

# rural development

# NEWS

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## **Information Technology Critical as Rural and Remote Areas Transition to the New Economy**

by *Cornelia Butler Flora*

The New Economy is fueled by information technology. Rural and remote areas often face challenges that slow their transition to the New Economy; business and government may be slow to make appropriate investments in technology and innovation, and the importance of community culture on the development of education and skills may be poorly understood. The ADEC AISEP research project addresses how infrastructure can be developed, deployed and used to increase the pace of transition to the New Economy for these areas.

The North Central Regional Center for Rural Development is cooperating with the American Distance Education Consortium to conduct research at sites participating in the Advanced Internet Satellite Extension Project. The AISEP is a \$4 million research and development project funded by the National Science Foundation and administered by ADEC. From 2001 to 2005, it brought high-speed Internet access and support free of charge to approximately 60 public learning centers across the country associated with Cooperative Extension.

The purpose of the research is to study the effects of bringing high-speed Internet access to geographically disadvantaged communities in remote and rural areas, and socioeconomically excluded communities with poor or ethnic minority populations. The NCRCRD focused on the institutional factors that aided the transition. We identified persistent challenges to and enablers of organizational effectiveness—including team dynamics, organizational structures, organizational cultures, cross-functional coordination, and organizational governance. We also identified factors that enable or impede innovation creation and diffusion, organizational learning and improvement, and knowledge transfer within and among organizations critical to the new economy. These include research and education, both formal and informal.

We found that neither Internet access nor good content alone were enough for project success, measured as technology satisfaction, inclusive impacts, and sustainability in terms of mobilizing local funds to keep the project going. In particular, community context and relation to the lead institution (almost always a university) were critical.

The term New Economy refers to a set of qualitative and quantitative changes that, in the last 15 years, have transformed the structure, functioning and rules of the economy. The New Economy is a knowledge and idea-based economy where the keys to job creation and high standards of living are innovative ideas and technology embedded in services and manufactured products. It is an economy where risk, uncertainty and constant change are the rule rather than the exception.

Transition to the New Economy includes industrial and occupational change, globalization, the changing nature of competition and economic dynamism, and progress of the information technology revolution (Atkinson and Randolph, 1998). The transition effects income distribution (more unequal) and income security (more precarious) through changes in employment dynamics.

Atkinson, Robert D. and Randolph Court. 1998. *The New Economy Index: Understanding America's Economic Transformation*. Washington, D.C.: Progressive Policy Institute (<http://www.neweconomyindex.org>).

published by the



Volume 28 Number 2, 2006  
<http://www.ncrcrd.iastate.edu>

*Rural Development News* is published four times a year by the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development. The NCRCRD is one of four regional centers coordinating rural development research and education throughout the United States. It is supported by the land-grant universities of the North Central region, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and grants and contracts from private foundations. The mission of the NCRCRD is to initiate and facilitate rural development research and education programs to improve the social and economic well-being of rural people in the region.

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ISSN 0886-8611

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## Lessons on Community Context

- Know and Respect Key Aspects of Community Values—Facilitators at the learning centers were not always aware of the norms and customs of culturally diverse Hispanic, Native American or African American communities. We found that it was the responsibility of the land-grant partners and the technical partners to increase their knowledge of community values and question their own assumptions. Program success also depended on respecting local people's time and their ways of knowing and participating.
- Involve Youth as Actors—Widespread local involvement included youth in the planning and implementation aspects of the project, not just its use.

## Lessons on Institutional Relations

- Technology and Content Are Not Enough—There is a need to build organizational capacity as well. At some sites, the hardware and software were greeted with joy as it was faster than dial up for e-mail. But people did not change what they did; they only did it with less inconvenience. Building organizational capacity ensured that staff was equipped to use the technology and that the content could be effectively delivered.
- Clearly Identify How this Supports the Mission—We found that when the partners clearly identified how the project supported the mission and would help participants do their job better, there was greater sustainability.
- Provide Additional Support to Excluded Communities—Exclusion is generally a result of historic disinvestment. Thus more support is needed to get the basic structures up and running. The increased investment showed high payoff.
- Increase Local Capacity in Excluded Communities—There is a shortage of trained technicians in many rural areas. By using the technology to do the training, and by providing the kind of support that helps local people fix the problem and explain why that fix works, local expertise can be improved.
- Show Respect for Front Line Workers and Learners—There is a tendency for technical and service providers to view themselves as the experts and others as those who need to change. By respecting local abilities, it was easier to get a higher level of local participation.
- Follow Through on Content and Support—When Internet access was not available on the designated date or did not function as anticipated, the most excluded sites were the most devastated, angry and disempowered. Rebuilding trust in the face of many opportunities for problems was difficult for land-grant universities.

