkages
Current Trends

- Best practices of rural development
- Value chain concept
- Scan of successful program examples
1. Population

- Most is occurring near large centres
- Rural society is aging
- Urban component ("rurbanization")
- Immigration expanding
2. Farm trends

- Continued decline in numbers → accelerating average size of farms
- Reduction in coarse grain production → increase in oilseeds and specialty crops
- Livestock sector volatile
- Poultry – ↑ numbers ↓ operations
3. Service Infrastructure

- 1 example: Railway and elevator abandonment (90% elevators lost; 29% of grain handling capacity displaced to on-farm)
4. Rural Community Network
   • Functional categories
     » Main – major retail/wholesale centres (Winnipeg & Brandon)
     » Complete shopping centres – (Portage, Dauphin, Selkirk, Winkler)
     » Partial shopping centres ~ 20 communities
     » Convenience centres
     » Trend towards regionalization of public and private services
*Worth noting*

- Big Cities are the engines of growth – occurring in rural areas located within “commuting distance”
- Inter-relationship among rural communities – communications, labour force and value-added industries driving options
- Farm families have diversified labour as a means to make agriculture viable
- Relationship between agricultural operations and needs and rural quality of life
Successful Programs and Actions

• Shift from top-down needs-based models to locally driven assets based models (financial, political, human, cultural, social, natural, built capital)

• Evolution of “clusters” of similar or related/complimentary industries

• Immigration – challenge is to attract and RETAIN immigrants to rural areas
Options

- Value Chains
- Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)
- Cooperatives in Viable Communities
- Rural Manufacturing
Key Ideas

• Bring 2 things to the process – 1. understanding of structure and function of both the physical and human dimensions of the target community/region; 2. suitcase of ideas for community decision/ownership/buy-in

• Linking past, present and future to promote growth for that community/region

• Regional approach allows greater flexibility of options and synergy
Final Thoughts/Committee Tasks

- Choice of model community/region
- Trends and attributes of the selected area
- Development of options
- Community/region buy-in/ownership
- Champion(s)/mentorship
- Identify indicators of progress
- Impact measurement (leadership development, capacity development, ability to engage community, exit plan and hand off to the community)
Committee recommendations:

• Phase I is completed

• There is justification for Phase II – needs – credibility and access to support/resources; ability to inspire “champions” i.e. Funders and Leaders

• Phase III is the “Community Handoff”
Question: What is a “Vibrant Rural Community”?

Answer: A Sense of Self – it is a continuum!
Questions/Comments?