

## Discovery Workshop Report

### Oxford, Brant, Norfolk, Elgin, and Tecumseh Region

November 16, 2009

#### INTRODUCTION

This report is part of The Rural Research Priorities through Community Engagement (RRP) Project, a one-year endeavor to identify and prioritize development needs in Rural Ontario. The report is a summary of information collected at a 3-hour workshop in Simcoe, ON. Eighteen community leaders and business people from Oxford, Brant, Norfolk, Elgin, and Tecumseh gave feedback on their community's development needs and research questions. This information, along with similar information gathered in seven other communities in Southwestern Ontario, will guide the research pursued over the course of the RRP project.

The workshop was hosted by Mr. Cliff Shank, Community Economic Development Officer, Norfolk District Business Development Corporation with the support of the Oxford Small Business Support Centre, Inc.; Enterprise Brant; Elgin Community Futures Development Corporation; and Tecumseh Community Development Corporation. Dr. Wayne Caldwell, Professor, University of Guelph; Mr. Harold Flaming, Executive Director, The Ontario Rural Council (TORC); and Mr. Jeff Dixon, Project Coordinator, The Monieson Centre, introduced the RRP project and Mr. Erik Lockhart, Associate Facilitator, Queen's Executive Decision Centre, facilitated the workshop. Special thanks belong to Dr. Jennifer Ball, University of Guelph; Dr. Yolande Chan, Director, The Monieson Centre, Queen's School of Business; and Ms. Suzanne Ainley, Project Coordinator, TORC, for their support of the event. The RRP project is funded by the Province of Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.



## QUESTION 1

*What are the challenges and needs with respect to rural community and economic development and making the Oxford, Brant, Norfolk, Elgin, and Tecumseh region a vital community (economic, social, health)?*

Top Issues:

1. **Health Care.** There needs to be greater awareness of health care needs, and solutions for addressing rural health issues in the region, including the attraction of health care professionals.
2. **Youth.** The community needs to create opportunities to attract and retain youth.
3. **Supporting Entrepreneurship.** We need to support and encourage entrepreneurs and stimulate home-based businesses.
4. **Local Economic Diversification.** Population loss and manufacturing job loss needs to be addressed. Declining physical labour-based jobs need to be replaced with skills-based jobs.
5. **Creative Economy.** We need a competitive advantage for the creative/knowledge economy.
6. **Community Partnerships.** Groups are lacking communication. They need to work together to build momentum.
7. **Training and Education.** We need to build up post secondary institutions, and increase skills training and access to post secondary institutions.
8. **Aging Population.** We need to create opportunities for local spending of income.
9. **Transportation.** There is currently limited access to highways, and public transit within the region.
10. **Poverty.** We need to address local poverty and low income housing.

## QUESTION 2

*If you had access to researchers for a year, what would you ask them to study in relation to question 1? What are the critical research questions requiring answers and insights?*

1. **Youth Retention.** How do we merge local economic diversification with attracting and retaining youth? What is missing to attract youth, from a lifestyle perspective?
2. **Regional Partnerships.** How can we remove barriers between neighbouring municipalities so they can work together for regional economic development?
3. **Creative Economy Models.** What methods of economic development can be applied to the creative and/or knowledge economy? What are the limitations of these methods and how can the gaps be addressed?
4. **Policy Development.** How can we attract diversification for cluster developments in the knowledge-based economy and what policy will support this?
5. **Post-Secondary Education.** How can we attract post-secondary institutions and knowledge-based industries to diversify the economy?
6. **Regional Assets.** Which regional strengths should be focused on to distinguish the area and foster the region's development?
7. **Skills Leveraging.** How do we inventory and capitalize on traditional skills for communities in transition?
8. **Public Transportation.** How could we improve public transportation?
9. **Entrepreneurship.** What is the best way to support prospective entrepreneurs?
10. **Health Care.** Are LHINs an effective system for providing healthcare in rural Ontario? How can we improve healthcare delivery in rural Ontario?