## Conclusions

As rural and remote areas strive to transition to the New Economy, it is important to note that they often face unique challenges to the development, deployment and use of information technology. Our research shows that neither technology nor content alone are enough for project success. Community context, organizational capacity and the relationship with the lead institution are critical. Additional information on this study is available at <http://www.ncrcrd.iastate.edu/projects/adc/index.htm>. ○

## Notes from the Field

# Annual Conference Focuses on Latino Immigration to Missouri

(with excerpts from an article written by)

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"Cambio de Colores (Change of Colors) in Missouri" is an annual conference that focuses on issues related to the current Latino immigration to the state in particular, and the Midwest in general. In 2005, the program stressed efforts that impact policy-making and shape the practices being implemented in communities. To what extent is research affecting policy? What kinds of programs and practices are resulting? What are the policy implications of current and ongoing research efforts?

Researchers, extension specialists, lobbyists, policy makers, educators, law professionals, law enforcement agents, service providers, funding agency representatives and community members gathered together around the theme "Connecting Research to Policy and Practice: *Hoy y Mañana*." Presenters examined this theme by focusing on five key areas: change and well-being; civil rights; education; health; and youth, families and communities.

All participants acknowledged that the current scope of their practices and policies were ill-equipped to serve the increasing Latino populations. But it was also recognized that many such groups and organizations have made great progress. The inadequacy of current immigration policies was a key issue brought to the fore throughout many discussions. It was noted that while some things can be done at the state and local levels to enhance the quality of life of the communities where Latinos live, only the federal government can carry out the comprehensive policy changes that are needed. Thus, presenters punctuated the need for community groups, researchers, and those who work closely with communities in various capacities, to be proactively and continuously involved in discussion about immigration policy before legislative measures are introduced.

In Missouri, as in other states in the Midwest, the Latino population has increased rapidly in recent years. While many Latinos are moving into urban areas in these states, many others are entering rural areas that had not been typical destinations of Latino immigrants in previous decades. Cambio de Colores provided an opportunity to assess the possibilities and challenges that communities and institutions face as they adapt to these demographic changes and to the social and political dynamics such changes entail. While the focus of the conference was on the conditions, needs and contributions of Latinos, a broader goal stated by conference participants was that of elucidating effective ways to enhance community well-being in Missouri and the Midwest.

As Missouri reforms its past practices and crafts and implements solutions like those described above, they not only take a progressive step in improving the lives of Latinos in their state, but serve as an example of self-assessment and change that other states in the Midwest might consider as they address the challenges associated with a rapidly increasing Latino population. ○



**Research & Outreach on  
Latinos and Changing  
Communities in Missouri**

All conference presentations can be accessed online at the conference Web site: <http://www.cambiodecolores.org>. Cambio de Colores 2006 is scheduled for April 19-21.

Notes from the Field is a vehicle for sharing ideas, tools and approaches that community development practitioners can apply to their own work. If you have ideas, tips or approaches you have found useful in your own community development work, along with a URL to additional resources if appropriate, please contact Mary Emery at [memery@iastate.edu](mailto:memery@iastate.edu).

## Extension Professionals Access Community Development Training Program at their Work Location



Janet Ayres

Extension professionals from 11 states in the North Central region received training on understanding communities and their dynamics through a distance education program that was launched by the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development on October 4, 2005. This program represents component one of a larger effort titled **Foundations of Practice: Community Development Core Competencies for Extension Professionals.**

The Foundations of Practice effort started more than two years ago when the North Central Community Development program leaders recognized the increasing need for all Extension professionals to have basic knowledge and skills in the processes, tools and techniques of community development work. Janet Ayres, professor and extension specialist at Purdue University, was hired by the NCRCD as a Senior Fellow to inventory the community development assets in the region and to identify community development core competencies.

Shortly after Janet joined the staff at the Center, Rod Howe, Cornell University, was hired by the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service-USDA to work on a similar effort for the newly-formed National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals. Working in collaboration with other community development colleagues, the Foundations of Practice<sup>1</sup> concept was developed. The intent was to develop a framework to provide a common language and understanding of community development work, while recognizing that states and regions offer a wide breadth of educational programs in this area.

