The Western Rural Development Center is one of four Regional Centers collectively known as the Regional Rural Development Centers. The Regional Rural Development Centers are a trusted source of economic and community development data, decision tools, education, and guidance in our nation’s rural communities.

DATA
DECISION TOOLS
EDUCATION
GUIDANCE

Together the Centers form a one-stop shop to connect to the nationwide network of land-grant college and university researchers, educators, and practitioners to provide sound information and hands-on, community-level training. The trainings help rural communities make science-based decisions about their community and economic development investments.

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## BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS, CONSTRUYENDO RELACIÓNES

Latino Energy Outreach and Research in the Pacific Northwest

By Noelle M. Hart, Catherine H. Gowan, and Patricia A. Townsend, Washington State University Extension

“Latinos are a growing and vibrant part of many communities but are often underrepresented and underserved by Extension programming. Access to Extension resources may be limited for a variety of reasons including language barriers and lack of awareness. Intentionally reaching Latino audiences is important to Extension’s mission of supporting resilient and healthy communities.”

PICTURED: Promotores de Energía and their families attend a field tour to learn about bioenergy from poplar trees/AHB.

**RURAL CONNECTIONS FALL 2018**
“At the Western Rural Development Center, we seek to work with partners to help rural residents and communities take advantage of new opportunities while minimizing emerging problems and concerns. *Rural Connections* is one of our tools to help accomplish this objective. Our goal is to learn from one another so we can all benefit from the wide range of exceptional programs developed by capable professionals from throughout the West.”
In my travels throughout the rural west, I have visited dairy farms where cows are being milked by robots. I have toured coal mines where huge machines claw coal from the mine face onto a conveyer belt that carries the coal to the surface. I have witnessed machines that cut trees, remove the limbs, and place them on trucks in a fraction of the time that an entire crew could have completed the work in years past. I have visited manufacturing firms that produce more output with fewer workers than was previously possible. Online shopping is eliminating jobs and putting many retail businesses under duress. In each case, technological changes are eliminating many of the jobs that once provided the base of the rural economy. We can be certain that not only will these jobs not return, but that this process will continue. The economy of today is very different from the economy of the past. We can be assured that the rural job market of the future will be very different from today's.

While modern technology has resulted in the elimination of many jobs, it has also opened doors of opportunity. Specifically, the disadvantages of distance have been reduced. With today's information and communication technology, it is now possible to live in rural areas and market one's products or skills anywhere across the globe. In our changing world, the thriving communities of today are those that recognize and take advantage of 21st Century circumstances, rather than trying to rebuild the economy of the past.

At the Western Rural Development Center, we seek to work with partners to help rural residents and communities take advantage of new opportunities while minimizing emerging problems and concerns. Rural Connections is one of our tools to help accomplish this objective. Our goal is to learn from one another so that we can all benefit from the wide range of exceptional programs developed by capable professionals from throughout the West.

In this issue of Rural Connections, we are pleased to present seven excellent articles that provide knowledge and tools for professionals seeking to assist rural communities. The authors of these articles reside in six different Western States (Arizona, California, Colorado, Oregon, Washington, and Wyoming). The articles cover topics that include addressing environmental challenges, enhancing the benefits of farmers markets, utilizing cooperatives to enhance rural economic development, and helping communities address issues related to the provision of energy and housing. After reading these articles, I feel I am in a better position to assist the residents and communities of rural America.

We at the Western Rural Development Center appreciate the opportunity to partner with and learn from so many capable individuals and organizations involved in excellent programs that benefit residents of the rural West. As always, I appreciate the dependable and efficient staff at the WRDC and especially Assistant Director Betsy Newman whose talents and skills make Rural Connections such an effective tool while at the same time being so aesthetically pleasing. ✪
In addition to natural resources like timber, food, and oil, ecosystems provide important services, such as fresh air, clean water, biodiversity, recreation, and carbon sequestration. Unlike resources that are bought and sold in markets, these services are harder to assign monetary value. Putting a price on ecosystem services makes it easier to weigh the costs and benefits of proposed plans and make decisions that balance economic growth and environmental quality, resource use and conservation, and public and private benefits.

For almost 50 years, scientists and economists from land-grant universities across the U.S. have worked together on Multistate Research Project W3133 to advance the valuation of ecosystem services (Hearne et al., 2013a). As a long-term, collaborative effort, this group has been able to draw on its members’ wide-ranging expertise, develop and share reliable new methods and tools, and collect data in diverse settings.
“Putting a price on ecosystem services makes it easier to weigh the costs and benefits of proposed plans and make decisions that balance economic growth and environmental quality, resource use and conservation, and public and private benefits.”

**ESTIMATING VALUE**

In recent years, the group has made significant contributions to theories and methods for valuing ecosystem services, especially willingness to pay. In particular, researchers examined how willing consumers are to pay more for products, like oysters, to account for the ecosystem services they provide and gauged what price communities are willing to pay for farmers to adopt practices that enhance ecosystem services (Ando et al., 2015; Hearne et al., 2013b). Other studies measured willingness to pay to avoid damage to ecosystems, such as shoreline property owner and boater willingness to pay to prevent aquatic species invasions in Wisconsin lakes (Gramig et al., 2017).

Many factors influence willingness to pay. In Illinois and Arizona, researchers estimated how proximity affects willingness to pay for water quality improvements and forest restoration, respectively (Manning et al., 2018; Gramig et al., 2017). The metrics a person values most often help explain variations in willingness to pay. Research showed that beach users in Maine and New Hampshire are more aware of safety risks associated with surf conditions than health risks associated with poor water quality (Manning et al., 2018). In Arizona, residents’ willingness to pay for protection of springs in Grand Canyon National Park is highest for springs that provide habitat for species of concern, followed by springs with cultural significance (Gramig et al., 2017).

Research also shed light on willingness to engage in behaviors or programs to protect ecosystem services. A recent study found that reading about future scenarios increased willingness to participate in land use planning (Mueller et al., 2016). At the University of Rhode Island, researchers showed that Southern New Englanders are willing to pay premiums and more likely to sign contracts for “green” lawn care when given informational nudges about the benefits, but they do not actually take action unless given financial incentives (Manning et al., 2018).

Recreation is one of the most obvious examples of the economic value of ecosystems. Many group members have worked to improve methods of measuring these benefits. In particular, they showed how different metrics affect value estimates, assessed whether social media can elucidate recreational behavior and demand, and developed a new model to measure the commercial value of nature-based tourism activities (Petrolia et al., 2014; Hearne et al., 2013b). New tools and techniques have led to reliable estimations of the economic value of recreation across the U.S. In Florida, researchers calculated that residents derive annual benefits of about $212 per household from recreation on the St. Johns River, and natural springs generate $57 million per year in recreation benefits (Gramig et al., 2017; Manning et al., 2018). Another focus has been to understand how changes to ecosystems affect their recreational value. Researchers illustrated how water level affects the value of whitewater boating in Colorado and informed park managers that rescinding off-road vehicle restrictions on Cape Hatteras National Seashore may have negative economic consequences. (Petrolia et al., 2014; Gramig et al., 2017).
The economic value of ecosystems is also seen in their effects on housing prices. Studies show that damage to ecosystems, such as Mountain Pine Beetle infestations of Colorado Front Range forests, can significantly reduce home value (Mueller et al., 2016). The opposite also seems true: improvements to ecosystems can increase home value. In recent studies, better water quality in the Narragansett Bay led to higher area housing prices, and in Oregon, coastal dunes increased nearby housing values by three percent (Gramig et al., 2017; Manning et al., 2018). There is some nuance though. For example, the housing price effects of watershed improvements in Portland, Oregon, varied based on project stage, distance, and type (Manning et al., 2018).

