## Transition Step: Functional – The Puzzle: A Conceptual Vision with Practical Implications

Now we are going to move from the conceptual/theoretical realm to more practical. This section provides a segue to the functional aspects of the RRES, but also ties back to our systems thinking approach, or context. It should be apparent that any community project done within "context" will have numerous activities which need to be organized and coordinated. Many of these "pieces of the puzzle" have very different characteristics and functions. So the operational activities (goals, objectives, tasks) can be very different.

In order to help us get our mind "wrapped around" all of these pieces it has been useful for us to use the image of a puzzle to help us organize our efforts. The puzzle put back together metaphorically represents the "vision" or the overall picture that we want to achieve. The pieces of the puzzle represent the various components of the strategy.

Diagram C5-8 depicts this tool. It is important that the "tools" that we use for our systems approach not distract or confuse us. Using a puzzle image provides a simple, yet effective way to visualize context and, to an extent, relationships.

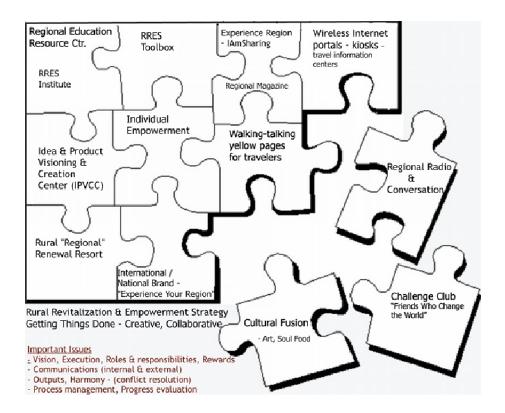There is a more detailed discussion of "the puzzle" in the tourism case study in Chapter 9.

**Diagram C5-8**: The puzzle – a functional diagram for understanding context.

Diagram C5-8 shows a preliminary set of functional components of a "generic" Rural Regional Empowerment Strategy (RRES). Each piece of the puzzle is critical to manifest the vision (the puzzle picture). It is necessary to identify the separate pieces because the functional aspects of any project will be different. Each puzzle piece has its own set of steps in order to accomplish that function. Additionally, a different set of individuals will likely be responsible for different pieces of the puzzle, however, all of the pieces need to be developed in a coordinated fashion.

This diagram is only a conceptual model since each project will have its own set of functional components (puzzle pieces) based on the organizational and regional context. However, since this approach has evolved from real, or existing projects (e.g. wireless internet portals, community and regional projects, etc.), there is a high likelihood that several of these components (pieces of the puzzle) can be used in any RRES.

The "Important Issues" outline in the bottom left corner of Diagram 8 has been derived from several years of research and experience, especially as it relates to team building and keeping harmony within an organization. These are issues that we consider critical for the success for a RRES. It is our opinion that managing people inside of organizations and initiatives are one of the biggest challenges, and proper guidance and "organizational ethics" (instead of policies) development provide a solid foundation for success. Thus, this short, but highly critical list identifies how potential pitfalls can be avoided. Things like "vision", "communications", "organizational roles and responsibilities" must be seen as paramount for creating a harmonious and successful initiative.

## Action Center 1) The RRES Institute (Hub for Education and Outreach)

As should be abundantly clear from the previous discussion, the overall success of the RRES is dependent on all the parts of our approach. To that end, Education is one of the pillars, or in many respects be viewed as the "hub" of the mandala.

The RRES Institute is grounded in three primary concepts 1) creating a central repository of knowledge and technical assistance, 2) providing strong extension and outreach, and 3) utilizing both in-person and technology based means to deliver various educational content and services. Areas of expertise, (courses and technical assistance)  that are developed are derived from the needs of the specific region where the RRES is established.

As depicted in diagram 9, the success of the RRES is a matter of fulfilling the mission of our strategy which is to successfully empower communities and people. This is accomplished, in short, by utilizing the resources available to us and to create useful educational programs and technical assistance.