The Foundations of Practice is composed of three major components:

1. Understanding Communities and their Dynamics
2. Developing Successful Community Initiatives
3. Areas of Specialization and Emphasis

**Understanding Communities and their Dynamics**, component one of the Foundations of Practice: Community Development Core Competencies program, is a series of seven core competencies that focuses on the ability to understand community of place, the nature of public issues, the dynamics and interdependencies of the various segments of the community, and the basics of community development work. All Extension professionals who work in a community context may find these competencies useful, regardless of their program responsibilities.

In the North Central region, we are implementing component one through a distance education program. A series of seven 1.5 hour sessions were offered as a pilot program in the fall of 2005. Thirty-seven people participated from 11 states in the North Central region. Members of the team who have helped develop the series and are teaching the sessions are: Janet Ayres (NCRCD), Stephen Jeanetta (MO), Andy Lewis (WI), Bill Pinkovitz (WI), Mary Emery (NCRCD), Phil Alexander (MI), and Tim Borich (IA). The topics include:

- Basic Understanding of Community
- Community Demographics
- Community Economics

- Community Power Structure
- Natural Resources and Sustainability
- Community Situational Analysis
- Community Development Process

The series is being offered four times in 2006 through WisLine, a Web-based conference system, and a phone line. There is a registration fee to participate. A certificate of completion will be given to those who participate in at least six of the seven sessions. For more information or to register for one of the following sessions, go to <http://www.ncrcrd.iastate.edu/corecomp/index.html>.

- Tuesdays, March 14–April 25, 2006
- Wednesdays, March 15–April 26, 2006
- Tuesdays, September 19–October 31, 2006
- Wednesdays, September 20–November 8, 2006 (No session on 11/1)

**Developing Successful Community Initiatives**, component two of the Foundations of Practice: Community Development Core Competencies program, focuses on the ability to carry out community development processes to achieve measurable impacts. These process skills may be of value to all Extension professionals, especially those new to community development work. These skills include:

- Principles of Community Development Practice
- Broad-based Participation and Bringing People to the Table
- Participatory Planning
- Implementation and Project Management
- Facilitation of Group Meetings
- Community Collaborations
- Evaluation

In the North Central region, these will be taught in a regional workshop November 1-3, 2006. The purpose of the workshop is to build the competencies of Extension staff. It also enables Extension professionals within the region to network with each other and learn about their programs. Members of the planning team include: Janet Ayres (NCRCRD), Dan Kahl (KS), Ken Martin (OH), Dan Oedekoven (SD), Donna Rae Scheffert (MN), Phyllis Schoenholz (NE) and Kathy Tweeten (ND).

**Areas of Specialization and Emphasis**, component three of the Foundations of Practice: Community Development Core Competencies program, focuses on the specific content areas of community development. As Extension professionals become proficient in the first two components, many will likely expand their effectiveness as community development professionals by specializing in one or more areas. The general specialization categories include: economic development, local government, natural resources, group process and facilitation, organizational development, leadership and civic engagement, community services and workforce development.

For more information on the Foundations of Practice: Community Development Core Competencies program, contact Janet Ayres, North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, at (765) 494-4215, [ayres@purdue.edu](mailto:ayres@purdue.edu), or visit the program Web site at <http://www.ncrcrd.iastate.edu/projects/corecomp/index.html>.



<sup>1</sup> The Foundations of Practice paper was presented at the inaugural NACDEP conference in February 2004. The paper was authored by Janet Ayres, Alan Barefield, Bo Beaulieu, Dan Clark, Steve Daniels, Charlie French, Rod Howe, Mary Simon Leuci and Dick Senese. It is available at: <http://www.ncrcrd.iastate.edu/projects/corecomp/fop.pdf>.

# publications



## **The New American Farmer: Profiles of Agricultural Innovation**

Driven by economics, concerns about the environment or a yearning for a more satisfying lifestyle, the farmers and ranchers profiled in *The New American Farmer, 2nd edition* have embraced new approaches to agriculture. Their stories vary but they share many goals—these new American farmers strive to renew profits, enhance environmental stewardship and improve life for their families and communities.