The value of ecosystem services to communities goes beyond housing price. An Oregon State University study showed that the state’s federally-protected forests have highly localized, positive effects on population growth and median income (Gramig et al., 2017). Ecosystem services can also influence where people choose to live. For example, because college graduates in the U.S. are willing to pay more to avoid hot weather, ecosystems that provide cooler temperatures may be better able to recruit and retain human capital (Gramig et al., 2017).

VALUE ESTIMATES IN ACTION
Across the country, new data and tools provided by W3133 are enabling informed public and private land management decisions, research-based incentive programs, and cost-effective mitigation strategies. For example, estimates of the economic value of recreation are helping the Utah Department of Environmental Quality determine which lakes and streams should be cleaned up and how much cleanup is optimal (Petrolia et al., 2014). In Louisiana and Alabama, policymakers are more aware of the costs and benefits of alternative methods for coastal restoration, and in Iowa, research is helping policymakers select plans that will have the greatest net benefits to lake users (Petrolia et al., 2014; Mueller et al., 2016). Value estimates also guided U.S. Army Corps of Engineers investments to prevent invasive Asian Carp in the Great Lakes (Gramig et al., 2017). Using free web-based tools that evaluate the economic risk associated with fertilizer and irrigation practices and equipment intended to reduce runoff, farmers in the Corn Belt are able to choose options that are both sustainable and cost-effective (Gramig et al., 2017).

This research is also helping develop incentive-based conservation and stewardship programs. Estimates of the value of grassland plant biodiversity, particularly the additional carbon stored, showed policymakers how much to incentivize diverse planting (Gramig et al., 2017). Multiple studies suggested that “reverse auctions,” in which farmers bid for payments to adopt environmentally-friendly practices, can improve the cost-effectiveness of incentive programs, especially when the benefits are spatially dependent and farmers know more than buyers about the costs of adopting the practices (Ando et al., 2015).

Putting a price on ecosystem services guides conservation programs and policies in other ways, too. For example, economists taught conservation agencies how to use portfolio diversification tools adapted from the finance industry to make “safe bets,” or pick a mixture of wildlife sanctuary sites that will be effective far into the future even as climate change affects habitats (Gramig et al.,
Other work is informing policies on species conservation and determining optimal investment in control of the invasive Brown Tree Snake in Guam (Manning et al., 2018; Gramig et al., 2017). Understanding the value of ecosystem services is incredibly useful when weighing the costs and benefits of climate change and natural disaster mitigation plans. In particular, studies are guiding carbon offset policy, flood insurance programs, and wildfire prevention strategies (Mueller et al., 2016; Manning et al., 2018). Results from an analysis of FEMA spending showed that increases in annual spending on risk reduction and warning projects have higher returns than increases in recovery and clean-up spending, suggesting potential gains from further diversification of FEMA spending (Gramig et al., 2017).

From sea to shining sea, America is full of diverse ecosystems. W3133’s comprehensive approach has provided wide-ranging, reliable data and nuanced insights. Being able to rely on this group’s research has saved agencies several months and thousands of dollars and enabled them to make decisions that take into account the full value of ecosystems.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
The author would like to thank W3133 project members Dr. John Tanaka, Dr. Dale Manning, and Dr. Benjamin Gramig for their assistance reviewing the article.
INTRODUCTION
One of the most significant developments in rural community development in the past twenty years has been the emergence of the healthy environment/healthy economy paradigm, an important expression of which is the restoration economy. The restoration economy explicitly considers the local economy and community while attending to the preservation and restoration of healthy, functioning ecosystems. Empirical examination of the socio-economic outcomes of restoration activity is in the early stages. As a contribution to development of outcome measures, we report the results of our socio-economic analysis of a ten-year restoration effort on the John Day River in rural Eastern Oregon. We begin by describing the background of the project. Following that, we present our methods and results. Finally, we discuss the implications for community development scholars and practitioners.
BACKGROUND: MEASURING SOCIO-ECONOMIC OUTCOMES OF RESTORATION

The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) has been at the forefront in concern for the local socio-economic impact of restoration projects. The central purpose of OWEB is to support environmental restoration and management. At the same time, Oregon law declares that “the long-term protection of the water resources of this state, including sustainable watershed functions, is an essential component of Oregon’s environmental and economic stability and growth” (emphasis added). In support of that legal mandate, the restoration economy is explicitly acknowledged in OWEB’s mission statement: to “help protect and restore healthy watersheds and natural habitats that support thriving communities and strong economies” (emphasis added). OWEB’s ‘healthy environment/healthy economy’ concern is reflected in the monitoring of restoration work on the Middle Fork John Day River in Eastern Oregon.

There has been substantial investment over the past ten years in efforts to recover salmon and steelhead populations throughout the Pacific Northwest. Restoration projects aimed at improving salmon and steelhead habitat and increasing water quality and quantity are central to that effort. Understanding the effects of restoration activities is a major concern to policymakers and environmental planners and managers, as well as scholars. To do so, a partnership of 20 federal and state agencies established sixteen intensively monitored watersheds (IMWs) across Oregon and Washington to track relevant restoration outcomes. Nearly all IMW monitoring is bio-physical (e.g., stream water temperature, fish populations, groundwater levels). However, the upper Middle Fork John Day IMW (MFIMW) is unique in that it includes a socio-economic element as well. The John Day is a major tributary of the Columbia River and the third longest undammed river in the lower 48 states (see map). In 2016, OWEB, together with NOAA Fisheries (the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), commissioned a ten-year review of the bio-physical and socio-economic outcomes of restoration work on the MFIMW.

This presented an opportunity to further develop outcome measures such as job creation and capital investment associated with restoration work. To do so, we collected and analyzed primary data on the socio-economic outcomes of MFIMW restoration projects. As well, to provide context for the outcome metrics we analyzed secondary data on key measures of the socio-economic well-being of the local community.

METHODS AND RESULTS

The Middle Fork John Day sub-basin is an 800 square mile area in the northeast part of Grant County, an isolated, mountainous region of Eastern Oregon. Grant County itself covers approximately...
4,500 square miles. About 65% of the county is public land and national protected areas, and several reaches of the John Day River and its tributaries are designated as Wild and Scenic under federal statute. It is sparsely populated – currently about 7,000 residents, down from a peak of 8,200 forty years ago.

Grant County epitomizes the historic natural resource-based economy of the rural West, especially the Intermountain West. The re-settlement of the area (as Euro-Americans drove out the Native American population) began with gold mining in the 1860s, and the local culture is still strongly tied to its roots as one of the first Western mining areas. Sheep ranching was prominent in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By the 1920s and 1930s, cattle ranching and timber harvesting and processing became the dominant economic sectors. Commodity production in cattle and timber remain important. However, production and profitability in both those industries has been in long-term decline since the 1980s, and the region is struggling to maintain an economic base.

