Vital rural economies take a long-term view

By Nancy Straw
Director
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The Ford Family Foundation

When Facebook announced last year that it was building its third data center in Prineville, adding hundreds more jobs to the 147 it already created, the region’s vigorous efforts to attract outside business were rewarded. The incentive package offered by Crook County and Prineville exempted Facebook from taxes on its buildings, equipment and improvements for 15 years, a multimillion-dollar benefit to the company.

Incentive-based business attraction strategies like the ones employed by the Central Oregon region are a favorite economic development tool for many communities. Data centers may well be a win for some rural areas, but there are not enough to bring prosperity to all. Plus, incentives don’t always work out.

In 2002, for example, Dell opened a much-anticipated call center in Roseburg, drawn by a generous package of tax breaks and other financial incentives. Five years later, when many of the incentives ran out, the call center abruptly closed its doors, leaving 220 Douglas County residents without jobs.

“Too often winning the chase for jobs from outside corporations is nothing more than fool’s gold,” says Portland consultant Rich Bruer. “It may look like real economic development, but it is soon followed by the realization that the same thing that draws large companies to a community — lower costs and higher profits — is what sends them on their way when their business declines or better opportunities present themselves elsewhere.”

Improving the vitality of

Continued on page 14
Many acts of kindness

The Umpqua Story Project was formed in the weeks after the shooting on Oct. 1, 2015, at Umpqua Community College. Nine people were killed when a gunman opened fire in a classroom at UCC. Eight others were injured.

The creative and experimental project has sought ways to provide healing to affected communities through story. Volunteers trained in compassionate listening collected hundreds of stories, both written and recorded. The stories are being shared to provide healing to affected communities through story.

Volunteers

Eight others were injured.

Nora Vitz Harrison

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Accent on leadership

Euvalcree links Latino families with an eye to improving community

Symbols, like photographs, can be worth many words. When the non-profit group Euvalcree of Ontario, Oregon, adopted a winged beacon as its logo in November 2014, the message was as clear as a speech.

Euvalcree was an outgrowth of the Treasure Valley Community Resource Center, which was created in 2012 to address frustrations of the region’s Latino community. Under its first incarnation, the organization’s logo was a fist. But as the group shifted its focus, members realized another change was in order.

A beacon of hope

“With a fist, the only thing you will confront is another fist,” says Euvalcree Executive Director Gustavo Morales. “With Euvalcree, we wanted to symbolize a beacon of hope, and a commitment to ourselves re-establishing the passion for creating better places for our family and community.”

Though the nonprofit group is young, Euvalcree has galvanized a Latino population strong in number but under-represented in leadership roles. That disparity troubled Ontario resident Maria Romero.

Romero says a perception persisted that area Latinos had little interest in civic affairs. Latinos make up 67% of Ontario School District students and 33% of Malheur County’s population. Yet Romero says Latinos are absent from city, county and school leadership roles.

A paralegal for 35 years with the Oregon Law Center, Romero began exploring how to launch the nonprofit. Her vision: “A paralegal for 35 years with the Oregon Law Center, Romero began exploring how to launch Euvalcree to create a five-year sustainability plan to continue its community work."

“With Euvalcree, we wanted to symbolize a beacon of hope, and a commitment to ourselves re-establishing the passion for creating better places for our family and community.”

Euvalcree sponsored events, such as family dances in the park, barbecues and street gatherings have all been catalysts for forging connections.

“We get people by being happy. They have a great time and that provides an opportunity to network,” he says.

Family dances in the park, community barbecues and street gatherings have all been catalysts for forging such links, Morales says. Such events have drawn hundreds of celebrants who came together for something as simple as hot dogs, nachos and music. From these occasions, potential volunteers have been open to Euvalcree’s message. Morales says, “The focus was on people, not frustration.”

As a result, Euvalcree has inspired 65 participants to sign up for Celebrating Latino Leadership, a program designed to increase management and leadership skills while increasing Latino visibility in society.

To date, 47 Ontario-area residents have completed the program, according to Morales.