A primary role of the RRES Institute will be to provide access to information and technical assistance to the region with an entrepreneurial focus. The RRES Institute will support a holistic economic development strategy focused on all aspects of a community's economy. Common areas needing support and expansion commonly include tourism, innovation in agriculture and small business development. As depicted in the bottom center of Diagram C5-9, there are an abundance of resources that are available through

existing institutions around the globe. The key is to decipher, refine, translate and adapt the materials to be usable to each specific audience. The RRES Institute will be comprised of an institutional (physical location) and a Web based distance learning resource center to be accessed through "partner" organizations (e.g. universities, Internet cafes and/or community and school computer centers/classrooms). Additionally the RRES Institute will provide on-site, hands-on training seminars to local "trainers" to create a network of "tech-transfer associates" throughout the region. It is our preference to partner with regional universities to develop educational outreach programs.
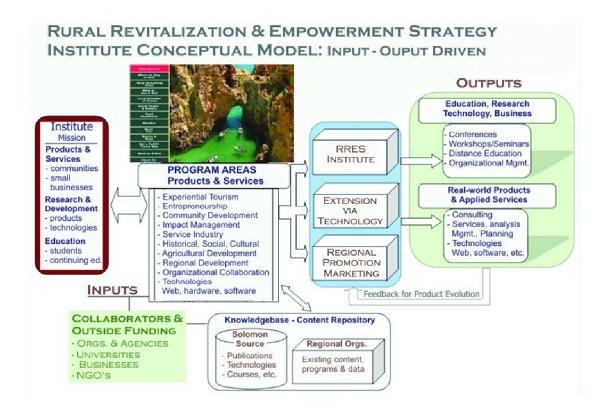


**Diagram C5-9:** The RRES Institute: Conceptual Model—Inputs and Outputs

**RRES Institute – Empowerment, Economic Diversification and Innovation**

**Introduction**

The following discussion provides a refinement and expansion of ideas of the institute, and details about steps in the process of creating it. Preliminarily, as stated above, a basic

assumption of the RRES Institute is the protection of the natural environment, which is where all wealth, and community success is derived from. The aim of the RRES is to develop strategies to grow opportunities and diversify economies, based upon existing agricultural and community necessities. The approach, based on "systems thinking" will enhance ecological sustainability by addressing traditional environmental challenges that usually result from economic pressures and improper planning.

Additionally, this proposal recommends the development of new technologies that will facilitate this process and significantly contribute to a new platform for extending *education* to more people. An added benefit of these technologies will be the capabilities to track all aspects of the RRES including educational program success, marketing and business performance.

A primary objective of the RRES Institute will be to build a bridge of benefits to communities, supporting the various industries that their economies are based upon. Tourism across the globe is emerging as a strong complimentary sector to agriculture in most rural communities. Our approach will focus on several levels, but entrepreneurship, diversification into value-added agriculture and *creative* business development will be primary foci. Creative and complimentary business will be encouraged—in contrast to a *competitive* approach. The main features of the initiative will build upon: a) a regional focus, b) the development of cooperatives, and c) adapting successful innovative initiatives from other places (see Volume II.).

*Technology* and *education* will be the vehicles for success. A primary result of the RRES will be to extend educational opportunities to broader and more diverse audiences. The effort will focus on extension outreach programs throughout the region. Once this effort has been developed, tested and evolved, the same process can be taken to other areas and adopted.

**Establishing the RRES Institute - Proposed Approach**

1) Aim to enhance a holistic economic development – tourism (ecotourism, nature, heritage and cultural tourism, etc.), agriculture, value-added agriculture, energy, entrepreneurship, micro-enterprise development.

2) Adapt existing educational materials available from many sources.

3) Develop a "custom" entrepreneurial training series (modularized) specific to the context of the host community(s) – resources can be developed with regional universities specifically adapted as "educational outreach programs".

4) Develop a custom Rural Community Leadership Program

5) Create Web based distance learning portal(s) that could be accessed through "partner" universities, Internet cafes and/or community and school computer centers/classrooms.

> - On-site, hands-on training seminars provided by locally trained instructors (using a train-the-trainer) approach (seek sponsorship from regional, state and national agencies, non-profit organizations or other entities).

6) Conduct research and project benchmarking throughout the project lifecycle.

**Steps in the Process**

- Conduct Strategic Planning session for the RRES strategy – Identify Project Board and Key Stakeholders for the coalition.
- Form working coalition.
- Identify viable sized "region(s)" to initiate project.
- Create short list of prospect communities (regional based preferred – see criteria below).

