

MEDC Rural Discussion

October 23, 2014

- Leadership is foundational
 - Identification of, and development of leadership
 - But, not a formal “program”
 - Get many people to stand up
 - Community structures allow everyone to be a leader including youth
 - Need to stop labeling people—all should have opportunity to be a “leader”
 - People from all backgrounds given a chance to lead
 - Take personal responsibility within the community being a charismatic leader, but can’t be just one person

- Value added is key opportunity for rural
 - How they link with value chains
 - Identify what skills, naturally are present (e.g. oak wood)

- Target individuals who want “rural lifestyle”
 - e.g. incubator clients

- Value chains need coordinator—job of local ED Prof?

- Regionalism starting to catch on, but how to foster?

- Value chain—understand what we have and recruit” into the value chain

- Succession planning for businesses
 - intergenerational transfer
 - \$\$\$ to support
 - Work with business owner for financing, training
 - How to connect opportunity—brokerage (?)

- Green Hills working with transfer of businesses, but would like to see state funding source; banks see as risky

- Foster greater alignment between communities
 - Can’t rely on “government” to do
 - What models are out there?

- Work within designated “economic regions” to identify opportunities to collaborate, share resources, coordinate /cooperate on key initiatives
 - Networking to soften divisions
 - Break down silos and ownership

- OTRP example of region focusing on local assets
 - Value-added; natural; historic; tourism
 - Cooperative marketing
 - Received external support to get started, now having success on won
 - Need to reach out to external markets
- It's too easy to get drawn into the "what's wrong" conversations—must change narrative
- Don't have luxury to put people in single role
 - i.e. school superintendent part of ED
- Broadband success stories
 - "Smart Rural Community" designation
 - Found a space below the major providers or worked with existing providers
 - Community leaders worked with providers to establish service
 - Some state's PSC invested \$ to ensure coverage
- Joplin region—conclave of elected and community officials; seven counties (MO & KS); talk about issues, share successes
 - Hope to see sharing of resources
 - Getting to know each other; building trust
- Seeing a striking decline in participation by entrepreneurs and millennials in planning; have reached out and gotten them engaged—generating innovative ideas
 - St. Louis Chamber doing it and willing to share how they did it