Building Entrepreneurial Communities: Blue Ridge Crossroads

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Virginia Cooperative Extension
- Front door to the land-grant system
- Research-based education
- 107 county offices
- 6 4-H Education Centers
- 4 ARECs
- Four Program Areas: ANR, FCS, 4-H, CV

Inventing the Future
http://www.ext.vt.edu

Community Viability
- A catalyst for community innovation
- Partners with communities to promote and sustain vibrant economies, thriving environments, and civic and social well-being.
- Six CV specialists located around the state.

Blue Ridge Crossroads Region

Regional Challenges
- Job losses (almost 2,000 in manufacturing sector)
- Transitioning economic base
- Adverse demographic trends
- Featured in The Economist magazine (01/18/07) in an article on “globalisation’s losers”
“The future of every community lies in capturing the energy, imagination, and passion of its people….”

--Ernesto Sirolli, The Sirolli Institute

Regional Opportunities
- New leadership
- Collaborative successes
- Attention from state decision-makers and resource providers
- Positioned to build on assets (culture, history, nature)
- The Crossroads Institute

The Crossroads Institute
- Southwest Regional Enterprise Center
- Wytheville Community College
- Learning Opportunities
- Rural Innovation and Entrepreneurship

“Collaboration occurs when people from different organizations (or units) produce something together through joint effort, resources, and decision-making, and share ownership of the final product or service.”

Russ Linden
Working Across Boundaries: Making Collaboration Work in Government and Non-profit Organizations

Russ Linden’s Collaborative Framework
- Getting the Basics Right
- Forming Open, Trusting Relationships Among the Principals
- Developing High Stakes
- Creating a Constituency for Collaboration

Community Viability as a piece of the solution
- Conversations and Relationships
- Initial success: Smart Communities
- Collaborative relationship: Enterprise Fair, Regional Capacity Building, National Entrepreneurship Week
Smart Communities Conference

- April 5, 2006
- Research-based framework for collaborative community-building
- Diverse partners
- Regional identity and focus on common issues

Enterprise Fair

- May 15, 2006
- Highlighted regional focus on entrepreneurship
- Regional and state-wide impacts
- www.vastartup.org

Regional Capacity Building

- Regional Technology Initiative
- Grayson County Technology Management
- Carroll County Planning
- Grayson County LandCares
- Entrepreneur Express

Lessons Learned

- Relationships are key. Research indicates the importance of “interpersonal connections” to successful collaboration (Rosabeth Moss Kanter, 1994 research study on corporate alliances)
- Collaboration begets collaboration (Formation and existence of Crossroads Institute paved way for current and future collaborative successes)
- CV, as a resource for communities, adds value in small, but significant ways
- Importance of designation of “official” regional collaborative bodies (RIFA)
- Regional success hinges both on maximizing local resources while leveraging outside resources

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