
The Northeastern Regional Center
for Rural Development

**National Coalition for Rural
Entrepreneurship
Listening Session Notes**

Location: Charleston, WV

Date: July 19, 2005

Hosts: NERCRD and West Virginia University

Number attending: 23

Contact: Pamela Hearn, pah7@psu.edu
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Facilitators:

David Hughes, West Virginia University
Gayle Vest, Advantage Valley Inc.

Recorder: Daniel Eades, West Virginia University



July 19, 2005 version

National Coalition for Rural Entrepreneurship
July 19th, 2005 Listening Session: Charleston, WV

I. Identifying Successes in Rural Entrepreneurship

- Former employees purchasing a company that is on the way out...reestablishing/reenergizing
- Purchase of companies by outside buyers because of quality/reliable workforce...work ethic
- Increase in artisans and small scale manufacturers
- Success of non-profit intermediaries
- Business incubator on shared land—board to organize/select best candidates for local area economy
- Use of intensive one-on-one...attaching to trainers to entrepreneurs
- Entrepreneurial league system
- INOVA and the High Tech Consortium
- Venture capital efforts
- Dreamquest Business Plan, FFA, FBLA, DECA and other school programs devoted to creating/inspiring future entrepreneurs
- Co-ops

II. Problems, Areas for Improvement, and Suggestions

- Knowing your resources and who needs what
- Examine working “blueprints” and policies (Vision Shared Policy)—Gap Analysis---and publicize those programs that work
- Examine distinction between entrepreneurs and small-businesses, target programs resources to appropriate groups/individuals
- Encourage programs and methods that help entrepreneurs work “on” the business rather than just “in” the business—taking programs to the entrepreneur, having classes at night, making programs affordable
- Encouraging “forced risk” individuals—catch early when access to capital/loans still available, support systems
- Duplication of themes and efforts throughout the state
- Communication between development groups
- Need for develop and networking of Angel Capital

III. Common Themes

- Need for education programs both within schools (K-12, technical, college/university) and in community
 - Partners in education (both mentoring and \$\$)
 - “Start early, stay late”
 - “Education Alliance”
 - Model programs (where applicable) such as Riverside Finance Academy
 - Change of mindset and culture...encourage work ethic, advertise entrepreneurial programs within school

- Access to capital
 - Environmental scan
 - Identifying microcredit options
- Creation of an overarching entrepreneurial group
 - Create clearinghouse for service providers
 - IJSC-like model
 - Use Vision Share Commitment
 - Creation of organization chair with funding support
 - State appropriations ??

IV. Important Ideas to Sustain Rural Entrepreneurship—National, Regional, and State Efforts

- Encourage educational programs: K-100
- Conduct regional environmental scans and organize regional clearinghouse for service providers
- Praise and support for non-profit intermediaries
- Access to capital—microcredit programs
 - NGOs
 - Credit Unions
 - Educational seminars organized between local libraries, banks, churches, and schools {opportunity for extension ???}
 - West Virginia: develop and network Angel Capital

Those attending the Listening Session agreed that the creation of an overarching group with a funded chairman position was the first in a series of beneficial and necessary steps for encouraging and improving entrepreneurial opportunities in West Virginia. This group would begin the environmental scan to identify opportunities for microcredit, entrepreneurial support organizations, and projects and programs relevant to specific “types” of entrepreneurs/small business owners.

The following individuals volunteered for specific tasks needed to make this group a reality.

Task	
Contact Mary Hunt	Nora Myers
Contact Vision Shared	Gayle Vest
Contact WVEI	Nora Myers, Russ Sorbel
Access grant money (Benedum Foundation)	Gayle Vest
Gap analysis	Possibly WVU or Marshall Faculty (no volunteer yet)