The profiles in *The New American Farmer* hail from small vegetable farms and ranches and grain farms covering thousands of acres. They produce commodities like beef, corn and soybeans, or they raise more unusual crops like ginseng, 25 kinds of lettuce or Katahdin lamb. Others add value—and profits—by producing ice cream, goat cheese, cashmere wool and on-farm processed meat. Another set provides agriculture-oriented tourism through “guest” ranches, inns, on-farm zoos and education centers. There are more than 60 examples in the second edition, and these farmers and ranchers not only shared what they learned, but also volunteered their contact information. To learn how to adapt what they’ve done, readers are able to get in touch directly.

*The New American Farmer* is available from the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program’s Sustainable Agriculture Network at (301) 504-5236, <http://www.sare.org/publications/naf.htm>.

## **Reflections on Teaching and Learning**

For much of the 1990s, new staff members of the Cooperative Extension Service in Michigan received a monthly mailing consisting of an essay to assist them in better understanding their role as educators and to challenge them to consider new and different ways of thinking about that role. S. Joseph Levine, now professor emeritus at Michigan State University, wrote most of those essays based on the following set of guidelines:

- The essays had to be fairly short, direct and to the point.
- Each essay needed to encourage a concern for reflection—the value of reflection in education and how to use reflection to inform their practice.
- Since most Extension educators had a strong disciplinary background, the essays had to represent the human side, rather than the technical side, of what they were expected to do. The essays had to focus on helping people learn and change.
- Each essay had to have a sense of lightness, a touch of humor, in an attempt to be disarming and therefore encourage the educator to “listen” to what was being said.

Through the years, the essays developed a following. *Getting to the Core: Reflections on Teaching and Learning* is a collection of 46 of these reflective essays that examine the role of the teacher and the challenges faced when trying to help others learn. The topics are diverse, yet the focus continues as it always has—on encouraging the reader to take a few minutes to reflect on their role as an educator.

*Getting to the Core* is available from Learner Associates at <http://www.learnerassociates.net/>.

## **world wide web**

### **ERS—Frequently Asked Questions**

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/AboutERS/FAQs.htm>

USDA’s Economic Research Service has a Web page that provides quick answers to questions they receive from policymakers, agribusiness, other researchers and the media about food and diet, farming, conservation and rural communities. Links are then provided for more detailed information. Some frequently asked questions include:

- Which are the top 10 agricultural producing states?
- What are the leading farm commodities in the United States, in terms of cash receipts?
- Are family farms disappearing?
- How does U.S. beef consumption today compare with consumption in the 1970s?
- What percentage of Americans experience hunger?
- How important are exports and imports to the U.S. agricultural sector?
- How does U.S. agricultural policy address agricultural-environmental issues?
- Is population in nonmetropolitan areas increasing or decreasing?

## Engaging Campus and Community

A century ago, a new type of scholar was envisioned in American higher education. Rejecting the historical stance of ivory-tower detachment and isolation, the new scholar was to embrace a stance of close and direct engagement. In the conversation that has developed in recent years about American higher education's civic mission, engagement is viewed as a scholarly activity.

In a book recently published by Kettering Foundation Press, the scholarly practice of engagement in public work is called "public scholarship." The editors define public scholarship as a particular variety of action research and community-based research. It is creative intellectual work that is conducted in public, with and for particular groups of citizens. Scholars who practice public scholarship seek to advance the academy's teaching and research missions in ways that hold both academic and public value.

Titled *Engaging Campus and Community: The Practice of Public Scholarship in the State and Land-grant University System*, the book includes eight case studies of academic professionals and students in the land-grant system who have chosen to directly relate their academic work to the social and environmental challenges beyond the campus. The focus was on understanding the nature and significance of scholars' academic and civic purposes and practices rather than on determining and evaluating the actual results of their work. Drawing mainly from scholars' own subjective accounts of their motivations and experiences, the editors' goals were to understand why they choose to become engaged in public work, what roles they play and what contributions they seek to make. Because they are aware that it is not easy to undertake and sustain public engagement, especially for scholars working out of academic cultures that do not always support it, they also sought to identify the kinds of difficulties and challenges scholars who are engaged in public work encounter.

The editors of *Engaging Campus and Community* are Scott Peters, Nicholas Jordan, Margaret Adamek and Theodore Alter. To order, e-mail [ecruffolo@ecruffolo.com](mailto:ecruffolo@ecruffolo.com) or call (800) 600-4060.