In addition, Euvalcree is in the process of establishing a community resource center to help connect Latino residents with services they need to be successful citizens.

Connecting with resources

Morales and Romero say Euvalcree does not seek to duplicate existing services. Nor does it provide direct services. Instead, staff members seek to help residents solve their problems by connecting them with available resources. They also shepherd clients through the process of resolving their concerns.

For example, staff members may guide a renter with landlord problems to a mediator. They offer guidance on filing for naturalization status. Staff can connect direct adults where to register for GED instruction. They may also help a non-English speaker get access to health insurance.

Morales says he believes Euvalcree’s biggest achievement has been to stay true to its grassroots origins. Like any nonprofit group awarded grants, Euvalcree must comply with funding standards. But Morales says its emphasis is on people rather than institutions.

“A community will always have needs,” he says. “It’s how we address those needs that makes a difference.”

Close-up: Euvalcree

WHAT THE NAME MEANS: “Euvalcree” comes from three Latin roots: “eu,” meaning “good,” “val,” meaning “valiant” or “strong” and “cree,” meaning “faith” or “belief.”

MEMBERS AND VOLUNTEERS: Euvalcree is made up of nine board and 18 committee members, with about 75 volunteers. There are also four paid staff members.

FUNDING: Euvalcree received a $30,000 organizing grant in 2015 from the Northwest Health Foundation of Portland. In addition, Euvalcree was chosen as a community partner by NIH’s Healthy Beginnings + Healthy Communities Initiative and will receive $750,000 over five years. The grant will allow Euvalcree to create a five-year sustainability plan to continue its community work.

PROJECTS INCLUDE:

Organizing the Children’s Day Celebration with 1,500 community members

Providing basic English classes to domestic violence survivors in partnership with Project Dove, an agency providing shelter and services to sexual assault victims in Malheur County

Organizing leadership training and educational outreach on signing up for health care

Reaching 85 families through a Toys for Tots drive

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

www.euvalcree.org

Euvalcree sponsored events, such as family dances in the park, barbecues and street gatherings have all been catalysts for forging connections.

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Growth-from-within transformation

Community Building Approach looks different in every community

What do The LEGO Movie and the Ford Institute’s approach to community building have in common? Lots, according to the Foundation’s first Community Building Approach (CBA) working group. As the 13 graduates of the Ford Institute Leadership Program worked to put the CBA mission into words, the movie analogy kept coming up.

In an open letter members wrote to future working groups, they explained the analogy.

“In the beginning of that film, Emmet is an ordinary construction worker. Everything about his life—his job, his schedule, his environment and even his blueprint. But by the end of the movie, Emmet has been transformed into a ‘master builder.’ He has vision. He has become a co-maker of his world. It is this kind of transformative, growth-from-within process that is at the heart of the Community Building Approach. Multi-step process

Rural communities across Oregon and Siskiyou County, California, are implementing this process as they build on the skills learned and experience gained through participating in the Ford Institute’s leadership opportunities. CBA is a multi-step process that provides a framework in which community members can learn to listen to each other, identify and engage residents, access and skills training that are needed, develop networks and communication systems, create and manage action plans, and celebrate change.

“This community building requires us to be intentional about engaging with those we might not be hearing, and be willing to listen and be influenced by their input,” says Amy Carlton, director of Rural Programs for the Nonprofit Association of Oregon.

“The ultimate result is more relevance and impact.”

The process looks different in different communities. In Coos Bay, for example, the year-old New Community Coalition uses CBA principles to promote community collaboration. It’s a grassroots movement led from community members gathering for conversation, often facilitated, to identify who is doing what around issues and ideas for improvement,” says community leader Char Luther. CCB organizes community meetings for diverse stakeholders to generate ideas, resources, opportunities and needs to solve locally identified issues through a collaborative approach.

At a series of Chat & Chew gatherings, for example, participants identified large issues—affordable housing, volunteer recruitment and management, and access to community resources. Breakout groups addressed each of these, followed later with outreach to stakeholders and information holders.

