

INDIANA RURAL FORUMS

MODULE #1 ***BUILDING A NEW RURAL FOUNDATION*** ***(January 25, 2007)***

***Indiana Rural Forums modules are based upon the work of the Rural
Indiana Strategy for Excellence (RISE) 2020 Strategic Framework***

Overview of RISE 2020 and the Strategic Options Report

In July of 2005, Lieutenant Governor Becky Skillman initiated an effort to assist the Daniels-Skillman Administration in creating a vision and strategic framework for rural Indiana's future. Although this framework would help guide the Indiana Office of Rural Affairs, it would be much more than that. It would link governmental efforts with other public, private, academic, and philanthropic initiatives to enhance the quality of life and economic vitality of Indiana's rural countryside.

In the ensuing six months, over 150 Hoosiers, representing the broad diversity of institutions, organizations, governments and constituencies of our state, have worked diligently to create a contemporary, dynamic vision for the future of rural Indiana. They also began to build the platform and mobilize the constituencies necessary to begin the common journey towards this future.

This was a very dynamic and transparent process. Commitment from all sectors was phenomenal, involving many meetings, conference calls, and email exchanges. Final decisions were, surprisingly, almost totally consensus-based. This effort included establishing eight work groups, which met independently and then integrated their sector approaches into a broader, more meaningful mosaic. The sector groups included community capacity, cultural assets, economic development, education and workforce, health and human services, finance, natural resource assets, and transportation.

The strategic roadmap that resulted from this dynamic grassroots initiative contains three key components - a foundation, seven pillars, and their associated strategic options. The **Strategic Options Report**, used by the Indiana Rural Forums as the framework for regional discussions, is the result of the recommendations made by the work groups, and the input received from rural residents and service providers at public input meetings.

Indiana Rural Forums - Module Packets

The module packets presented and utilized during the Indiana Rural Forums are based upon the seven pillars of the RISE 2020 initiative. These pillars include:

- Asset Based Community Development
- Civic Leadership and Engagement
- Wealth Creation and Retention
- Regional Frameworks
- Rural Innovation
- Foster Youth Engagement
- Diversity, Access and Inclusiveness

Regional discussions will revolve around the strategies and approaches recommended for each pillar in the **Strategic Options Report**.

RISE 2020 Strategic Options and Regional Discussion Questions

On behalf of the Purdue Center for Regional Development, USDA-Rural Development and the Purdue Extension Service we would like to welcome you to the Indiana Rural Forums and especially this regional discussion. Your conversation today is facilitated by representatives from Purdue Extension and USDA-Rural Development. This regional dialogue will be approximately thirty minutes in length and, at the conclusion of the discussion; all thirteen regional locations will join back up with the main studio where each location will give a brief report of their discussion. To begin this regional discussion please:

- **Introduce yourself and indicate what organization you work for, and your role.**

- **Please review and reflect on the following questions:**
 - a. From your experience what are the three most important problems facing Indiana's rural communities? If possible give specific examples.
 - b. Lack of a competitive infrastructure is often a defining characteristic of rural areas. What are the infrastructures where a modest investment could generate a quick return on competitiveness?
 - c. How can our organizations work intra-and inter-regionally to address the challenges raised in questions #1 and #2?
 - d. What communication channels can best be used to improve communication between citizens, community leaders, and service providers to address rural needs?
 - e. Indiana wants to develop an innovative economy in order to remain competitive. What can we do to foster an "innovation culture" in rural Indiana? Consider how an "innovative culture" could be encouraged in the following sectors: youth, schools, banking, community leadership.
 - f. Are there new approaches to encourage greater public input into local, state or federal decisions that affect local communities? How might you encourage greater public input in your organization?
 - g. What are two or three ways in which we can insure that a rural voice can be developed and maintained?

- **Review the Strategic Options Report section included in this module. Is there at least one action or initiative that your discussion group would like to address on a regional basis? If so, how can the Purdue Center for Regional Development, USDA-Rural Development and the Purdue Extension Service assist your group with those follow-up actions?**

STRATEGIC OPTIONS REPORT

The RISE 2020 Foundation

Those involved in the RISE 2020 initiative believe the top overall priority is to nurture the development and empowerment of a sustainable constituency that focuses on rural issues and opportunities. Historically in Indiana, in other states and nationally, there has not been a strong and well-organized constituency to focus on the broad scope of rural issues, challenges and opportunities. Contrast this situation, for example, to that of the agricultural industry in which multiple agencies, organizations, and institutions exist to help address the challenges and opportunities of that particular constituency, such as the plethora of farm organizations, state and federal departments of agriculture, and a national network of colleges of agriculture. Achieving the RISE 2020 vision requires a broad and sustainable rural constituency.

Building a New Rural Foundation – Create the constituency, voice and platform necessary to execute the Rural Indiana Strategy for Excellence.

- ❑ Leverage RISE 2020 to help local leaders create or strengthen a strong sense of community or spirit of place necessary for community development

- ❑ Convene community forums that encourage conversations about emerging issues so that they can be discussed before conflicts splinter residents, businesses and local organizations

The Foundation of RISE 2020 is the creation of a rural constituency...a voice to develop, guide, and execute the framework based on people, plans and platforms.

Tom Kelley of marketing and design firm IDEO, says, “Innovation is not self-starting or self-perpetuating. People make it happen through their imagination, willpower, and perseverance. And whether you are a team member, a group leader, or an executive, your only real path to innovation is through people. You can’t really do it alone.”