### QUESTION 3

*What local resources (organizations, reports, past work etc.) might contribute to addressing the issues identified above? What local businesses have had success overcoming related challenges and can be consulted or studied?*

1. **Youth Retention.** How do we merge local economic diversification with attracting and retaining youth? What is missing to attract youth, from a lifestyle perspective?
  - Gina Brown at McMaster
  - Oxford County Youth strategy 2008. Recommendations re: needs from youth.
  - Oxford County Drug Task Force
  - University of Waterloo: Software engineering program, high-tech incubator program, Communitech
  - Ingersoll Fusion Center-Town of Ingersoll Bill
  - Peter Kenyon Bank of Ideas (Australia)
  - Parks and Recreation Ontario Youth Friendly Awards
  - Youth friendly communities program
  - YMCA
  - Huron Health Kicks project
  
2. **Regional Partnerships.** How can we remove barriers between neighbouring municipalities to foster partnerships for regional economic development?
  - South Central Ontario Region project-South Central Ontario Region doing planning together: Norfolk, Elgin, Brant, Middlesex, Oxford economic development partnership
  - Southern Ontario Marketing Alliance (SOMA): [www.somasite.com](http://www.somasite.com)
  - Tourist Partnerships-Ontario South Coast
  - Southwest Economic Alliance (SWEA)
  - South West Ontario Rural Cultural Alliance
  - Ontario Cultural Rural Alliance
  - Still not enough co-operation between Brantford, Brant, Haldimand, Norfolk, Six Nations, New Credit
  - Rob Greenwood, Harris Center for Regional Policy Development, Newfoundland and Labrador
  - Norfolk County Mayor, Dennis Travale
  - “Coopetition”- a new term referring to cooperating while still competing with each other.
  - Oxford Tourism BR+E
  - Ontario’s South coast partnership between Haldimand, Norfolk, and Elgin.
  
3. **Creative Economy Models.** What methods of economic development can be applied to the creative and/or knowledge economy? What are the limitations of these methods and how can the gaps be addressed?
  - Creative Rural Economy case study on Prince Edward County (report by Ministry of Agriculture)
  - Dr. Richard Florida

- Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs' (OMAFRA) Rural Economic Development Data & Intelligence (REDDI) tools
  - Oxford's Cultural Plan released November, 2009
4. **Policy Development.** How can we attract diversification for cluster developments in the knowledge-based economy and what policy will support this?
    - Canada's Creative Corridor, Ontario East Economic Development Commission
    - Creative City Task Force: London, Ontario
    - Elena Bird, City of Toronto: Cultural mapping and policy objectives
    - Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs' competitive advantage analysis tool has added "creative economy" as sector classification
    - Oxford Creative Connections Study (Dr. Greg Baeker)
  5. **Post-Secondary Education.** How can we attract post-secondary institutions and knowledge-based industries to diversify the economy?
    - Town of Ingersoll attracting Conestoga College
    - Brantford municipality has heavily invested its own money to buy or fix up buildings for Wilfred Laurier's/Nipissing University's local campuses. Also, used the investment to revitalize the downtown.
    - City of Cambridge and business leaders who worked to bring campus of University of Waterloo School of Agriculture to Cambridge-not too rural, but some lessons learned.
    - Economic Developers Council of Ontario (EDCO) Conference 2008 had workshops with guest speakers and panels.
  6. **Regional Assets.** Which regional strengths should be focused on to distinguish the area and foster the region's development?
    - South Central Ontario Region (SCOR) Plan
  7. **Skills Leveraging.** How do we inventory and capitalize on traditional skills for communities in transition?
    - University co-op programs
    - Lakehead University (a northern university?) that only admits students planning to remain to practice in northern Ontario
    - Local Training Boards and Local Economic Development Departments/Advisory Committees
  8. **Public Transportation.** How could we improve public transportation?
    - Metronauts project in Toronto : Mark Kuznicki, Remarkk! Consulting
    - Haldimand and Norfolk County Rural Transportation Feasibility Study : [www.spinningyourwheels.org](http://www.spinningyourwheels.org)
  9. **Entrepreneurship.** What is the best way to support prospective entrepreneurs?
    - University of Waterloo: Software Engineering Program, High-tech incubator program, Communitech
    - MaRS Centre in Toronto
    - Studies/analysis coming out of Growing Forward program aimed at instilling business skills in small businesses/farmers

