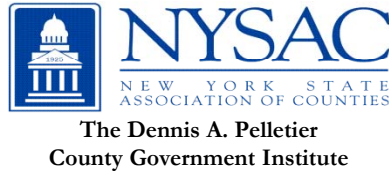


Brain Drain/Brain Gain in Rural Central and Western New York

A one-day conference of
The Learning Network of Rural Central and Western New York



Cornell Cooperative Extension



Chautauqua Suites & Conference Center, Mayville, New York May 6th, 2008

Conference Purpose:

To examine brain drain/brain gain issues from a community and economic development perspective. To learn from each other about research, educational programs, and government/private sector initiatives designed to address problems and take advantage of opportunities resulting in a net brain gain in rural central and western New York.

About the Rural Learning Network (RLN):

RLN is a free membership learning network composed of public officials, non-profit agency personnel, business leaders/other decision makers and citizens for the purpose of enhancing community and economic development in the central and western NY region. The main goals of RLN are:

- Enhance the quality of public and private decision making with evidence-based information and technical assistance.
- Enhance community development, economic opportunity and the quality of life of citizens of rural central and western New York.
- Enhance inter-local cooperation among rural communities in the region.

Keynote Speaker: Craig Schroeder, Senior Associate, RUPRI Center for Rural Entrepreneurship, Creating a Regional Climate for Rural Entrepreneurship

Why Entrepreneurs Are Important:

- Entrepreneurial Growth Companies are responsible for 2/3 of job creation and business growth, as well as 50% of business expansion.
- Entrepreneurs are present everywhere, and can make a huge difference in rural economies.
- Entrepreneurial businesses offer a better scale of activities for rural communities, and help to match skills and resources with unique market opportunities.
- Entrepreneurs often focus their businesses on community assets.

Challenges facing Rural Entrepreneurs:

- Location, access to technology and funding, poor connections to markets and limited opportunities to network.

Understanding and Targeting Entrepreneurial Talent:

- Different types of entrepreneurial talent include: young potential entrepreneurs, existing lifestyle entrepreneurs and growth entrepreneurs or entrepreneurs with a series of successful ventures.
- All entrepreneurs need: A supportive environment, freedom and encouragement to innovate, technical assistance that meets their needs, entrepreneurial networks and various forms of capital.
- Communities need to find the “sweet spot” where entrepreneurial talent, development goals and development capacity all coincide.

Entrepreneurship Development Systems:

- Create a pipeline of entrepreneurs.
- Implement a system of support for all entrepreneurs.
- Foster a supportive policy and cultural environment of entrepreneurship within the public, private and non-profit sectors.

Getting Started:

- Online resources and tools available: www.energizingentrepreneurs.org

Policy Forum – Where Do We Go From Here? Next Steps

Educational Opportunities to Train Professional and Skilled Workers

Challenges or Barriers:

- Primary and secondary schools need to understand their role in economic development.
- Businesses need to work more closely with educational institutions.
- Lack of appreciation for each other's skills and abilities.

Opportunities, Successes, or Innovations:

- Regional initiatives - better coordination and information sharing.
- Opportunity to replicate across industries.
- A growing understanding of the need to invest in people.

Improving the Business / Entrepreneurship Climate

Challenges or Barriers:

- Old thinking – narrow focus working with traditional organizations.
- Culture of economic growth, not economic development.
- Lack of business mentors.
- Government is often too slow to help.

Opportunities, Successes, or Innovations:

- Emerging niches are available for capturing – e.g. microbeers.
- Import substitution – intreprenurship.
- Resources targeting minority and women-owned enterprises.
- Services and assistance through Cornell Cooperative Extension.
- Developing entrepreneurship capacity of current workforce.

Enhancing Civic Engagement/Participation in Government/Politics

Challenges or Barriers:

- Breaking through the “folklore” that nothing good is happening.
- Complexity of life: single parent homes; the necessity of two income families etc.
- Apathy due to 1) government scandals and 2) the belief that people have no impact.

Opportunities, Successes, or Innovations:

- Involvement on the local level is a key to success.
- Involvement in government; voting; being informed.
- Changes in communications due to technology allow us to reach more people.

Green Economy / Green Collar Jobs

Challenges or Barriers:

- Educating the general public and policy makers on these issues.
- Making the revolutionary transition from a fossil fuels economy to a green economy.

Opportunities, Successes, or Innovations:

- Global trends are converging to create the necessity for a greener economy.
- Green business opportunities, investment and jobs are growing dramatically and future prospects are excellent.

Revitalizing Upstate Communities and the Quality of Life

Challenges or Barriers:

- High taxes impact the quality of life.
- Disconnect between government and business.
- Policy decisions may have unintended consequences.

Opportunities, Successes, or Innovations:

- Identification and tracking of quality of life indicators.
- Enhanced partnering between government and business.
- More focus on regional branding and marketing.
- Recognizing that quality of life issues such as childcare are vital.

Viewing Older People as Community Assets

Challenges or Barriers:

- Workforce Investment Act currently undervalues older adults.
- Ageism in employment and community settings.
- Engaging older adults in the right settings to provide enriching opportunities.

Opportunities, Successes, or Innovations:

- Intergenerational community building provides stronger vital relationships and communities.
- Healthy aging is a fact for many older adults, thus giving them the capacity to contribute positively to community and society.
- Many opportunities for older adults to use their wisdom and experience in employment, civic engagement and volunteerism.

For more information about the rural learning network go to the Web site www.cardi.cornell.edu and under “Training” click on “Rural Learning Network.”