Building a rural constituency will not be easy, but it is necessary. A Rural Strategy that focuses on “we and they” will not work. This rural Indiana future must be built upon a platform of “us” working together, speaking up and seeking the best from our people. Conversations about community at the local level will not eliminate conflict, but enable a community to address difficult choices in a manner that respects differences and identifies solutions. RISE 2020 is clearly about people, their communities and innovative strategies for rural Indiana.

- Ensure that RISE 2020’s vision emanates from, is embraced by, and is stewarded through implementation by a broad Hoosier constituency, representing rural, urban and suburban citizens, communities, and interests.
 - ✧ *Communicate the RISE 2020 purpose, expected outcomes, and action steps.*
 - ◆ *Citizens, both rural and urban*
 - ◆ *Local, state, and federal elected officials*

- ◆ *Appointed and career government professionals*
- ◆ *Non-governmental organizations*
- ◆ *Academic institutions*
- ◆ *Private industry*

- ⌘ *Engage individuals, communities, and constituencies to establish a broad based partnership.*

- ⌘ *Ensure local leaders participate in regional listening sessions and provide input to the RISE 2020 Report.*

- ⌘ *Utilize peer challenging and strong advocates.*

- ⌘ *Engage youth and young adults to fully participate in RISE 2020 to help create communities, in which they want to live, learn, work, and play.*

- *Identify specific policies, programs, and practice opportunities that offer strategic advantages in achieving the principles, values and goals of the RISE 2020 foundation and pillars.*
 - ⌘ *Convene rural constituencies and service providers to stimulate conversations, expand the capacity to lead and strengthen Indiana's rural culture.*
 - ◆ *Assemble expanded RISE 2020 Work Groups at least twice annually to ensure conversations across sectors*
 - ◆ *Convene groups on existing and emerging rural issues*
 - ◆ *Provide safe places and effective facilitation for communities and sectors to hold conversations*
 - ◆ *Pursue intergovernmental solutions by working intra- and inter-regionally*
 - ◆ *Lead the effort with the 2006 Rural Summit and Rural Forums hosted by the Purdue Center for Regional Development*
 - ◆ *Continue hosting a Rural Summit to convene rural constituencies and service providers to cross-walk rural needs, track progress of the strategy and identify additional strategies to implement RISE 2020*
 - ◆ *Explore the desirability of creating a rural caucus in the General Assembly as in other states and the U.S. Congress*
 - ◆ *Make a special effort to connect RISE 2020 with Faith-Based Organizations, minority groups and others who were overlooked or unable to participate in the initiative's development*
 - ◆ *Community Assessment Project (duplicate the RISE 2020 process on a local level)*

 - ⌘ *Identify local champions, such as local economic development organizations, chambers of commerce, community foundations, that can use RISE 2020 as a road map to strengthen local community development.*

 - ⌘ *Enlist support for RISE 2020's "social contract" at key community events, such as fairs, festivals, etc.*

- ◆ *Serve as a strong day-to-day intermediary for RISE 2020 and provide its institutional home*
- ◆ *Coordinate the management for implementation with the organizations in the initial RISE 2020 leadership consortium*

The RISE 2020 Seven Pillars and Strategic Options

Upon this foundation, seven strategic pillars must be erected and embraced. These pillars form a holistic framework for how rural Indiana must approach its future; and represent the unifying thread for moving from vision to action whether the area of focus is economic development, health and human services, transportation or any other sector concern. The identification and articulation of these pillars are based on research and best practices in community and rural development in the U. S. and elsewhere, and through the deliberations of those involved in the RISE 2020 initiative.

Selected strategies from the eight work groups have been synthesized and placed underneath the most appropriate pillar. Not all of the strategic options make specific mention of rural, but the rural connection is always implied. Because RISE 2020 is designed to guide decisions, policy and resource allocations for the next 15 years, specific strategies, tactics and action steps will need to be continuously assessed and modified; and additional specifics such as timelines and points of responsibility will need to be developed. This is the one of the most important roles of the organized constituency that is being created and nurtured, led initially by the RISE 2020 Coordinating Committee. The strategic options and tactics were vetted among rural residents as part of the Rural Community Input Sessions held during March and April 2006). Specifics actions, timelines and tactics will often vary from locale to locale and will certainly change over time. The seven pillars, however, will not change, but will stand the test of time to 2020...and beyond.

- I. Establish appropriate regional frameworks to optimize rural competitive advantage in a rapidly changing global economy, building connectivity across public, private, nonprofit and academic sectors and institutions.**
- II. Achieve a rural leadership renaissance, to broaden and deepen civic leadership and engagement and reinvigorate civic processes.**
- III. Invest in rural Indiana's unique, place-based assets, to fully optimize and enhance our diverse natural resources, the heritage, history, arts and cultures of our people and places, the integrity of our rural communities, and the human and social capital of all Indiana citizens.**
- IV. Build a "Rural Innovation Culture" to enhance public and private entrepreneurship and build collaborative systems that sustain public, private and philanthropic commitments to achieving this goal.**
- V. Engage the youth and young adults of rural Indiana in achieving the RISE 2020 vision, so they build a rural countryside in which they wish to stay, and other young people wish to come.**

- VI. Ensure that rural Indiana's substantial wealth is retained, enhanced, and harnessed, to generate new wealth and capture emerging economic opportunities for all citizens.**
- VII. Ensure all rural residents are engaged in achieving this vision and advantaged in its outcomes, by embracing approaches that specifically address the challenges faced by the poor, minorities, and those undervalued or with special needs and which ensure all citizens have reasonable access to basic human and social services and are authentically included in community decision-making.**