Town Hall meetings featuring a panel of drug abuse experts initiated action around the heroin/opiate problem in Coos County. The initial gatherings soon gave way to monthly meetings where different sectors gathered to share knowledge and expertise. Projects were developed, services expanded, information was discovered,” Luther says.

“Community Building Principles

Not only do we believe in the power of collaborative problem-solving, we also believe in the power of inclusive, engaging, and celebratory involvement to guide our work.”

“Rebuilding leadership

In the Mt. Hood area, CBA is helping volunteers rebuild community leadership. Clackamas County dissolved an advisory council representing five areas after a series of raucous public meetings.

“We hope to use the Community Building Approach as our guiding light, customizing it as necessary to suit the needs of our community,” says community leader Becky Downard. “We have started by using the principles of the CBA (building on what we have, being profoundly inclusive, keeping our community’s needs at the center of the work, and ensuring all voices are heard) to guide our work.”

The Community Building Approach has been particularly effective on the issue of inclusiveness, Downard says. “In the past, a few powerful voices drowned out the less-assertive voices, and entire segments of our community were not represented,” she says. “Through using the CBA, we hope to unite our community, and the communities which surround us, to open lines of communication, to engage those who have been hesitant to get involved in the past, and to move forward with impactful work to address the challenges our community faces,” Downard says.

Back in Coos Bay, Luther says, “Every community member, through CBA, can become a social entrepreneur doing something to make a positive impact on the community.”

The Master Builder

In the beginning of [The LEGO Movie], Emmet is an ordinary construction worker. Everything about his life—his job, his schedule, his environment and even his entertainment—is carefully prescribed. He is an “assembler,” building his world according to somebody else’s blueprint. But by the end of the film, Emmet has been transformed into a “master builder.”

All around him he sees new possibilities and interesting connections. He has vision. And he has claimed his own creative capacity. He has become a co-maker in his world.

— Community Building Approach, Working Group 1

In Coos Bay, the year-old New Community Coalition uses the Community Building Approach to promote collaboration.
In Jackson County in 2007, the libraries closed for six months for lack of funds.

Such measures have met with mixed results in Oregon. Voters in Eugene approved a five-year property tax levy in November 2015 that will collect $2.7 million a year to pay for staff and services at the city’s main library and two branches. The vote was by no means a mandate, however. Voter turnout was about 37% of ballots mailed, with nearly 53% approving and 47% against the measure.

“We credit the success of the library levy largely to the efforts of community volunteers who worked on the ‘Yes’ campaign,” says Rennie Grube, executive director of Library, Recreation, and Cultural Services for the City of Eugene.

Jackson County made national news in 2007 when all 15 of its library branches closed after county voters rejected a tax levy. Six months later, a down-sized system reopened under private management; most of the libraries cut their open hours in half. In 2014, voters passed a levy that created a new library district. Supporters promoted the district, an independent unit of local government, as a way to provide permanent, stable funding for the county’s libraries.

Coos County features a cooperative of eight public libraries and an Extended Services office, all funded through a dedicated tax base. Each library is accountable to the citizens of its area. The system has low overhead with no central headquarters and stays responsive to local needs. Josephine County voters rejected a tax base for its library system in 2014. Today, a nonprofit organization runs the system and must rely on contributions and volunteers. The largest branch in Grants Pass is open 14 hours a week; other branches are open even fewer hours.

Computers are a popular resource at the main branch of the Douglas County Library in Roseburg.

Still in circulation: Libraries adapt

Public libraries offer volumes of community engagement

I n a corner wing, preschoolers and their parents gather for story time, swash in pirate tales. It’s the same site where, earlier, children with autism or Down syndrome giggled and clapped as they crawled through a plushy fabric tunnel designed to engage their senses.

Across the foyer and past an information desk, adults sit at a bank of computers. One man fills out an online job application. The woman beside him visits Facebook to see photos of her grandson’s birthday party two time zones away.

Later that evening, in an adjoining meeting room, candidates debate in a gathering sponsored by the League of Women Voters.