The MFIMW is the site of a vigorous effort at environmental restoration, with the aim of returning the sub-basin to a close approximation of its condition prior to intensive grazing, logging, and mining. The direct intention is to bring back endangered fish species. Community socio-economic development is a desired indirect effect.

COMMUNITY INDICATORS
To understand the context of the local restoration economy we worked with an ad hoc panel of local leaders to develop a set of indicators of the overall socio-economic well-being of the local community, drawing on existing data. We defined the local community as Grant County because the MFIMW is entirely contained within the county and most available data on socio-economic health are collected at the county level. The indicators paint a socio-economic picture of Grant County over the past 40-50 years in which there was a gradual decline, corresponding with the trend for rural eastern Oregon as a whole. However, things have stabilized and even moved up in some ways in recent years. Jobs and earnings are both up and transfer payments to the growing elderly population have also contributed to improved socio-economic well-being. The indicators cannot directly capture the effect of restoration work in the MFIMW. However, the outcomes suggest that the restoration economy is contributing to the local economic revival.

MEASURING THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC OUTCOMES OF THE MFIMW
Building on the approaches developed for a preliminary study of the MFIMW (Hibbard and Lurie, 2012), and drawing on more recent research (Nielsen-Pincus and Moseley, 2013; BenDor et al., 2015), we used three measures to assess the socio-economic effects of MFIMW restoration and monitoring activities. (For details on the measures and results see Appendix M in https://digital.osl.state.or.us/islandora/object/osl:103499/datastream/OBJ/view.)

RESTORATION-RELATED PLANNING, MANAGEMENT, AND MONITORING JOBS IN GRANT COUNTY
The MFIMW expresses a wider effort across the Pacific Northwest to restore various fish habitats and populations. In Grant County the number of organizations (government, tribal, and non-profit) concerned with restoration planning, management, and monitoring increased from 10 to 13 between 2000 and 2016. The number of people they employ nearly doubled, from 52 (46.55 FTE) to 97 (83.5 FTE).

OWEB CAPACITY GRANTS
OWEB provides capacity grants – basic operating funds – to watershed councils and soil and water conservation districts around the state. OWEB contributed a total of $1,277,150 in capacity grants to organizations relevant to the MFIMW from July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2017. Hibbard and Lurie (2006) calculated that every OWEB capacity grant dollar generates an additional $5.09 in grants, contracts, and the like. Thus, the capacity grants drew an additional $6.5M to the local economy in that ten-year period.
ESTIMATING THE EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC OUTPUT EFFECTS OF RESTORATION PROJECTS

For the heart of our study we collected data about OWEB grants awarded for on-the-ground restoration work in the MFIMW area during the period July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2017, and then applied multipliers derived specifically for Oregon’s restoration economy (Nielsen-Pincus and Moseley, 2013) to produce estimates of the overall effects on employment and economic output. We then extrapolated from that to estimate the overall socio-economic effects of all restoration work in the MFIMW area over the same period. We estimate that the awards for all projects totaled at least $15.6M. Using the multiplier, this generated an additional $19.6-$24.8M in economic activity. As well, it produced about 168 jobs. (See graphic.)

CONCLUSION

The restoration economy is particularly culturally relevant to deep rural areas where making livelihoods from natural resources continues to be important. In our experience through this project, however, restoration may often be overlooked as activity that adds to rural economic and community development. The indicators selected by our ad hoc panel cannot specifically capture the role of MFIMW restoration work in advancing the apparent local resurgence after the past 40-50 years of decline in Grant County, but the two are moving in parallel. As measured by the community indicators, the Grant County economy is doing better at the same time that restoration work is bringing work and money into the economy.

While it is methodologically impossible to demonstrate a direct cause-and-effect relationship, the IMW restoration economy has almost certainly contributed to the increase in jobs and earnings in Grant County. The results and the methods we used to obtain them should be of interest to scholars, policy makers, and community development practitioners as they shed light on the restoration economy and demonstrate the local socio-economic benefits of restoration, thereby building increased awareness and support for a healthy environment/healthy economy strategy that increases rural economic development opportunities.

SUMMARY OF RESTORATION-RELATED ACTIVITY AND JOBS IN GRANT COUNTY, OREGON

July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2017

| JOBS |
| +45 Environmental planning, management, and monitoring |
| +168 On-the-ground activities |

| DIRECT FINANCIAL IMPACT |
| ~$1.3M Administrative (capacity) grant money |
| ~$15.6M On-the-ground activities |

| ADDITIONAL ECONOMIC ACTIVITY GENERATED (INDIRECT IMPACT) |
| ~$6.5M Administrative activities |
| ~$19.6-$24.8M On-the-ground activities |
FARMERS MARKET AND SNAP

In the last 10 years, the number of Farmers Markets (FM) nationally has increased by 86% from 4,685 in 2008 to over 8,727 in 2018 (Briggs et al., 2010). FM play a critical role in increasing access to and affordability of fresh fruits and vegetables in low-income communities by accepting Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly Food Stamps, benefits. In agriculture-rich communities with high food insecurity, FM can provide a unique opportunity to generate money back into the local economy while improving the social and physical health of food-insecure households. The number of FM authorized as SNAP retailers has increased by 283% with 753 markets in 2008 to 2,884 in 2018 (“Local Food Directories: National Farmers Market Directory”). Yet in 2016, purchases made at FM
represented only 0.02% of total SNAP redemptions (Kellegrew et al., 2018). With a rise in the number of FMs accepting SNAP, there is a need for innovative strategies to increase SNAP participation.

FMs are often perceived as a venue only for the middle and upper class, offering expensive produce out of reach for lower-income communities. Skagit County, Washington’s Population Health Trust conducted a local community assessment between 2013-2016 and found the high costs of produce at FMs were barriers to healthy food access, and a large percentage of residents reported they would eat more fruits and vegetables if they were less expensive, if there was more time to prepare them, and if there was a better selection of produce at local stores. In their 2009-2013 American Community five-year estimates, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that almost 7,000 households in Skagit County receive SNAP benefits to help combat food insecurity. Over 56% of those households have children and 26% are comprised of seniors.

To promote the value of FMs as a community-based option to access local produce, Washington State University Skagit County Extension received a three-year Farmers Market SNAP Support Grant (FMSSG) from the Food and Nutrition Services U.S. Department of Agriculture (Award number FMSSG-1511944071) to fund Farmers Market Flash (FMF). FMF was a pilot project aimed to promote the inclusive nature and unique accessibility of locally-grown food available at four Skagit County FMs and increase SNAP transactions made with an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card.

THE FARMERS MARKET FLASH PROJECT
FMF strived to encourage SNAP-eligible seniors and families with children to shop at FMs in order to improve both social and nutritional health. FMF was designed as a vehicle to entice SNAP shoppers to frequent their local FM while familiarizing the consumer, market staff, vendors, and community partners with the benefits of utilizing SNAP at the market. The foundation of FMF was based on the pillars of supporting programs, diversified partners, engaging senior audiences, engaging families with children, and the market experience. (See Figure 1.)

SUPPORTING PROGRAMS
Funded by the Food Insecurity and Nutrition Incentive (FINI) grant, Double Up Bucks (DuBx) is an EBT incentive program for SNAP shoppers to increase their purchasing power, improving the affordability of local produce. When SNAP shoppers swipe their EBT card at the information booth, they receive a dollar for dollar match in the form of market currency to purchase more fruits and vegetables. To promote the value of spending SNAP at the FM, FMF integrated messaging about DuBx through social media marketing, bus ads, and radio ads.

