

# Marketing for Rural Communities

## Initial Focus Groups

### *Strategies to Learn About Community*

Once the new residents have an opportunity to move to the new community, they then need to determine if they will make the move. Action/interaction strategies in this study refer to how people learned about the community. The four strategies that emerged during the analysis were: (1) from family and friends; (2) previously lived in region (including neighboring states within 50 miles); (3) visits to the community; and, (4) the Internet. The four strategies are self-explanatory as people asked family and friends about the region, had experience living in or visiting the region. Others searched the Internet to discover information such as, “We went on there [Internet] for ACT scores” or “I went on to EPodunk.com.”

The participants were also asked, “What advice would you give to communities to develop strategies to attract new residents?” While the new residents recognized the importance of job opportunities during the interviews, only 8% of the comments were specifically related to employment. As one new resident shared, “It is much more complex planning than simply saying we have jobs.” Fifty-nine percent of the comments were related to community marketing with half of these comments encouraging communities to “know who they are” and to “create a vision.” A new resident who had a career in marketing stated: “It behooves the cities, the small towns, to get together as a group and individually say what are the things that their cities want to market. What are their strong points, what are their weak points? If we did this, how would that increase our attraction?”