This hub of activity, or some variation of it, is typical of the Douglas County Library head-quarters in Roseburg. But it could be unfolding in any of the 224 branches of Oregon’s 131 public libraries. And all of it is free of charge — from Wi-Fi access to public forums to after-school activities for children and teens.

Encouraging reading is probably the public library’s best-known role. But frequent visitors know there’s much more going on than following the Dewey Decimal trail.

“Everybody likes to talk about the demise of the book and how our society has gone beyond the need for public libraries,” says Harold A. Hayes, director of the Douglas County Library System. “But from the time of Benjamin Franklin onward, public libraries have contributed to a viable and working front.”

Nevertheless, to keep from fossilizing into extinction, libraries have had to adapt to patrons’ needs. Exploring this necessary evolution was one of the goals of a recent assessment commissioned by the Oregon Community Foundation.

Library consultant and former Canby Public Library Director Penny Hummel researched and produced the study published last summer. Eight primary roles were assessed. Hummel says the results show great variation in what libraries offer their patrons. Nevertheless, “public libraries are actively engaged in fulfilling all those roles in the community, and how they do so depends on their individual characteristics,” Hummel says.

Kirsten Kluchenstein, a senior donor relations officer with the Oregon Community Foundation, says she is struck by the assessment’s finding that while Oregon ranks well below the national average in state funding of its public libraries, Oregon’s public libraries charted the highest circulation per capita of all 50 states in the fiscal year ending in 2012.

“What is clear to me is that libraries are a point of contact for so many families who are struggling,” Kluchenstein says. “Everyone is welcome to come and find their needs met, and the library is a go-to place on so many fronts.”

Economic and workforce development

Hummel reported in the assessment that some libraries on the national level are placing great emphasis on economic and workforce development. This happens on a more individual basis in Oregon libraries. However, the study states, a temporary shutdown of Wi-Fi in one Oregon library prompted complaints that made it clear that patrons were running their small businesses on personal devices at the library.

In Douglas County, where county funding for the library has been cut by more than half since 2007, Hayes says system resources concentrate on three roles in particular: early childhood learning; educating and lifelong learning; and digital inclusion. Libraries play an important role in early childhood learning, providing a place where families can go to get the help they need to nurture children. Libraries offer story time programming, access to age-appropriate books, book give-aways and celebrations.

Libraries serve as an outreach point to families for available community resources, such as free lunch programs and quality childcare.

Library staff also guide parents of preschoolers in teaching reading skills in the home — the start of lifelong learning.

As for digital inclusion, offering Internet access is critical in an area where numerous residents live in poverty or out of Wi-Fi range. Many depend on the library as the sole place they can conduct job searches or keep in touch with distant relatives.

For Oregon communities with large immigrant populations, being inclusive means reaching out in another way.

Oregon State Librarian

Continued on page 9
Coordination for home visiting

New project fosters collaboration in Coos, Douglas and Siskiyou county programs

When it comes to strengthening families and improving the health of women and young children, home visiting is a proven strategy. Programs are voluntary and serve families from diverse backgrounds and with a variety of needs.

By participating in home visiting programs, families can receive support from a variety of professionals, including health, social service, and education professionals. Through regular home visits, parents have increased access to resources and critical information to support their children’s healthy development.

“The home visiting service delivery model is about building a relationship and supporting the family in its own home,” says Robin Hill-Dunbar, a program officer with The Ford Family Foundation. Parents can access health screenings, emotional support, and connections to other services in the community through a trusting relationship with their home visitor.”

Planned and supported coordination across multiple home visiting agencies can help identify gaps in service and resources in our regions as well as strengths. A major aim of the coordinating across models is to improve the intake and referral processes so that families receive the best fit home visiting services available.

Full-time home visiting system coordinators have been hired in three counties to build relationships and lead advisory groups that will work together to meet project goals.

New multi-year early childhood project

The Ford Family Foundation recently launched a multi-year project to foster collaborative relationships between home visiting programs, ultimately leading to improved outcomes for parents and children and improvement of each region’s capacity to serve families.

