

Retention Strategies for Smaller Communities

Promising Ideas from the
'Newcomer Engagement:
Building Social Capital in Rural Communities' Project

A project sponsored by Rural Ontario Institute



Overview

- Project introduction
 - ROI, project context and our community research team
 - ‘Newcomer’ and social capital
 - Our community partners
 - Where we are and where we’re going
- Preliminary Research and Potential Early Findings
- Community Engagement: A promising approach for smaller communities
- References



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Measuring Rural Community Vitality

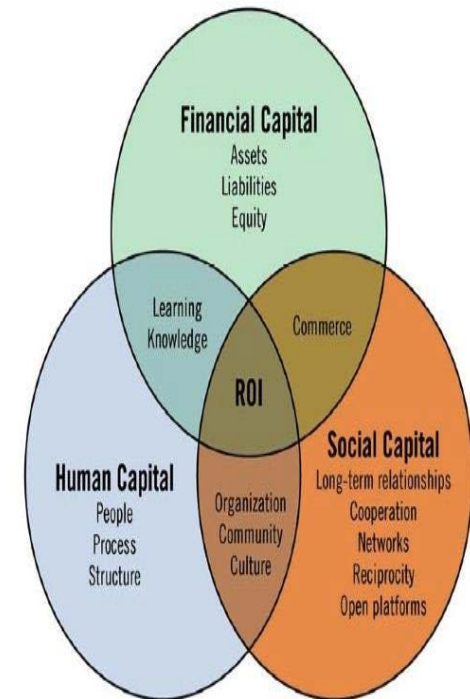


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'Newcomer' and social capital

- 'Newcomer' = any one new to community in last five years
 - Not exclusive or specific to immigrants
 - So far, much discussion on immigrant newcomer experience in rural communities; expect trend to continue
- Exploring newcomer engagement as a means of building social capital in rural communities
- Social capital
 - Networks/webs of relationships in communities; support cooperation, collaboration and reciprocity; add distinct value to communities



Social Capital is one of the three major business catalysts

Our Community Partners

We are grateful to the three rural counties and communities who have agreed to partner with ROI and participate in this project:

- Dufferin County (Orangeville)
- Huron County (Bayfield)
- Northumberland County (Cobourg)



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Choose Excellence

Where we are and where we're going

Prepare

Research

Report

Launch

- Case study approaching using document review, key informant interviews, group discussions, observation
- **Initial contact and preliminary interviews conducted**
- Customized approach for each community – what will work best to capture their community's unique context and experience
- **Early findings largely from literature review and preliminary environmental scan**
- Intensive fieldwork in the communities in next two months
- **Wrap up January 2017**
- Outputs – Toolkit of resources, incl. comprehensive summary report, individual case study of each community, and video case studies for each community

Preliminary Research and Potential Early Findings

- Literature review, preliminary environmental scan, initial key informant interviews
- A key to retaining immigrants in rural communities is to address systemic barriers, including:
 - Transportation
 - Affordable and appropriate housing
 - Language
 - Supply of suitable employment
 - Cultural amenities
 - Settlement and long term supports and services
 - Local schools
 - Wider host community

Preliminary Research and Potential Early Findings

Ideas for removing/reducing systemic barriers:

- **Transportation**
 - E.g., developing public transit options, volunteer driver networks
- **Affordable and appropriate housing**
 - E.g., employer provided housing, employer partnering with agencies to help locate housing, municipalities collaborating with developers (and employers) to support housing needs
- **Language**
 - E.g., translation services, partnering to offer ESL classes

Preliminary Research and Potential Early Findings cont'd.

- Supply of suitable employment – most important factor in immigrant retention in rural communities
 - E.g., recruiting immigrants as entrepreneurs, supporting employer searches for labour and talent, long term economic diversification
- Cultural amenities – another key component for retention
 - E.g., inviting and empowering local community leaders, especially cultural and religious leaders, facilitating relationship building between immigrants, cultural communities and host community

Preliminary Research and Potential Early Findings cont'd.

- Settlement and long-term supports and services
 - E.g., Volunteer networks, tapping into existing ethno-cultural communities, regular consultation with local agencies and individuals providing support, role of municipalities, community and employers
- Local schools
 - E.g., encouraging teacher support, parental orientation, regular communication between municipality and schools
- Wider host community
 - E.g., intentional community outreach, involvement in community activities, messaging about value of immigrants, multicultural festivals

Preliminary Research and Potential Early Findings cont'd.

- Emerging themes include:
 - Importance of intentional outreach
 - Building relationships and partnerships
 - Community participation and community leadership
 - Building bridges between host community and immigrants
 - Encouraging flexible programming and supports
 - Community planning
 - Understanding diversity and complexity of needs

Community Engagement: A Promising Approach for Smaller Communities

- Suggest community engagement may be a promising approach for retaining immigrants
- Community engagement: “the process of working collaboratively with groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interests, or similar situations with respect to issues affecting their wellbeing” (CDC/ATSDR Committee on Community Engagement, 1997)
 - Supports collaborative partnerships and relationship-building between community members, organizations and government; shared planning and inclusive decision-making; and authentic participation and empowerment of community members

Community Engagement: A Promising Approach cont'd.

- Some principles of effective community engagement:
 - Be clear about the purpose and goals of engagement and who to engage
 - Know your community and its perception of engagement
 - Reach out – build relationships, trust, value partnerships and their contributions, create ways to mobilize the community
 - Be 'of the community' – shared leadership & empowerment belong to all
 - Be a partner – create opportunities for mutual cooperation and responsibility
 - Recognize and respect the diversity of your community
 - Mobilize and build on community assets and strengths
 - Be flexible
 - Agree on indicators, outcomes and measures of success ... at the start!
 - Expect to engage, re-engage, and re-engage again
 - Be planful – establish a time horizon, budget, resource allocation, champions, etc. for ongoing engagement
 - Know this is a journey, an ongoing, intentional process

References

In addition to key informant interviews and background documents provided by participating communities, we wish to highlight the following sources in our research:

- Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. (2011). *Community Immigrant Retention in Rural Ontario Toolkit*.
- Russell et al. (2008). *The Active Community Engagement Continuum*. The ACQUIRE Project.
- Tamarack Institute. (2011.) *Principles of Community Engagement*. 2nd ed.
- Tamarack Institute. (2015). *Community Engagement: The Next Generation* workbook.
- Wiginton, L.K. (2013). *Canada' Decentralized Immigration Policy Through a Local Lens: How small communities are attracting and welcoming immigrants*. Rural Development Institute, Brandon University.



Thank you!