## Inventing Civic Solutions

Finding solutions to tough community problems rarely follows a linear path. Rather, it is most often a blending of experimentation with knowledge garnered from research and practice. The resulting civic inventions are a unique product of trial-and-error.

*Solutions for America: Inventing Civic Solutions* is an attempt to capture both the process and the context of proven community solutions. Each highlighted program was part of a national research initiative, Solutions for America, which set out to document the outcomes of existing efforts to solve some of the nation's most pressing challenges. Program staff and their research partner (usually a faculty member from an area college or university) teamed up to document the results of these programs. For this volume, they were asked to examine their solution from the vantage point of invention and related lessons. The writers focus on the steps necessary to create and implement successful civic inventions—from understanding the challenge, to designing and launching the program, to keeping the program on track through measuring outcomes.

*Inventing Civic Solutions* is available from the Pew Partnership for Civic Change at (434) 971-2073, <http://www.pew-partnership.org>.

# conferences

## National Extension Tourism Conference

The 2006 National Extension Tourism conference is scheduled for September 10-13, 2006, in Burlington, Vermont. This year's theme is "NETworking in Tourism: People, Places and Partnerships." The call for presentation proposals has been released. The conference committee is looking for presentations on topics related to tourism and recreation extension and education activities. The deadline for proposals is March 15, 2006. More information is available at <http://www.esf.edu/NET2006/>.

## Midwest Sociological Society

The 2006 Annual Meeting of the Midwest Sociological Society is scheduled for March 30-April 2, 2006, in Omaha, Nebraska. This year's theme is "The Art of Sociology," and will speak to sociology's fusion of art and science. More information is available at <http://www.themss.org/meetings.html>.

## Cambio De Colores

The 2006 Cambio De Colores conference is scheduled for April 19-21, 2006, in Columbia, Missouri. This year's theme is "Latinos in Missouri: Beyond Borders," and will explore how the flows of people, goods and information are changing our notions of what constitutes a border. To what extent are Missouri's experiences similar and different from other states in the region? More information is available at <http://www.cambiodecolores.org/>.

Visit the NCRCD Web site at <http://www.ncrcrd.iastate.edu> for more conference announcements.



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### Return Services Requested

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## Strategic Planning at the NCRCRD: Delivering on a New Destiny

Following a broad and extensive planning process, the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development has developed the following goals for the next five years:

- Increase Capacity of Communities
- Reach Under-served and New Populations
- Convene Research Groups
- Encourage Use of Evaluation Tools
- Create an Effective Organization

The goals for the planning process were threefold: to engage a wide variety of Center stakeholders in the process, to identify key issues across the region, and to design strategies for increasing the Center's responsiveness to regional players and their concerns. In order to make the process as comprehensive and useful as possible, Marie Hvidsten, an Extension specialist from North Dakota State University, conducted surveys with Extension directors, Experiment Station directors, community resource development program leaders and NCRCRD Board members.

The planning process was framed using an Appreciative Inquiry approach, which involves looking at four stages in the planning effort—discovery, dream, design and deliver. The Center is now engaged in the delivery stage and executing the first 15-month implementation plan emerging from this process. The goals include strategic foci for the Center in relation to topics of importance to the region and to Extension, as well as strategies for increasing the effectiveness of the Center's core functions.

More information on the strategic plan and accomplishments to date can be found in the 2005 Annual Report of the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development at <http://www.ncrcrd.iastate.edu/pubs/contents/2005annualreport.htm>. ○

## Coaching Roundtable

A group of experienced coaches joined representatives from nonprofit groups and foundations to pool what they know about coaching for community and organizational change at a roundtable held in Boise, Idaho, in October 2005. While a number of foundations have invested heavily in coaching, there is little written about the strategy. The roundtable involved people with first-hand knowledge of cross-community initiatives and focused on what coaching for community looks like, what skills are involved, what circumstances best lend themselves to this strategy, and the impact of coaching on community change processes. It is anticipated that the report will be of use to many foundations and Extension educators in designing and implementing outreach efforts.

The Roundtable was organized by Mary Emery (NCRCRD), Priscilla Salant (University of Idaho) and Ken Hubbell (consultant), and was funded in part by the Northwest Area Foundation and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. For more information contact Mary Emery at [memery@iastate.edu](mailto:memery@iastate.edu). ○