The project aims to develop a coordinated system in Douglas, Coos and Siskiyou counties that strengthen and benefit all home visiting programs, as part of each region’s greater birth-to-five early childhood development system.

The project had three specific goals: create a common referral process, a professional development plan for all home visiting providers and a regional communication plan.

The project kicked off in June. One full-time coordinator has been hired in each of the three core counties to build relationships across multiple home visiting program models, as well as establish an advisory group that will co-design and implement each of the three elements of the coordinated system.

“It’s a wonderful opportunity for everyone to support collaboration,” Hill-Dunbar says. “The Foundation’s support can help ensure all the home visiting programs have an opportunity to meet on a regular basis, and have an agreed-on process for referrals, shared professional development and communication.”

Mary Kay Dahlgren points out that supporting non-English-speaking populations may not be at the top of the radar for libraries that are struggling to provide basic services. Still, to the extent that they are able, Dahlgren says libraries can be a bridge to children whose parents are working multiple jobs or who are hesitant about links to any government agency.

“At the one end of the spectrum, there are libraries that provide English Language Learning classes, as well as an online service. Some may even use Ready to Read grant money to hire a Spanish-speaking liaison,” Dahlgren says.

Smaller libraries with tighter budgets at least can provide materials with non-English languages and, hopefully, a welcoming face,” Dahlgren says.

Reflecting needs

Whether they are connecting people with necessary services or linking patrons to career certification tests, public libraries attempt to reflect the needs of those who visit them. Defining that value isn’t always a matter of citing numbers or statistics.

“I can tell you how many books were checked out last month or how many people walked through the doors,” Hayes says. “But to really tell you what libraries are, I’d have to say that a community without schools or parks or libraries — it’s not a community most people want to live in.”

The Foundation team grows with six newly created positions

Kathleen Flanagan is a program officer for Community Economic Development. Flanagan comes to the Foundation from the Wildhorse Resort and Casino in Pendleton, Oregon, where she was the business development manager for 17 years. As a program officer, Flanagan will focus on workforce development, business financing, entrepreneurship, community economic development and promoting family economic success.

Ford Family Foundation Opportunity Scholarships alumna Robin Hill-Dunbar is now a program officer for Children, Youth and Families. Previously, Hill-Dunbar worked for the Maternal Child Health Section of the Oregon Health Authority/ Public Health Division. As a program officer, she will help shape and execute the Foundation’s strategies to support strong families and healthy children. She is a master’s degree candidate in Early Childhood at Portland State University, has a graduate certificate in infant-toddler mental health from PSU and a bachelor’s degree in psychology from the University of Oregon. She received an associate’s degree from Umpqua Community College.

As the first manager of Scholar and Alumni Engagement, Bonnie Williams is responsible for programs that engage a network of nearly 3,500 alumni and 1,000 current Ford Family Foundation scholarship recipients. Before coming to the Foundation in 2015, Bonnie worked at the University of Oregon School of Law as the associate director for the Center for Career Planning and Professional Development. Williams earned a bachelor’s degree in journalism and communication from the University of Oregon and a law degree from the University of Oregon in 2004.

New field coordinators

Three community leaders have been hired to serve in field-based positions for the Foundation. The three new field coordinators will represent the Foundation in rural Oregon and Siskiyou County, California, to support the Foundation’s work at the community level. They are: Crystal Aston, Mt. Shasta, California; Denise Bacon, Newberg, Oregon; and Maurizio Valerio, Union, Oregon.

Crystal Aston has worked at the nonprofit Great Northern Services in Weed, California, for 11 years, most recently as the community services manager. She was instrumental in growing the community food program and played key roles in providing assistance to the survivors of the Boles Fire of 2014. Aston has a bachelor’s degree in liberal studies from California State University Chico.