In collaboration with the Skagit County Public Health Department, FMF staff hosted informational booths during distribution of Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program Vouchers in order to cross-promote SNAP at FMs to a wider audience.

“With a rise in the number of Farmers Markets accepting SNAP, there is a need for innovative strategies to increase SNAP participation.”
The Washington State Farmers Market Association (WSFMA) Regional Leads program provides technical assistance and support to FMs to leverage resources in food access work. A rack card designed by WSFMA was distributed by FMF staff to market Skagit County FMs and the food access programs/payment methods accepted at each market. (Visit the WSFMA Regional Leads program at http://wafarmersmarkets.org/regional-leads/)

**DIVERSIFIED PARTNERS**

FMF partnered with the Museum of Northwest Art (MoNA) to pilot an innovative approach to mobilize families to the visit their local FM. Art educators engaged youth participating in Summer Meal Program sites, Boys and Girls Clubs, and afterschool programs in fruit-and-vegetable-themed art lessons. Upon completion of each art lesson a letter was sent home to the family, inviting them to come see the child’s artwork displayed at their local market. The artwork was then featured on recipe cards distributed during cooking demonstrations at the FMF booth on market day.

The Skagit Valley Farmers Market Coalition (SVFMC) (https://www.svfmcoalition.org/) serves as a platform for FM managers and community stakeholders to work collaboratively on improving access to fruits and vegetables. To ensure a positive experience, FMF staff collaborated with the coalition to strategically plan unified messaging and marketing materials for display at each market. Additionally, the SVFMC website served as a platform for FMF to share resources with service providers.

To spread the word that “EBT is welcome at the farmer market,” FMF staff trained staff at Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and WIC on methods to educate clients about the social and health benefits of shopping at the FM. Following each training, service providers could access promotional materials and further resources from the SVFMC website.

**ENGAGING SENIOR AUDIENCES**

During the FM season, SNAP Outreach Educators engaged seniors in 30-minute culinary classes at senior centers and senior-restricted subsidized housing. Class topics included selection, preparation, and storage of produce to equip seniors with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to purchase and prepare locally-grown produce available at the FM.

**ENGAGING FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN**

FMF designed a social marketing campaign including Facebook, bus, radio, and newspaper ads to increase word-of-mouth promotion. Additionally, FMF designed promotional material for distribution at DSHS, food banks, libraries, and WIC clinics. Once at the market, FMF offered art activities, cooking demonstrations, and scavenger hunts to create a family-friendly experience.

**MARKET EXPERIENCE**

Behavioral nudging techniques were applied around the FM to guide new and existing market shoppers to the information booth. Navigational signage included A-frame and banner displays with an image of the EBT card to capture the attention of potential shoppers.
SNAP shoppers with limited English proficiency. Signage at vendor booths contained the message, “Ask me how to double your EBT $$,” to communicate vendors’ willingness to be a resource person.

Skagit County FMs run a market-level token system where customers receive Debit/Credit/EBT tokens or paper scrip at the market information booth to use when purchasing items directly from vendors. To eliminate confusion for new shoppers, FMF designed a market currency reference sheet with a visual aid explaining the multiple programs. Reference sheets were translated in Spanish and Russian to ensure the inclusive nature of the FM.

EBT Clerks received training from FMF to provide customer service to new and existing shoppers interested in spending their SNAP benefits at the market. To prevent misplacement of multiple currencies while shopping at the market, FMF designed a zipper pouch for SNAP shoppers.

FMF trained farmers, vendors, and market staff on the general SNAP process and strategies to welcome SNAP shoppers to the market. A multiple currency reference sheet for vendors was designed by FMF to ensure the proper sale of items eligible for SNAP sales, resulting in efficient and seamless SNAP transactions.

RESULTS
Through efforts of the Farmers Market Flash project and local community partners, seniors and families with children have been made aware that SNAP benefits can be used at the Farmers Market. Collected data reflects project activities have increased awareness around SNAP use at the FM, while continuing to bring in new SNAP shoppers. The number of unduplicated SNAP shoppers redeeming benefits has increased 14.8% from 452 in 2014 to 519 in 2017. The familiarity of utilizing SNAP at the market has encouraged return customers, as demonstrated by shoppers visiting an average of 2.5 times and swiping an average of $24 at the information booth for tokens in 2017. In addition, a total of $25,816 in DuBx was redeemed in 2017.

FARMERS MARKET FLASH 
LESSONS LEARNED

- **Navigational signage** with visual aid around the market can cultivate a welcoming and inviting atmosphere for SNAP shoppers.

- **A multiple currency reference sheet** available for both vendors and SNAP shoppers can increase confidence in SNAP transactions.

- **Kids’ activities** are a great way to sell the appeal of FMs as a destination for weekly shopping, as it becomes a reason for a family outing.

- **Seniors** may only be eligible to receive an average of $16 a month in benefits. Providing tips on saving benefits and stretching SNAP dollars can help seniors to overcome objections to shopping at the market. Tips such as saving benefits during the winter months to have a larger amount to spend during the market season can increase the appeal for shopping at the market, especially if a local incentive program is available to increase purchasing power.

- **Incentive programs** are critical to increasing SNAP sales at FMs in low-income communities. The availability of the county-wide DuBx program has allowed for SNAP shoppers to double their shopping dollars at the FM, increasing the appeal and ease of budgeting a portion of benefits to purchase fresh and local food.
Latinos are a growing and vibrant part of many communities but are often underrepresented and underserved by Extension programming. Access to Extension resources may be limited for a variety of reasons including language barriers and lack of awareness. Intentionally reaching Latino audiences is important to Extension’s mission of supporting resilient and healthy communities.

As part of Advanced Hardwood Biofuels Northwest (AHB), a collaborative poplar-based research project, our WSU Extension team realized that Latinos are important stakeholders for the bioeconomy. Poplar agricultural workers are primarily Latino, and Latino communities are eager to learn about energy and the environment to help their families and future generations. In 2016, AHB started programs, events, and research specifically targeted toward Latino communities, youth, families, and agriculture workers.
Latino Poplar Workers: What They Know and Need

Latinos make up a significant portion of the laborers contracted to work at poplar plantations, as is the case for many other crops. The workers are essential for planting and maintaining AHB’s poplar demonstration sites. We wanted to learn from their experiences and find out how Extension could help them in the future.

A big part of doing research with vulnerable populations, like Latino agriculture workers, is establishing relationships and building trust. One of the researchers on our team is a bilingual Latina, who helped participants feel comfortable and confident in sharing their thoughts. We spent over a year recruiting, and ultimately spoke with 35 workers in four focus groups.

Latino poplar workers told us they valued working with trees:

That is something with the trees I enjoy… I know that the tree is special for that land because the field that we plant today for next year will grow nice and green. (Translated from Spanish)

You work in the open air, you take advantage of the wind, of the shade that the trees give you when it is hot. (Translated from Spanish)

Workers discussed how starting out in the poplar plantations can be challenging. It helped them if others on the crew and the supervisors gave them assistance:

I think the most important thing is to work together, because I had to work with people who never helped me… Now in the work that I am at, we are all equal because we help each other. If there is one that is slow we encourage and we help to be at the same level as everyone. (Translated from Spanish)

While it was clear that the workers valued the trees and became increasingly skilled at their jobs, they often did not know why the trees were being grown. They expressed a need for more information about the AHB project and the conversion of trees to fuels.