Evaluate those communities based on a set of criteria to ensure project success.
- Resources for the Institute are available and some are in development, or can be adopted/integrated from a variety of sources (e.g. Extension materials from various U.S. universities, etc.).
- Identify potential additional funding sources (public & private)
- Project leaders, community(s), collaborators, and institutional partners contextualize" the approach based on political and social climate of proposed sites.

**Select "Pilot" Community Development Projects – Pending discussion**
  Rural agricultural and forestry regions
  See criteria for selection listed below

**Potential Collaborators**
> - Communities in región
> - Sponsoring organizations

- Regional (state & national) governmental representatives
- Private businesses
- Regional University(s)
- Etc.

**Outcomes:**

- Stimulate/create robust rural community economies
- Sustainability as a driver creating sensible linkages between the various complimentary "assets" and economic sectors within the community/region
- Conserve (and/or enhance) the natural, historical and cultural assets of the community

Enhance *Quality of Life*

The RRES aims to integrate all aspects of community economic development into a centralized approach supported by a technology based information and technical assistance system. Publications, information and a variety of rudimentary tools are available to assist communities realize a more diverse set of economic development opportunities. These resources can be combined with new forms of assistance to address other important areas of need including: leadership training and development, tourism development, community enhancement, technology development and utilization, and forest, animal and plant (ecological) protection and enhancement. These areas can be supported via technical assistance and training and other support to stimulate/enhance other economic activities that are necessary for communities to flourish, while also protecting the natural and historical resource base and culture of the region.

The approach utilized will provide incentives for the adoption and diffusion of the use of new technologies and distance learning tools and information that is, essentially, universally needed for tourism and other economic development activities. New Web-based technologies can create direct economic returns (rewards) for businesses and communities. These "rewards" then will stimulate people to expand their use of computers for running and growing their businesses and community economic development programs.

An active outreach and "marketing branch" of this initiative will promote resources and services and also conduct in-the-field research to identify and recruit communities that are "primed" with proper leadership and a community collaborative spirit. These communities (or groups of communities) can then be "seeded" with a package of incentives to stimulate their participation.

Because the RRES is designed to be market-driven, it will be economically sustainable perpetually. Driven by a successful business development model, programs will be designed to be self-sustaining over time. Initial funds will be used to "prime" the initiative, but the "Institute" will generate revenues so that the initiative will not need to be subsidized over time.

**Pilot Community (Region) Selection Criteria –** (*tentative and not prioritized*)

- Leadership
- Creativity
- Cottage industries
- Relatively stable economic basis
- Community forestry
- Funding assistance available
- Diversity of natural resources
- Critical mass of tourist attractions
- Linkages between communities (collaborative potential)
- Absence of contentiousness intra-community and inter-community
- Infrastructure (roads, telecommunications, service industry e.g. food, lodging)
- Access to financial support and outside funding
- Social networking - capital
- Access – to tourism attractions by visitors, distance from University
    collaborators
- Prior leadership training
- Volunteer/service organizations
- Prior projects that may have potential to re-start or revitalize
- Rural development models (existing approaches)

## Action Center 2) Idea and Product Visioning & Creation Center

This section describes a second critical tangible "center" for the RRES, that which empowers entrepreneurship. In combination with the Institute, the part of the strategy is one that brings a tangible asset which results in many benefits. Focusing on supporting the process of generating new ideas and products, there is a cooperative nature grounded in the ultimate aim to support regional communities, businesses, organizations, but ultimately individuals. The model is designed in a way for it to be adaptable. It includes a practical arrangement for the organization, its functions, the steps to implementation and an overview of the technologies that will facilitate completion.