Denise Bacon is a lifelong community builder, and she currently serves as city counselor for the City of Newberg, Oregon. Her public service also includes helping to create a program to house Newberg’s homeless during severe weather, working with the community to create solutions for affordable housing. She is a Ph.D. candidate in public policy and administration at Walden University, Minneapolis, Minnesota. She has a master’s degree in public administration from Ashford University, Clinton, Iowa, and a bachelor’s degree in political science and government, also from Ashford. Bacon is a graduate of the Ford Institute Leadership Program.

Maurizio Valerio comes to the Foundation from Rural Development Initiatives where he facilitated leadership programs for nine years and recently piloted a coaching program for rural organizations and individuals in Eastern Oregon. As a ranch owner in Northeast Oregon he has managed a horse and cattle operation; he is currently involved in a long-term forest stewardship plan. Valerio has a Ph.D. from the University of Parma, Italy, in natural sciences, and a master’s degree in zoology from the University of California Berkeley. Valerio is a graduate of the Ford Institute Leadership Program.
Justice and opportunity

Leif Coorlim tells stories of human trafficking to raise awareness, promote solutions

Leif Coorlim says there are two clear themes in his work as an executive editor at CNN: justice and opportunity. Whether uncovering evidence of human trafficking in the southern United States or speaking before the European Parliament regarding modern-day slavery and the migrant crisis in Europe, he looks for ways to highlight injustices and change policy.

“I don’t tell these stories just to uncover a problem, but rather to find a solution and to engage the right people to address the issue,” Coorlim says.

Being a catalyst

Coorlim, a Ford Scholar, Class of 1997, understands the importance of one small action that would ultimately become The CNN Freedom Project. According to its website, The CNN Freedom Project seeks “to amplify the voices of the victims of modern-day slavery, highlight success stories and help unravel the tangle of criminal enterprises trading in human life.”

Through his work on The CNN Freedom Project, Coorlim has told hundreds of stories of human trafficking, from Thailand, the Philippines, Mexico, North Africa, Haiti, and many points in between, including the United States. Two recent projects in the United States include a documentary with Jada Pinkett Smith, “Children for Sale,” and a report on wounded veterans who were retrained to help find and rescue exploited children.

Coorlim’s work has been a catalyst for many positive changes with a worldwide impact. The film with Pinckett Smith played an instrumental role in passing a law in Georgia that provides harsher penalties for traffickers and extends increased protections and supports for victims.

Additionally, Coorlim notes “The CNN Freedom Project stories have contributed to changing laws and corporate policies, led to more than 1,000 survivors being rescued, and sparked more than $24 million in donations to anti-trafficking organizations.”

Human rights/social justice

In the future, he hopes to tell more stories that showcase human rights and social justice issues.

“So many people think of it as activism,” Coorlim says. “But it isn’t. It’s just journalism. We tell the facts as they are on the ground. Stories are vetted. The principle of objectivity still applies. We seek out both sides just like reporters would on any other topic. But we stay on the story as long as it takes, and we’ve seen some amazing examples of what can happen as a result of that.”

The Egyptian Theater, restored in 2014, serves as a performing space and community center for the town of Coos Bay. Top left: Interior of the Egyptian Theater. Photo/drawing courtesy of the gem theatre. Bottom left: Master plans for the Gem Theater.
Learning how to ask for a fair share for rural communities

Training provides needed skills to write proposals for federal grants

When it comes to securing their share of federal grant dollars, rural communities are lagging far behind their urban counterparts.

Consider this: In the most recent federal fiscal year, the federal government awarded $3.2 billion in competitive grant awards within Oregon. Of those funds, just 3.7% were to recipients in Oregon’s 2nd Congressional District, which includes nearly all communities east of the Cascades as well as some rural towns in southern Oregon. While that was a slight improvement from the 2.4% awarded in fiscal year 2010, the actual dollar value decreased by $6.5 million or 5 percent.

“Rural Oregon is still lagging far behind urban Oregon in securing its fair share, on a per capita basis, of competitive federal grant dollars,” says Kathy Ingram, a nationally certified non-profit professional and coach based in the Coos Bay area.