- Kentucky Entrepreneurial Coaches Institute
  - Business Incubator examples, both successful and not
  - Self Employment Benefits program results
  - Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC) Annual Reports
  - Community EFFORT project: pilot project for Enterprise Facilitation model using local resource board and Enterprise Facilitator
  - Enterprise Brantford: Offers help with business plans and access to grants/ loans for entrepreneurs
10. **Health Care.** Are LHINs an effective system for providing healthcare in rural Ontario? How can we improve healthcare delivery in rural Ontario?
- Video Conference by City Specialists for patients in rural Ontario small communities (e.g. Carol Gerrett)

## QUESTION 4

*To ensure that today's workshop results in lasting community benefits, what actions can your community take to address these priorities and what assistance do you need?*

### **Suggested Next Steps (in no particular order)**

- Media public relations campaign. Celebrate successes. Why not publicize our wins, successes across communities?
- Town Hall meeting across region: Ensure invites go out across the region to various events
- Develop profiles of local businesses. Need to find success stories: motivate and mentor entrepreneurs
- Cultural planning. Need an integrated regional cultural plan and resources that are user friendly
- Make Monieson Centre seminars on Green and Creative Economies available online
- Summarize results from RPP workshops, present them to municipal councilors next week (WC)
- Webcasts. Can webinars be developed on key burning issues (e.g. agri webinars, broadband usage, technology in home-based business) for easy access?
- Build Inventory of retired human resource capacity. Note: lots of existing orgs such as Port Dover Enhancement association, Thamesford for taking action, Kiwanis clubs
- Educational programs. Using videoconferencing network using CFDC facilities. Regionally and nationally
- Present key findings from today to municipal councilors

## Appendix A – Rough Ideas for Question 1

*What are the challenges and needs with respect to rural community and economic development and making the Oxford, Brant, Norfolk, Elgin, and Tecumseh region a vital community (economic, social, health)?*

### Voting Results

Multiple Selection (maximum choices = 6)

Number of ballot items: 21

Total number of voters (N): 12

Rank	Issue	Comments	Total Votes
1	<b>Health Care</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LHINs being aware and truly addressing rural health issues in the region.</li> <li>Attracting health care professionals</li> <li>Doctor recruitment strategy and available funding to attract new doctors</li> </ul>	9
2	<b>Youth</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attracting and retaining youth</li> <li>Encouraging young people to return after university by creating opportunities for them</li> <li>Employment opportunities for new graduates to gain necessary experience to excel/become leaders</li> <li>Retirees 'double-dipping' with the same company after retirement</li> </ul>	9
3	<b>Entrepreneurship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting and encouraging entrepreneurs (i.e. creative and cultural industries, social enterprises)</li> <li>Stimulating home-based businesses in rural Ontario</li> </ul>	9
4	<b>Diversify Local Economy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diversify local economy and labor force</li> <li>Tax base-population decline &gt; Tax sources</li> <li>Loss of manufacturing jobs</li> <li>Replacing labor jobs with advanced skills</li> <li>Educating tobacco farmers about alternative crops, alternative careers</li> </ul>	8
5	<b>Knowledge Economy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing advantage for creative or knowledge economy</li> <li>High-tech jobs equals high paying jobs</li> </ul>	6
6	<b>Community Partnerships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community partnerships and communication</li> <li>Groups in rural towns do not talk outside of their own small boundaries</li> <li>Must stop 'clinging' to our old ways</li> <li>Building critical mass and aligning agendas.</li> </ul>	6
7	<b>Training and Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Skills training and local access to post secondary education</li> <li>Building up post-secondary education institutions in these areas to diversify economy.</li> </ul>	6