Latinos Teach Latinos about Energy

‘Save energy’ and ‘protect the environment’ messages are familiar to many Americans (e.g., flip the switch), but less information is reaching Spanish speakers. Latinos can benefit from outreach on how to save energy to save money, and from understanding where our energy comes from and how it impacts the environment.

To increase energy literacy in Latino communities, AHB funded the Promotores de Energía (Energy Ambassadors) program in 2016. Promotores de Energía volunteers received training on basic energy concepts, alternative energy topics, and energy conservation tips. They also visited AHB’s demonstration site in Stanwood, Washington, to learn about the potential for poplar biofuels.

“Many Latinos care about the environment because this is where they and their children live. They are a group of people that are incredibly curious and eager to learn about how everything works. Energy literacy is just one of numerous topics they are curious to learn about in order to understand it more and so they can save money,” explained Yolimar Rivera Vázquez, former WSU Extension Natural Resources and Latino Engagement Projects Coordinator.

The eight certified Promotores de Energía used their training to do energy outreach in their local Latino communities. They produced Spanish educational materials, like an energy audit exercise for homeowners. They gave presentations at schools, community centers, churches, homes, and events.
Program participants said:

It was interesting to learn how with little change we can save energy and money. (Translated from Spanish)

Everything was interesting and important. I will now share with family and friends of the importance of taking care of the environment. (Translated from Spanish)

The program was a great success. In three months, the Promotores de Energía reached over 300 people through 17 presentations and two community events!

¡TODA LA FAMILIA ES BIENVENIDA! (THE ENTIRE FAMILY IS WELCOME)

One of the primary takeaways from our interactions with Latino communities is the importance of family-friendly programming. These events appeal to family values and allow parents to attend who have childcare needs. We held two events for Latino families in Snohomish County, Washington – a field tour and an interactive energy event called the Bioenergy Carnival.

During the field tour, children and young adults took part in science games and experiments. These were run by outreach specialists from the Northwest Earth and Space Sciences Pipeline (NESSP) Washington NASA Space Grant Consortium and Snohomish County Extension 4H Program. Meanwhile, the adults heard presentations in Spanish about energy and Extension services.

The field tour included a game for the whole family. In the game, people passed around “carbon” (balloons) to illustrate the difference between renewable and non-renewable fuels. When using fossil fuels, the balloons came from the ground, passed through vehicles, and built up in the atmosphere. When using biofuels, the balloons cycled between the atmosphere, plants, and vehicles.

One participant shared with us, “It was truly a great educational experience to learn about this topic. It was not just a talk but a direct experience with the nature and benefits of it.”

The Bioenergy Carnival, El Carnaval de la Bioenergía, provided Latino families with a chance to learn together through hands-on activities and science demonstrations conducted in Spanish. The central theme was energy and the environment. Stations covered energy efficiency, wind/hydro/solar power, biofuels, wood energy, and food waste for energy. Seventy-five people, including volunteers and hosts, attended the carnival. Families collected stamps at each station to earn chances at winning educational prizes.

Our primary co-sponsor was NESSP through Washington NASA Space Grant Consortium at the University of Washington. Student volunteers from NESSP ran multiple stations. We also had volunteers from WSU Extension Snohomish County’s Promotores program and representatives of Impact Bioenergy. Snohomish County Public Utility District (PUD) provided educational display materials, and Bonneville Power Administration sent give-away items.

BRINGING ENERGY TO THE CLASSROOM:
REACHING LATINO YOUTH

AHB connected with area schools that have high attendance of Latino students. WSU Extension Energy Intern, Sarah Lane, brought an hour-long interactive energy lesson into classrooms of third through eighth grade youth from those schools. In total, AHB reached 700 students through 26 energy lessons.

“Our energy portfolio future is dependent on the young minds that will be entering into the job
At the end of the lesson, students came up with creative ideas for saving energy, like using a turbine to capture energy when water goes down the drain. They also expressed willingness to change their own behaviors to reduce home energy consumption. Teachers appreciated the interactive nature of the lesson, the instructor’s enthusiasm, and alignment with their curriculum.

AHB Extension also taught Latino high school students from migrant and seasonal-farmworker families in University of Washington’s Dare to Dream Academies. We took part as invited instructors for the Science Academy, run by the Washington NASA Space Grant Consortium. We used a zombie apocalypse survival scenario to make renewable energy topics fun and interesting. When necessary, bilingual mentors and students helped translate information to non-English speaking participants. Students learned about various energy sources and how biodiesel is made. Then they imagined how different forms of energy could be used as they escaped, defended, and ultimately rebuilt society in a post-apocalypse landscape. "

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LATINO EXTENSION
Based on our experiences at AHB, here are recommendations for incorporating Latino stakeholders into Extension programming:

1. HIRE NATIVE SPANISH SPEAKERS.
   Beyond an ability to communicate, native speakers can foster a sense of inclusion. They may also have existing connections within Latino social networks that can help in recruiting audiences.

2. NETWORK WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS.
   Look for local groups with established connections in the Latino community. Consider co-sponsoring events or offering to attend their events. Collaborate with schools with high Latino attendance.

3. INCLUDE THE WHOLE FAMILY.
   Family-friendly events are popular, as many Latinos wanted to come to events with their children. And you will likely get more participation when childcare needs are met.

4. BE PATIENT.
   Developing trust and relationships is a slow process. You have to be persistent, friendly, and able to show you are genuinely interested in helping them.

5. TRAIN LATINO OUTREACH VOLUNTEERS.
   The success of the Promotores de Energía shows how quickly Extension training programs can multiply effects within the Latino community; eight volunteers reached over 300 people! Although you need to find educators who speak Spanish, the effort is worth it because the volunteers can reach a much larger Spanish-speaking audience.

Working with Latino communities is highly rewarding. They are often excited to have access to information that many English-speakers take for granted and are eager to share what they learn with others. While translating material into Spanish is useful, we cannot stop there. Latino outreach initiatives, like those developed through the AHB project, demonstrate how diverse audiences can be included in the transition to renewable energy through innovative Extension programs.
INTRODUCTION
Community economic development (CED) professionals, the first-line providers of public goods, are facing a challenging policy environment where the politicians cutting the checks have objectives misaligned with the citizenry, despite popular opinion polling consistently indicating support for more such goods and services (Dahlgreen, 2013; Gilens, 2014; Lichtman, 2014). CED professionals have an impossible task: take control of the steering wheel driving delivery of new public goods and services to overcome CED challenges in an era when legislatures everywhere have prioritized slimmer budgets, low taxes, and special interests. How do CED professionals credibly commit to initiatives and programs aligned with the needs of the constituencies they serve in this environment?
“Gig Economy” entrepreneurs and venture capitalists have masterfully repackaged a tried and true method of securing public resources for private gain by tapping into the status quo economic development practice of Smokestack Chasing: a focused, large infusion of capital investments, offsets, and tax incentives resulting in significant economic impact. Facebook server farms. Amazon distribution and fulfillment centers. The Tesla Gigafactory. Foxconn’s first U.S. factory. Gig Economy proponents brandish an image of ecologically aware, socially-conscious projects promising thousands of jobs, an injection of local tax revenue, and a massive economic spillover effect into surrounding local communities.