Federal grant proposals are notoriously difficult to successfully complete, and rural areas often do not have access to qualified grant writing professionals. In an effort to level the playing field, the Ford Institute sponsored a federal grant writers training program from 2011 to 2014. Under Ingram’s direction, two rural cohorts received comprehensive training in federal grant development. Six of the nine participants went through a rigorous process that certified them as Grant Professionals by the Grant Professional Certification Institute.

“By building the capacity of persons in rural communities to craft federal funding proposals, more dollars can be brought into these communities,” says Timothy Hoone, a member of the second cohort and a graduate of the Ford Institute Leadership Program.

Since he finished training in 2014, Hoone, a resident of Crescent City, California, has helped develop more than a dozen successful grant applications, totaling more than $4 million in funding. Grants ranged from a $400,000, four-year, USDA-funded project to expand community gardens and improve local food access in Northern California to a $350,000, two-year project providing transitional housing in Del Norte County and Curry County, Oregon. The program provides transitional housing for people affected by domestic violence.

Hoone has joined fellow student Lyn Craig of Joseph to offer grant-related services through consulting group NorthNorthwest.

“I learned immediately that federal grant applications are completely different than those of foundations and require a singular skill set,” Craig says. “I also learned it’s much more exciting to bring in $500,000 than $50,000.”

Training program participant Elaine Eisenbraun of Long Beach, Oregon, says, “The joy of this work flows from helping people to create a project design that is effective and functional, including a clearly understood budget to assure a project that hits a home run for the mission of the organization.”

Not ‘federal dependency’

Ingram says there is a sufficient knowledge base and available technical assistance to assist rural communities in securing competitive federal grant resources. But in order to win those dollars, she says Oregon’s rural communities need to be willing to risk scarce resources in the costs of grant development, knowing that not all grant proposals will be successful.

Rural communities also need to come to terms with the fact that, in accepting federal grant assistance, one is not substituting fierce rural independence for federal dependency.

Finally, she says, “need to come to terms with the fact that, in accepting federal grant assistance, one is not substituting fierce rural independence for federal dependency.”

“Rural Oregon is still lagging far behind urban Oregon in securing its fair share, on a per capita basis, of competitive federal grant dollars,” says Kathy Ingram, a nationally certified non-profit professional and coach based in the Coos Bay area.

“Rural Oregon is still lagging far behind urban Oregon in securing its fair share, on a per capita basis, of competitive federal grant dollars,” says Kathy Ingram, a nationally certified non-profit professional and coach based in the Coos Bay area.
Local businesses drive majority of job creation

Continued from page 1

rural economies with the tools of economic development is a long-term commitment. And it is hard work. The strategy of business attraction is just one tool and, despite its upswing, it has several potential downsides. Incentives may attract businesses whose only loyalty to the community is financial — when the incentives run out, the companies leave town. In addition, offering incentives to outside firms to locate in a community sends a message to those who are already there that new firms are more important than they are.

Up to 80% of job growth comes from startups and existing businesses, according to the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities. But, according to Michael H. Shuman’s book The Local Economy Solution (see page 15), in one study, 80% of the funds given by state economic development programs were given to nonlocal businesses. Since a majority of job creation happens in local businesses, this is not playing out the odds.

There are many entrepreneurial development and business retention and growth strategies that rural communities can engage to support new and existing local businesses. Engage a broader community in supporting new and existing local businesses through “Buy Local” campaigns or “Cash Mobs”. In a Cash Mob, residents gather and “mob” one business each month to make small purchases. The business enjoys a boost in its daily sales, and townspople learn what is available in their own community (to start a Cash Mob, see article, right).

Provide incentives to exciting businesses: Many communities have provided financial incentives for property owners to upgrade store appearances through façade improvement grants through a model offered by Oregon Main Street program.

Increase your knowledge about the local business climate: There may be some fairly easy ways to change regulations that may be preventing a barrier, and educating local, regional and statewide policymakers about them is a good first step toward starting or expanding businesses in your area.