**A Proposed Structure for the IPVCC – three legs: Business, Social, Infrastructure**
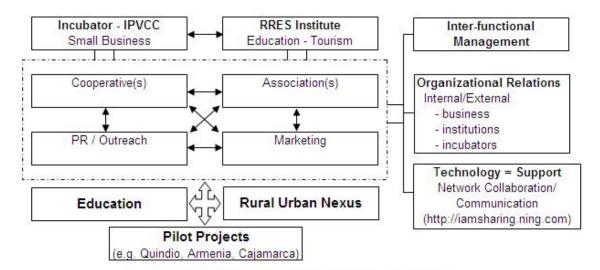
**Introduction a Cooperative Model**

In the world today there are three primary types of organizations: *business* (financial), *non-profit* (social good) and *institution*/ government (infrastructure and public services). Usually, these three types of organizations end up attempting to support all three of these functions within their organization, but do not succeed because the main focus of the organization is on one aspect and are not designed to support the other activities. A balanced organization should give adequate importance to each function. For example, if infrastructural support falters, the success of the organization will be diminished. Likewise, if the "quality of  life" (social) diminishes then the whole organism suffers. Finally, if adequate financial resources (business) are not generated and sustained, there will be a breakdown of the whole organization (community, region).

It appears that a blending of the primary functions of these three entities would make for a more efficient organization. The *institution* would be responsible for managing the infrastructure and the services of the Cooperative. The *business* would be responsible for the fiscal and financial (marketing, business development) aspects and the continued monetary support/management for the other two legs of the organization. The *non-profit* portion of the organization would be responsible for the programs that ensure the continued vitality of the region, such as education, social and other community empowerment programs.

## IDEA AND PRODUCT VISIONING & CREATION CENTER

Products
Services
Technologies

**Knowledge Repository**

Information sources we are drawing from to develop useful information for our customers
- ours
- others
- U.S.

**Conversion Center**

Converting information, processes, techniques, ideas & technologies into practical usable programs & services

**Application Research & Developent -**

- Solutions
- Portals
- Classes
- Customers
- Students
- Communities
- Regions
- Institutions
- Businesses
- Individuals
- Organizations

**Figure C5-1:** Idea and Product Visioning & Creation Center

Figure C5-1 provides a schematic for the overarching components of the Idea and Product Visioning & Creation Center (IPVCC). The foci of the IPVCC will be on small business (products, services) creation and support and tourism. The tourism strategy will follow the regional development model as described in detail later in this document with a focus on education, marketing and technology. The diagram below shows the initial structure and flows of activities and organizational functions of the IPVCC. The items "Education" and the "Rural Urban Nexus" identify the first opportunity spaces and the way the process will begin will be through the successful launching and implementation of "pilot projects."

**RRES (IPVCC) Organizational Structure**

**Diagram C5-10**: Functional Structure (internal & external) for the RRES Idea and Product Visioning & Creation Center

This document description only provides a brief outline of what we see as the critical functions necessary and the steps to realize the "vision" of the IPVCC. This is a "living" document so elements can be added and expanded and adaptation will occur often, depending on the organic, evolutionary nature of this "systems" endeavor:
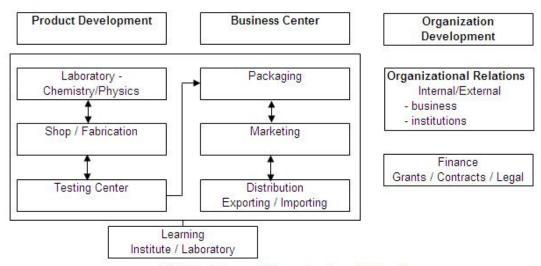
*Facilities necessary to accomplish our Vision*

The kinds of facilities that we will need to realize this vision are depicted in Diagram C5-10. Both Diagrams C5-10 and C5-11 are based on the activities occurring for several products that are being proposed in Colombia South America. One of our team is an inventor that has "green" products and processes to bring to market (e.g. bio-ethanol). Thus, there is a focus on the creation of the product development laboratory, testing center and shop outfitted with all the necessary tools to manufacture or fabricate first production (test versions) of the various products.

Additionally, our understanding for the success of a regional initiative is to have a physical place where the community can come and actually see the products and gain an understanding of progress for our initiative. To fulfill this we would need to acquire a complex of buildings to include a product and demonstration showroom. We also want to

have a "business development" section: Marketing, business planning, packaging. There is more discussion along these lines in a later section entitled "hybridized community development cooperative".
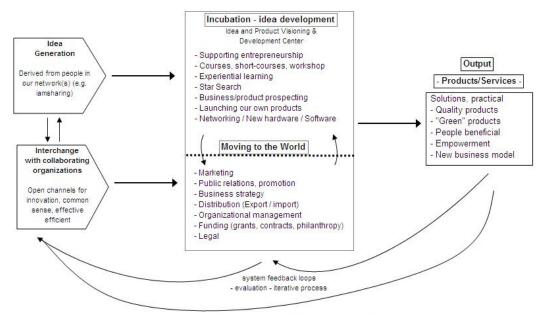
Also necessary will be computer infrastructure for supporting online application development, a GIS laboratory, hyperspectral data storage, manipulation and product creation.