Modern-day Smokestack Chasing all-too-often comes with unforeseen tradeoffs. These Faustian Bargains cost the public billions in incentives in return for unaccountable pledges of economic trickle-down, with nary a claw-back clause attached. Each day that goes by, the tab for Foxconn’s Wisconsin’s factory goes up, the Gigafactory fails to employ the workforce numbers promised, and we find that even investor-owned renewable energy developers fail to deliver on economic pledges to their host communities despite lavish tax abatements, subsidies, etc. These actors are well aware of their shaky value proposition: the vernacular in modern-day startups refers to their “next-big-thing” as unicorn chasing, since launching a successful venture is tantamount to catching a unicorn.

Smokestack Chasing undermines central aspirations of CED by:

- Application of technological solutions to socio-political problems;
- Extracting collective assets, and diminishing community wealth;
- Redirecting public goods redirected into the hands of a few;
- Curtailing local governance rights;
- Obstructing economic and civic participatory pathways;
- Furthering generational opportunity gaps.

The CED profession has neglected diversified, bottom-up economic development programming, missing an opportunity to empower individuals at the bottom of the economic hierarchy. Small business entrepreneurship is declining, wages are stagnant, rents increasing, household indebtedness is in bubble territory, and homeownership is on the wane. Misapplying privatized solutions to collective problems leads to increasing societal maladies. The CED profession is overdue to re-engage with a forgotten tool at the back of the economic development toolbox: the cooperative business model.

THE COOPERATIVE BUSINESS SECTOR

Three models of cooperative business development promise a practical pathway for CED.

**Philanthropic Partnerships.** Retailer Edward Filene was one of the wealthiest men in the world at the turn of the 20th Century. A Progressive Era industrialist, Filene was a champion of progressive causes and benevolent capitalism. Frustrated with the predatory lending practices loan sharks meted out upon his staff, Filene took on the task of democratizing a share of the consumer finance market. From 1920-1937, Filene infused the Credit Union National Extension Bureau (CUNEB) with $1 million to grow a national credit union sector – and supportive public policy – in tandem with public entrepreneurs. By 1953, the CUNEB’s efforts resulted in the creation of over 25,000 individual credit unions. Today’s credit union sector is owned by over 100 million Americans, governed by 70,000 board directors, employing over 300,000 professionals, controlling 10% of the consumer finance market.

**Leveraging Economic Development Resources.** In the depths of the Great Depression, the FDR Administration initiated a goal of 100% national
The collaboration with rural interests resulted in the creation of a flourishing electric system that continues to be stewarded by the users. Second, Edward Filene leveraged his extensive wealth not to tell people what to do, but to create consumer-owned financing alternatives operating in the public interest and competing head-on against powerful financial interests.

Once established, these co-op systems can be leveraged for spectacular CED ends. Community-aligned vision, leadership, and enabling policy can further drive inspiration and entrepreneurship in the public interest, as persists with the electric cooperatives. Once established, rural residents were trained in practices in starting co-op enterprise to meet their needs. Many of the same interests involved in developing electric co-ops turned their attention to rural teleco cooperatives (100% national telco saturation was attained by the late 1950s). This era saw public entrepreneurs build entire co-op sectors in agriculture, credit unions, housing, and daycare. Local community members, empowered by supportive social entrepreneurial infrastructure in the form of government, CED, and university Extension professionals, were able to leverage experience and the newfound collective, community wealth from self-governed industries to develop critically important enterprise.

These movements have resulted in an American co-op sector that reaches across the entire U.S. economy (see Figure 1). One in every two Americans owns at least a single share in a cooperative. There are 350 million total memberships in over 39,000 cooperatives, employing over two million Americans, turning over a trillion+ dollars annually. It’s well past

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**Economic Clustering and Enabling Policy.** Italy’s disparate cooperatives of the 1970’s convened around a comprehensive strategy of clustering across co-op industries and regions, developing and reinforcing a business-to-business solidarity structure privileging cooperatives and reciprocating investments. Fragmentation and limited market reach left the sector vulnerable to the rising commodification of value-added products and high-velocity competition from their conglomerating corporate counterparts. Paraphrasing David Thompson (2005), a single Italian cooperative retailer can count on a national network providing an array of services, including:

1. Purchase and operate the real estate;
2. Build the shopping center (usually built by worker cooperatives);
3. Finance the property;
4. Manage, clean, and maintain the property;
5. Provide security to the property;
6. Provide the accounting service;
7. Train personnel; and
8. Link to Coop Italia.

The consortia, Coop Italia, controls an 18.7% market share on over $15 billion in sales in 2017 (Magazine, 2017).

These three examples of systemic co-op development demonstrate empowering community wealth-building strategies that scale from the local to national. First, had FDR relied solely on investor-owned energy to electrify America, we might still see rural communities waiting to turn on the lights.
time to engage cooperatives in a large-scale CED partnership.

CATALYZING THE COOPERATIVE SECTOR FOR CED

Our third example, the Italian co-ops, provides a case study for leveraging public policy and the collective might of cooperatives for the purposes of an enduring CED. Italian law complements the co-op sector in such a way as to enhance their competitiveness and business-to-business solidarity within their respective industrial sectors. All cooperatives contribute three percent of their profits to a central fund dedicated to providing cooperative business investment capital. Further, any cooperative facing dissolution will see its assets diverted into this fund, mitigating vulture capitalists (as recently witnessed by the razing of the True Value purchasing co-op [Zumbach, 2018]). Favorable policy and industrial strategy are vital to the health of cooperatives if they are to serve as complements to CED practices. But CED professionals need not wait for politicians to utilize cooperatives in their economic development portfolios.

Cleveland’s Evergreen Cooperatives were designed utilizing an import substitution strategy with key anchor institutions: hospitals, museums, universities, which are decidedly rooted in place. Doing business with anchor institutions can provide a reliable business partner whose local mission is aligned with community wealth building values of cooperatives. Evergreen’s worker-owned cooperatives in industrial laundry, large-scale inner-city agriculture, and solar energy have signed exclusive contracts with these anchor institutions to provide hundreds of jobs and keeping public dollars rooted in the local community. Evergreen’s central association is harnessing economic surpluses to grow additional cooperatives, and concurrently, complement CED programming and outcomes. Variants of this model are being deployed in Madison, Wisconsin; Denver, Colorado; Jackson, Mississippi; Cincinnati, Ohio; and elsewhere.

PUTTING COOPERATIVES INTO ACTION

Public entrepreneurship of this sort is no simple pathway. Fortunately, we have numerous examples of how to get there. CED professionals must add these practices to the CED toolbox. Unchecked, the dominant Smokestack Chasing model benefits only those interests who have diverted billions in public monies to socialize their risk. Even in today’s policy environment, resources exist in abundance and CED professionals must strategize and redirect these resources back toward public goods and community wealth building.

If CED professionals do the hard work of redirecting these resources, there is no doubt we can advance co-op development models similar to the systems we see in Italy, Spain, Indonesia, and elsewhere. In the meantime, we have an existing co-op sector that is not yet at the table. Working with advocacy organizations such as National Cooperative Business Association (NCBA) and Cooperatives for a Better World (CBW), we can tap into emergent attempts at forming local-regional, cross-sector associations of businesses with the co-ops in our own communities. We all see credit unions, farmer co-ops, utility co-ops, food and retail in our daily lives. Working with NCBA and CBW, we can convene prospective partners to initiate the dialogue around co-ops as a centerpiece in CED policy and practice.

Depression-era Rural Americans started the decade with virtually no energy infrastructure and ended up owning their own multi-billion-dollar electric grid in a matter of 15 years. Financial consumers, with the assistance of values-aligned philanthropy, grew credit unions from under 100 to over 25,000 institutions in 30 years. And the Italian cooperatives show us how existing cooperatives can mobilize for authentic self-help CED. Considering the U.S. co-op economy has over 37,000 cooperatives, employing almost two million Americans, with over 350 million co-op memberships, the time is ripe.

Must we chase unicorns? Why continue to prop up an economic development system that often does little to help our communities and too frequently leaves them worse for the wear? It’s time we reassess our CED practice. It’s time to bring cooperatives and community wealth building institutions back, in order to bring balance to our CED toolbox, and deliver on the potential for bottom-up economic development. ✪
My role as Executive Director with Regenerative Business Institute (RBI) keeps me in close conversation with entrepreneurs and business owners in a variety of industries. I have walked with many through increasing and nearly impossible barriers to entry. I have also seen first-hand the struggles existing businesses and families are experiencing in efforts to keep their doors open. Over the last couple of years, more and more of my conversations about starting a business are with Social Security-eligible clients who are now realizing that Social Security benefits alone will not carry them financially through what has been the industrial age concept of retirement.
The challenges faced by our aging Baby Boomer population are just the beginning. Young entrepreneurs regularly approach RBI with challenges overcoming access to capital in order to realize their dream of business ownership while current business owners cite a lack of qualified buyers in the market as one of the top stressors relating to the succession of their business. I regularly interact with many economic development professionals and civic leaders, who stress that business retention and expansion (BR&E) along with access to a talented, qualified workforce, are their top constraints in economic development efforts. It has become increasingly clear that each of these issues stem from a common source. My time spent traveling throughout New Zealand and other parts of the globe have taught me, “the solution to a problem lies within the problem itself” (Mollison, 1988). This guiding principle has led to the approach of addressing these economic challenges by instituting collaborative competition through cooperative and employee stock ownership program (ESOP) business models.

COOPERATIVE BEGINNINGS
Cooperation through cooperatives reaches back to examples like the Rochdale Pioneers in 1844, and even further back to the Fenwick Weavers Society in 1761. (Holyoake, 1893). One of the key principles of cooperatives is the notion of self-help, whereby the members of a community take it upon themselves to create, operate, and manage enterprises that serve the common interests of those members. Cooperatives usually form in one of three ownership structures: consumer owned, producer/worker owned, or a combination of consumer and worker ownership.

Cooperatives have proven to be powerful economic impact creators, often experiencing incredible stability and staying power, especially when compared to their privately- or investor-owned counterparts, all while placing priority on benefit for the cooperative membership over a narrow focus on profit. (Deller, et al. 2009). The Quebec Ministry of Industry and Commerce reports that Cooperatives have a 27% greater likelihood of surviving beyond the critical fifth year. Cooperatives still exist today and, according to the National Cooperative Business Association (NCBA), most often take the form of housing cooperatives, utility cooperatives, credit unions, value-added agriculture production, and manufacturing companies.

OUR FIRST CASE STUDY–FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT
In a small rural town between Phoenix and Tucson, a cooperative project, unlike any in current existence, is underway. A couple that owns a small business in the family entertainment industry approached RBI in early 2017, citing concerns with declining sales trends and an inability to attract and retain a labor force that would allow them to grow and develop the business. RBI worked them through an intensive feasibility analysis to determine that a cooperatively owned family entertainment center would solve the problems experienced by the current business model. Additionally, this model would have the benefit of bringing a family entertainment venue to an area that does not meet real estate or demographic requirements usually required by large, investor-owned family entertainment firms.

This project required an evaluation of risk associated with the investment of a multi-million dollar, 40,000
square-foot indoor trampoline and extreme sports park. We needed to identify where a small family-owned business would gain access to that level of capital and what the transition would look like. Importantly, if the large investor-owned firms set requirements for themselves that prevent pursuit of projects in this type of demographic, we had to ensure our venture would be viable.

By signing the membership forms and investing financially through the Member Investor Share Offering (MISO) the proof of viability is present and the capital needed to build the center becomes available. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) also supports the financing of cooperatively-structured businesses using a program that is similar to the Small Business Administration’s (SBA) 7(a) and 504 loan guarantee programs. Giving ownership of the family entertainment center to the community that will ultimately benefit from its existence while also encouraging patronage in the center by declaring patronage dividends is a sound economic development strategy. This encourages households to start thinking about alternative ways to participate in the economy, producing regenerative results from their spending.

OUR SECOND CASE STUDY-RESTAURANTS
In another rural community in Arizona, a different problem is taking shape. The Director of Economic Development engaged RBI to explore options for a struggling restaurant industry in this community. RBI met with twelve locally-owned, sit-down restaurant owners, separately, to learn about the concerns the owners have and the challenges they are experiencing. In each of the interviews, the following commonalities arose:

- Ownership is exhausted and wants to sell the business
- Ownership has tried to sell but was unsuccessful in finding a qualified buyer
- A lack of training for back-of-the-house staff was exponentially increasing direct costs
- Front-of-the-house issues were creating increased customer complaints
- Getting employees to show up to work was a real challenge
- A lack of public transportation greatly contributes to employees not showing up to work
- Proximity to the major metropolitan area creates retail leakage (patrons spending in neighboring communities)

Independent and isolated incentives often lead to outcomes that are unfavorable for the whole. (Bartlett, 2010) Each restaurant, independently competing for available “Food-Away-From-Home” dollars found that their individual costs of attracting and retaining sales were increasing while the available market size was decreasing. Food quality and dining experience in each restaurant began to suffer due to the lack of sales and profit, resulting in diners seeking opportunities elsewhere, in this case, in neighboring communities.

While there is growing interest in cooperatively-structured businesses, there remains much to be done in gaining the attention of business owners, municipal leaders, economic development professionals, consumers and producers, and providing education as to why they should consider the benefits of the co-op business model. For example, cooperatively-owned brewpubs are gaining in popularity across the U.S., primarily due to a co-ops ability to raise capital, in many cases, without having to register a securities offering. The benefits of the cooperative business model go well beyond a co-ops ability to raise capital and provide worker and patron ownership. Any community expected to adopt the co-op business model will
require these benefits to be clearly communicated and easily understood.

In this case, RBI is exploring a cooperatively-owned industry: twelve restaurants, assembled under a single co-op, owned by the restaurant employees and patrons of the restaurants. By sharing resources across the co-op, RBI anticipates that each restaurant will be able to overcome the issues identified in the interview by cross-scheduling staff between restaurants, co-op owned transportation to shuttle staff between restaurants and to and from home, and cooperatively-managed administrative functions like accounting, payroll, marketing, training, and promotional activities. Rather than each individual restaurant fighting for an increased share of a decreasing market, the co-op works to increase the market share and profitability of the entire industry, translating into higher wages for industry staff, democratic choice in service offering, and the Food-Away-From-Home portion of the household budget working as an investment.