Increase the odds of strengthening businesses in your community: Talk with existing businesses and identify the barriers to their business growth and stability. There may be skill sets needed by several employers, such as truck driving; find ways to provide the training for those skills. Perhaps they are unable to find financing for their next phase of growth; help find financial resources and organizations that work across the spectrum, from startup to global enterprise.

Whatever it is, you will find that other businesses share the same or similar challenges and the community can come together to help resolve them.

Identify opportunity gaps in the business sector of your community: Perhaps your area needs a specialty retail outlet or service. By identifying gaps, there may be entrepreneurs ready to step up and supply the missing pieces.

Encourage the creativity of local people to establish new businesses: Make it known that you want community to be a place friendly to new endeavors by local folks. Your community’s greatest assets may already be in place. Before committing time and resources to attract outside businesses, it’s worth the time to employ strategies that make the most of what communities already have to offer.

The town of Myrtle Creek has built a sense of community while helping local businesses through the popular “Cash Mob” activity. Residents “mob” one business a month.

Start a Cash Mob in your town

Of a Paulette C. Roden-Jones’ favorite Cash Mob visits was to the Myrtle Creek Saw Shop. “That mob blew our mobsters minds,” says Roden-Jones. “They had no idea our saw shop carried Carrhart clothes for adults and kids. It gave them an insight and a new place to shop for clothes.”

“Cash Mobs are an amazing way to get to know your community, your customers and your local business owners.”

Cash Mobs are like flash mobs, but instead of singing and dancing they spend money as a group. They target local businesses to give the business owners an economic stimulus. Interested in starting a Cash Mob in your town? Roden-Jones wants people to know it is not a complicated task. “It takes maybe two hours a month to plan and see it through, once the stage is set,” she says. “I own a business, have a husband and three kids, and volunteer with other organizations, and I was able to create and implement our program in a very short time with amazing community support.”

“Community buy-in is important, so if you can get the support of your city council, mayor, city staff, chamber of commerce and any other organization, you are set.”

For general information on cash mobs, visit https://cash-mobs.com. Roden-Jones also welcomes inquiries at paulette@thehappyplount.com.

Regional collaboration in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula resulted in more visitors to Marquette, a regional landmark such as the Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum. Would it be possible for other rural communities to market themselves in a similar way and to create a stronger, regional identity? The result? Tourism revenues have grown, jobs have been created and retained.

Across the nation, other WealthWorks projects have created a cleaninghouse for wood products manufacturers to supply products to green builders in the region, and grown small businesses that supply biofuel production jobs to community college graduates.

For other success stories and more information: www.wealthworks.org.

A poster produced by Southwestern Oregon Food Systems Collaborative promotes local seafood.
What leads to success?

Authors identify keys that help build community efficiently and effectively

Community building is a complex process with a lot of moving parts. It helps to know what has worked. Many people start by doing extensive research into what has worked in similar towns, but doing the research that identifies these successful strategies can be a daunting task.

Fortunately, it’s not a task you need to take on. In the eminently readable Community Building: What Makes It Work, Paul Mattessich and Barbara Monsey have done the research for readers, identifying 28 “keys” that help build community efficiently and effectively. “The thousands of hours of preparation required for this book ... is the nitty-gritty homework that all of us who are interested in community building rarely have the time to do,” write the authors.

In their search for critical factors, Mattessich and Monsey kept two questions in mind: What leads to successful community building, and what distinguishes efforts that succeed from those that fail? The answers to those questions led to the identification of the 28 factors, which are divided into three categories: characteristics of the community, characteristics of the community building process, and characteristics of community building organizers.

For example, a community characteristic identified as essential to success is the community awareness of an issue. "Yours for the asking See page 13."

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Community Building: What Makes It Work
A Review of What Works and How It Works
Community Building

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MISSION
Successful citizens and vital rural communities

CORE VALUES
Integrity: Promoting and acknowledging principled behavior
Stewardship: Responsibility to give back and accountability for resources and results
Respect: Valuing all individuals
Independence: Encouraging self-reliance and initiative
Community: Working together for positive change