**RRES - Internal Organizational Structure**

**Diagram C5-11**: Internal Organizational Structure for the RRES Product and Idea Visioning & Creation Center

Diagram C5-12 below illustrates to the flow of an idea or product from conception to delivery to the market place. The center box, is a sort of "black box" representing the flow of activities between the product creation section (Incubation) and the business side of the IPVCC. This box is depicted in organizational details in Diagrams 10 and 11. One important additional aspect are the feedback loops from the products and services in the market place. These provide intelligence and continual quality control to assure that the process is functioning effectively and efficiently.

**IDEA AND PRODUCT VISIONING AND CREATION CENTER (IPVCC)- THE BLACK BOX**

**Diagram C5-12:** Flow diagram of ideas moving through the RRES Idea and Product Visioning and Creation Center

## Action Center 3) Technologies – the Platform for Success

We believe we are at one of the most fortuitous times in human history. The Internet presents unprecedented opportunities. Just think about how the telephone transformed the world - simple voice communication, primarily 1 to 1 communication.

Now think about the Internet. Potentially, innumerable channels of communication open simultaneously. And what can we exchange?: voice, music, video, knowledge, data, information, Money!, and even scents. - All at the touch of a button. But in our view we have barely tapped into a fraction of its potential. We have often used the analogy of our use of the Internet to be like "kids playing in a sandbox", but we think that we have not even put any toys in the sandbox yet, we are just throwing sand at each other.

The potentials in our view are boundless. Many of the tools, software and technologies have already been developed, but much of these are contributing to further fragmentation. We see our opportunities as looking at the specific needs of certain groups of peoples and providing them the necessary information tools and resources to help

them advance their lives. That is why we are focusing on what we call "collaborative networking". The idea is to facilitate the creation of substantive relationships, that help people of like minds or interests come together. Then provide them the necessary access to information and services to facilitate them to collaborate with business or social or community development interests.

But "like minds" can be a continually evolving concept. One example in tourism is to have a biking company collaborate with a bed and breakfast. It seems to be a simple connection, but these two business operators are not usually viewed to have like minds or similar interests, but they do. There are as many possibilities as the imagination can create.

### Challenge: time, ease of access, productivity and communication

There are challenges, but in the right mind-set those challenges transform into opportunities. Following are some preliminary ideas about creation of these "collaborative networks". Some key elements include: efficient for users, support effective time management, support effective exchange of ideas and information, and collaboration. The technologies need to operate seamlessly and be easy to use for all audiences. Additionally, these collaboration networks need to create a productive working environment and one that promotes communication.

*Basic principles that we recommend for effective online collaboration:*

In order to achieve the highest quality experiences, the online tools should assist our users (user group(s)) to:

- Find what they are looking for – easily!

- Provide access to content 24/7/365

- Communicate efficiently and effectively (e.g. live, or at collaborators convenience)

- Remotely work together

- Not require a significant "learning curve" to utilize

- Get access to the standard tools

- Provide an engaging experience for network members

Our proposed approach will be to evolve and expand these existing collaboration

networking capabilities. The emphasis of our approach will be to expand the utility of existing networks to provide ways for people to collaborate instead of just communicating (or social networking). We are aware that there are numerous tools that are available for effective coordination (online learning environments). However, our observation is that these tools tend to be disparate and not combined to provide a complete solution.

We intend to utilize these existing capabilities but also to improve on them, initially by using the techniques outlined below. At the outset, an important realization is that a significant proportion of one of our first audiences (youth and students), are already "fluent" and totally adapted to an online environment. Thus, a part of our ultimate audience is already well prepared to utilize the resources and platform (Internet) that we intend to use. They should also be instrumental in our efforts to extend our impacts and capabilities. