



Marketing Rural Communities to Attract and Retain Workers in a Changing Economy

Presented at the National Association of Community
Development Extension Professionals Annual Conference
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PROJECT OVERVIEW

Purpose: Apply innovative marketing concepts and methods to attract new residents to rural communities and regions.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Who are the partner communities?

North Dakota

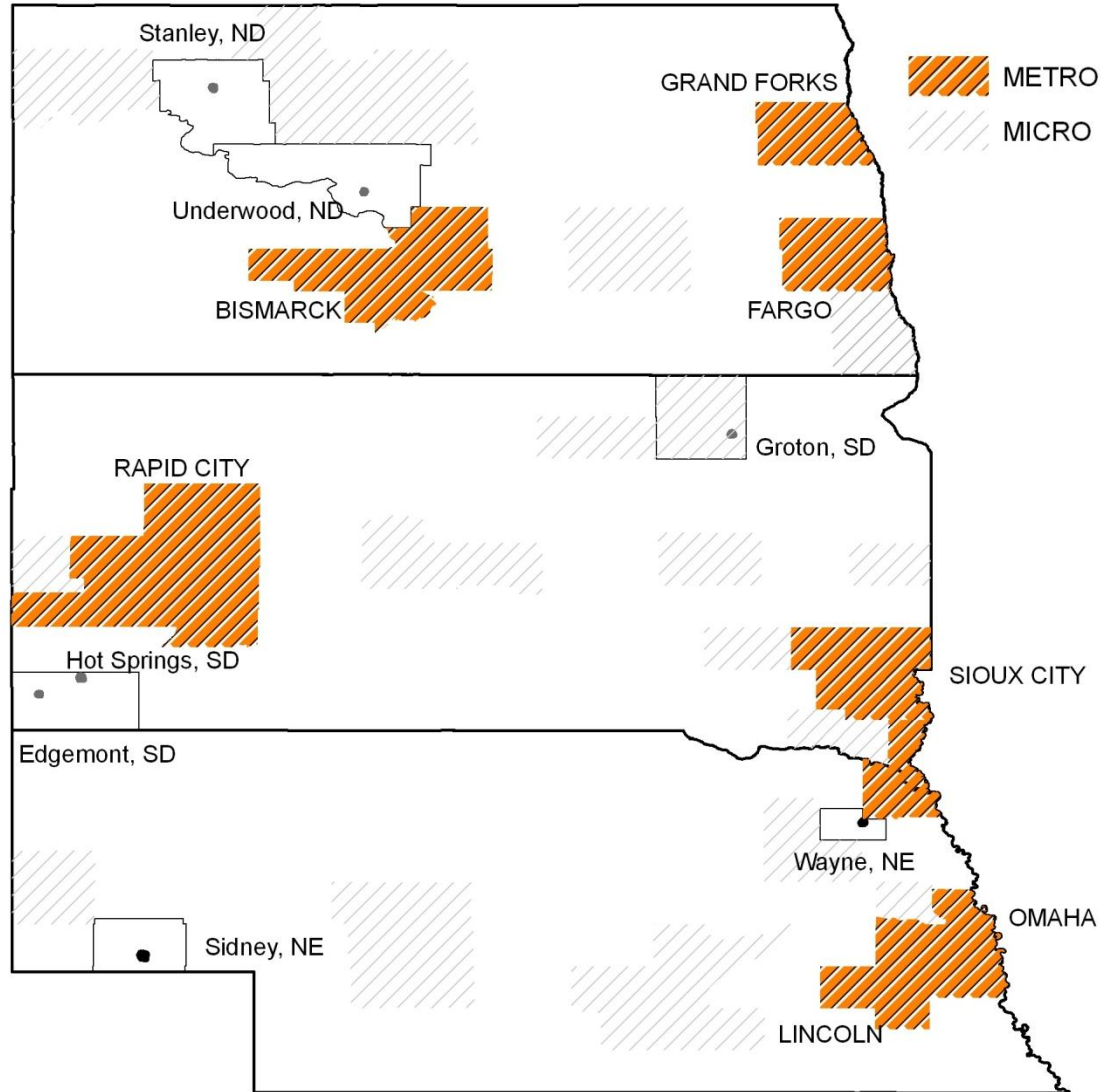
- Stanley
- Underwood

South Dakota

- Edgemont–Hot Springs
- Groton

Nebraska

- Sidney
- Wayne



Research Components

- Household surveys of new residents
- Labor vacancy surveys
- Consumer focus groups
 - ✓ Face to face
 - ✓ Online

Household New Resident Survey

- Self administered questionnaires mailed in May and June 2009
- Mailing lists included purchased lists of new residents and local utility lists
 - ✓ New residents within past five years

HOUSEHOLD SURVEY OVERVIEW

Characteristics of New Residents



- Average age ranged from 43 to 54
- Most had lived in their current state before
 - ✓ Especially in Underwood (91%) and Groton (95%).
- Majority have never lived in the community or county before
 - ✓ In Groton, the average age was younger, more moved with children and had previously in lived in county; however, not in community.

HOUSEHOLD SURVEY OVERVIEW

Moved from Metro and Nonmetro Counties

- In Underwood, Hot Springs/Edgemont and Sidney, most moved from metropolitan counties.
- In Stanley, Groton and Wayne, most moved from other nonmetropolitan counties.

HOUSEHOLD SURVEY OVERVIEW

Family Considerations were Important

- Underwood – cost of living and quality time with family
- Groton – family related reasons
- Wayne – family ties & employment
- Stanley – family ties & employment
- Sidney – employment & family time
- Hot Springs/Edgemont – environmental reasons



HOUSEHOLD SURVEY OVERVIEW

Employment Brought Many to Region



- Most new residents are employed.
 - Majority have college degrees
- Nearly 50% in all communities earn more than \$50,000

HOUSEHOLD SURVEY OVERVIEW

Environmental Factors Key Motivation for those moving to Hot Springs/Edgemont

When asked to rate community and life factors: In four of the communities - new residents indicated satisfaction with natural scenic or recreational activities.



HOUSEHOLD SURVEY OVERVIEW

Cost of Living Factors Key Motivation for those moving to Underwood

Over one-half of new residents moved to lower cost of living and to lower cost of housing



Labor Vacancy Survey

- Conducted to determine area workforce requirements
- Self-administered questionnaire mailed in August and September 2009
- Used purchased mailing lists

LABOR VACANCY SURVEY OVERVIEW

Labor Vacancy Survey Data

- Data weighted to reflect the population of employers in the region
 - ✓ Weights derived from secondary data sources, specifically County Business Patterns from US Census.



LABOR VACANCY SURVEY OVERVIEW

Sample Summary from One Community:

- Almost all new hires come from local area
- Most applicants match job requirements fairly well
- Most firms anticipate difficulty in filling future openings with qualified applicants.
 - ✓ Admin/sales/services openings - great difficulty



DATA SYNTHESIS OVERVIEW

Synthesis Process:

- Combined data from Household Surveys and Labor Vacancy Surveys
- Identified key themes in community
 - Example: Firms have difficulty recruiting professional and managerial workers.
- Identified potential strategies to address the issues
 - Examples: Devise better advertisement strategies. Mentoring/contact with professionals who have lived in community for some time.



Focus Groups

- Two types:
 - Online focus groups
 - Face to face focus groups

- Attempt to better understand how images portray community characteristics

Face to Face Focus Groups

- Will be conducted in project communities
- Participants are current new residents
- Local and online focus groups will complement each other, enabling comparisons
 - ✓ TurningPoint software

Online Focus Groups

- Separate surveys were developed for each community
- Participants are potential new residents
- Target = 180 participants (30 from each community)

Please tell us about your impression of the community portrayed in the picture?





Please rate how well you agree that the picture above represents the community characteristics					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree or agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Simpler Pace of Life					
Quality Time with Family					
Environment for Raising Children					
Available Outdoor Recreational Activities					
Safe Place to Live					
A Place that you Might Like to Visit					
A Place that You Might Like to Live					
Other - Explain					

Describe this Phrase in a Picture

- Quality Time With Family
- Affordable Cost of Living
- Less Congested Place to Live

How are the communities using this information?

What have they learned?