8	<b>Aging Population</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change view that aging population is a negative thing</li> <li>• They have disposable incomes, but spent it wisely, so give them opportunity to spend it.</li> </ul>	4
9	<b>Transportation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited access to 400 series highways.</li> <li>• Also public transit within the region.</li> </ul>	4
10	<b>Poverty</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How poverty impacts economic development</li> <li>• Addressing local poverty and low income housing</li> </ul>	3
11	<b>Accepting Change</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reluctance to adapt to evolving times (e.g. cannot grow tobacco like we used to)</li> <li>• Change some of the “old” thinking that life should stay the same</li> </ul>	2
12	<b>Proportion of New Jobs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the proportion of new job creation from small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and ‘main street’ rural businesses in overall job retention and creation equation?</li> </ul>	2
13	<b>Processing Facilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A lack of processing facilities in close proximity to where products are grown.</li> </ul>	2
14	<b>Renewable Energy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive and negative impacts of renewable energy projects in the region</li> </ul>	1
15	<b>Land Use Policies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The impact of land use policies</li> </ul>	1
16	<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessing funding sources for projects</li> <li>• Access to capital and support for knowledge-based companies/entrepreneurs</li> </ul>	0
17	<b>Environmental Protection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protecting the environment</li> </ul>	0
18	<b>Succession Planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Succession planning for family farms</li> </ul>	0
19	<b>Increased costs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dealing with increased costs (i.e. HST)</li> </ul>	0
20	<b>Life-long Learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Going from a “one job during a lifetime” mindset to a culture of continuous lifelong learning</li> </ul>	0

## Appendix B – Rough Ideas for Question 2

*If you had access to researchers for a year, what would you ask them to study in relation to question 1? What are the critical research questions requiring answers and insights?*

**Note: prior to voting, the group brainstormed questions. Below is the result of selecting top questions**

### Voting Results

Multiple Selection (maximum choices = 6)

Number of ballot items: 19

Total number of voters (N): 11

Rank	Issue	Questions	Total Votes
1	<b>Economic Diversification and Youth</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do we tie-in diversifying the local economy with the attraction and retention of youth?</li> <li>What is missing from a lifestyle perspective, to attract youth? (E.g. Ingersoll's Fusion YAT Centre)</li> </ul>	7
2	<b>Regional Partnerships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do you break down barriers between neighboring municipalities to get them to work together on economic development on a regional basis? (Playing in the same sandbox)</li> </ul>	7
3	<b>Creative Economy Models</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What economic development methodologies can be applied (or adapted and applied) to the creative and/or knowledge economy?</li> <li>What are the limitations of these methodologies and how can the gaps be bridged?</li> </ul>	7
4	<b>Policy Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What research can be done to support policy development/ land use planning for PPS, OP's and local by-laws to support the attraction for diversification for cluster developments in the creative/knowledge-based economy? i.e. coordination of culture plan and other sectors (like food processing and renewable/alternative energy as examples).</li> </ul>	6
5	<b>Economic Diversification</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do you attract post-secondary educational institutions and knowledge-based companies to diversify the economies of smaller communities?</li> </ul>	5
6	<b>Regional Assets</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To capitalize on interest in regional development, what are the strengths of the region that should be focused on to distinguish the area and foster the region's development?</li> <li>Also, taxation implications</li> </ul>	5
7	<b>Skills Leveraging</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do we inventory and capitalize on historical skills for communities in transition?</li> <li>Regional reframing based on passion, energy,</li> </ul>	5