A NEW PERSPECTIVE
The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) publishes the Consumer Expenditures Survey, an analysis of how Americans spend their money, on the complete range of consumer expenditures by income and demographic characteristics. This type of data, along with the Retail Sales Per Capita metrics from the U.S. Census Bureau, provides perspective regarding the high retail leakage rate in the county of the proposed projects. In fact, due to the county’s proximity to both of the largest metropolitan areas, the rate proves to be the highest in all of Arizona.

Residents who make up the membership of the family entertainment co-op spend, on average, $2,900 annually in the entertainment category. The Food-Away-From Home spend exceeds $3,000 annually. Each project’s current prospectus anticipates that a family could realize a six percent return of their annual spend on family entertainment or dining out through patronage dividends. Established as a democratic organization, the cooperative would anticipate higher levels of patronage loyalty because members could see higher returns with higher participation levels. Moreover, the membership is the voice that determines the entertainment or dining mix offered.

RBI continues to develop programming to work with economic development professionals and civic leadership to expand beyond family entertainment dollars into other critical areas of the household budget like: Food-At-Home (cooperative grocery and direct farm sales), Food-Away-From-Home (cooperative restaurants and brewpubs), utilities, insurance, transportation, clothing, housing, manufacturing, and technology firms designed to increase the wage capacity in rural communities.

Furthermore, economic development professionals, incentivized to develop local, cooperatively-owned companies rather than recruiting nationally-branded companies, stand to create economies where 56% of consumer dollars stay in the local community compared to the 13% of consumer dollars non-locally owned, nationally-branded companies leave in the local economy. Depending on the tax structure of the municipality or rural community, this local spending can translate into exponential tax revenues critical to infrastructure and municipal services.

CONCLUSION
I believe that the positive and desirable aspects of capitalism can be married to a more socially-conscious business environment. In doing so, we should expect economic structures that incentivize self-help by the people, reward entrepreneurial and capitalistic endeavors, and provide for an economic environment where the components of the household budget go beyond consumerism and take on a much-needed investment and wealth-building purpose. As a father, business development professional and experienced accountant, I am excited to see and inspired by the possibilities that lie ahead for those communities that are prepared to embrace an era of collaborative competition through cooperative business structures. ★
Homes are where jobs sleep at night. Without housing it becomes incredibly difficult to attract industry and business. Over the last several years, by various needs assessments and community input workshops, housing remains one of the most needed and complicated topics in Wyoming.

Housing throughout the state of Wyoming continues to be a topic of conversation had by communities, residents, and those looking to relocate to Wyoming. As a result of hearing this common theme of housing (needs, wants, desires), the Wyoming Business Council, the University of Wyoming Extension, and sixteen other housing agencies in Wyoming collaborated to create a Housing Toolkit. The mission of the Housing Toolkit is to help communities successfully address common struggles by developing tools and a team that can provide resources, information, and a map leading to action.
Prior to the Toolkit collaboration, the Wyoming Business Council, UW Extension, and others located throughout the state held several meetings to identify statewide needs. Topics included tourism, diversifying the economy, jobs, day cares, and housing. The group acknowledged from the beginning that housing would likely be the hardest task to cover and housing was not initially selected.

After much thought and discussion, the realization that homes are where jobs sleep at night, and before improvements could be made to other sectors, the communities’ homes were a critical and essential need to fulfilling any other need or desire.

Once housing was selected as a statewide need, the original gathering of individuals began inviting housing professionals, agencies of all kinds, nonprofits, and developers, all who could provide insight and education on housing in Wyoming. The process started with a series of meetings to identify solutions for the variety of needs and wants for housing in Wyoming. A number of facilitated meetings were held to develop the process and define the Toolkit and its mission. A Toolkit emerged and as the group evolved so did the Toolkit.

Although Wyoming is the least populated state in the U.S., no two towns have the same housing requirements or desires. The partnership between the agencies was vital in identifying opportunities to overcome the housing disparities, cost, and availability.

Located within the Toolkit are a variety of resources for communities and municipalities to identify their housing needs:

- List of housing agencies and their programs
- Housing success stories
- Resource list
- Financial tools
- Housing flowchart to help communities determine if they are ready for a housing study or what they need to do to be ready
- Consumer information

The biggest achievement of the group was the Housing Needs Study by Income Level and County. This is the first report of its kind in Wyoming and breaks down the needs by income level, in an easy to read four-page report. This report is easily understandable by non-housing individuals. (insert link.)

It was important to all of the collaborators, in addition to providing resources, that the Toolkit provide hope to communities looking for help as well as share the success stories other Wyoming communities have achieved.

GUERNSEY – SUCCESS IN HOUSING

One of the success stories featured in the Toolkit is the town of Guernsey located in South Central Wyoming. Guernsey is a town with a population of 1,200 people and was struggling for years to provide housing for their residents. To help overcome the housing disparity, a group of six individuals who called themselves the G2 group (Growing Guernsey) identified the need for affordable housing in their community and formed a nonprofit to overcome this challenge.

G2 purchased and renovated an empty building which currently has full occupancy. They then purchased at auction the “pink apartments,” a former town eyesore; they re-sold the building to a contractor for renovation. Their next project included purchasing an oversized lot with a rundown trailer, the lot was split into two and a home was built on each. In addition to these housing renovations, a lot was purchased and a new home was built.
All three houses were sold for under $150,000. The group also helped the Wyoming Housing Network build a new, 12-unit apartment. Economic developer, Bruce Heimbuck, was invited to a regional symposium in Denver to talk about the project after gaining regional attention as a result of the Toolkit video and Best Practice Manual.

To better understand their motivation, challenges, and success, the Wyoming Business Council and Community Development Extension Educators from the University of Wyoming went to Guernsey to meet with the G2 group, town electives, and the community through a variety of focus groups and a town public meeting. During these sessions, the team was able to understand what worked, what was learned, and what the current housing needs are in Guernsey. Ripple effect mapping was used to capture the comments and effects that the G2 housing initiative had on the community. Hearing how residents in one community took action and made a difference is just one resource found in the Toolkit.

Takeaways from the meeting with residents in Guernsey were positive regarding the G2 group and their accomplishments. It was indicated many times that community members began working on their homes and a sense of community pride in their homes was re-established. The community has since done other projects to improve the quality of life in Guernsey.

Although the G2 group was successful in their endeavors, the need for more housing was communicated throughout the visit. Guernsey’s success and response to their housing needs is attainable by other communities and demonstrates the power of residents taking action.

The Housing Toolkit is an ongoing process and will continue to evolve as efforts continue to help communities in Wyoming.
The Wyoming Business Council collaborates with other state agencies and various stakeholders – public, private and nonprofit – to tackle local, regional and statewide quality-of-life issues and opportunities that have an economic development component.

Mission

Help communities successfully address common struggles by developing tools and a team that can provide resources, information and a map leading to action.

Background

Wyoming has been gathering data from communities about their needs through community assessments, Town 23 and other assessment venues for more than 15 years. Many themes are continuous and recurring across the state, such as affordable housing and workforce development and attraction.
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Plus, you may contact the authors directly with your questions.
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