		interests and resources.	
8	<b>Public Transportation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How could we improve public transportation? (Transportation-access to the 400 series highways limits economic development)</li> </ul>	4
9	<b>Entrepreneurship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How can we best support prospective entrepreneurs? (E.g. access to credit, business &amp; marketing planning, succession)</li> </ul>	4
10	<b>Health Care</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are LHINs an effective system for providing healthcare in rural Ontario?</li> <li>What steps need to be taken to improve healthcare delivery in rural Ontario?</li> </ul>	4
11	<b>Training and Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where do we get qualified staff for the training in the knowledge-based economy?</li> <li>How do you build a database of skilled professionals/technicians?</li> </ul>	3
12	<b>Indicators of Economic Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the performance criteria to measure the results of economic development efforts?</li> </ul>	3
13	<b>Resource Utilization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How to revitalize our manufacturing sector leveraging existing infrastructure, assets, and skills in new ways, such as in the knowledge economy? (E.g. beyond auto)</li> </ul>	2
14	<b>Substance Abuse and Violence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the social and economic impacts of drug trafficking and related crime and violence (e.g. theft, vandalism, violence)?</li> <li>What are some potential solutions or models to address this issue?</li> </ul>	1
15	<b>Poverty</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the extent to which poverty issues (basic needs; food, shelter, safety) affect the ability of the rural community to access education and get jobs?</li> </ul>	1
16	<b>Regional Alignment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regions are more and more the focus, but in different sectors regions are defined differently, so how to align different regions covering the same territory and make use of corresponding, but unaligning data to extrapolate evidence? (Programs are becoming more regionally focused but many existing structures are not aligned like this)</li> <li>Note: Innovative governance models that are better suited to the regional organization.</li> </ul>	1
17	<b>Aging Population</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is missing to engage the aging population, which translates to new business development?</li> </ul>	1
18	<b>Quality of Life</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How to place a value on/ measure the quality of life? (E.g. ROI on cultural investments, etc.)</li> </ul>	0

## Appendix C – Session Overview

The **purpose** of the workshop was to engage community leaders and academics to collaborate in order to:

- Identify Southwestern Ontario knowledge needs and resources
- Prioritize research needs and opportunities
- Share experience and knowledge
- Build lasting relationships and communication channels
- Serve Southwestern Ontario

Discovery workshop groups **explore four topics**:

1. Burning issues. What are the challenges and needs with respect to rural community and economic development and making the Oxford, Brant, Norfolk, Elgin, and Tecumseh region a vital community (economic, social, health)?
2. Research wish list. If you had access to researches for a year, what would you ask them to study? Given the immensity of the research “wish list” and the scarcity of available resources, what are your research priorities?
3. Local capacity. What local resources (organizations, reports, past work etc.) might contribute to addressing the issues identified above? What local businesses have had success overcoming related challenges and can be consulted or studied?
4. Ensuring success. To ensure that today’s workshop results in lasting community benefits, what actions can your community take to address these priorities and what assistance do you need?

## Appendix D – Methodology

### Information Gathering and Community Consultation process

The community consultation process included an information gathering component composed of a series of interactive workshops using facilitators from the Queen’s Executive Decision Centre. The purpose of this component was to get input from a broad cross section of community stakeholders.

The consultation was conducted using a group decision support system also known as an electronic meeting system (EMS), an innovative facilitation process developed from research at the Queen’s School of Business. The Queen’s EMS, called “the Decision Centre”, combines expert facilitation with a state-of-the-art group decision support system to enable groups to rapidly accelerate idea generation and consensus building. This facility consists of a network of laptops accessing software designed to support idea generation, idea consolidation, idea evaluation and planning. The tool supports, but does not replace, verbal interaction; typically 25% of interaction takes place on the computers. Feedback from groups who have used the Executive Decision Centre process includes: meeting times can be cut in half; participation goes way up; better idea generation and alternative evaluation; a more structured process; and automatic documentation of deliberations.

Over 500 organizations around North America use the Centre for meetings such as: strategic planning, visioning, annual planning, focus groups, team building, budgeting, program review, project planning, risk assessment, job profiling, 360 degree feedback, alternative evaluation, new product development and a variety of other meeting types.

In the consultations, participants were asked, for example, “*What are the challenges and needs with respect to rural community and economic development and making your region a vital community (economic, social, health)?*” Participants typed in ideas on the laptops all of which appeared on a public screen at the front of the room. These ideas were then discussed and categorized into common themes. The group was then asked “if we could only address five of these in the next year, which ones are most critical?” Individuals selected his/her top 5 and the overall results were then displayed to the group and further discussed.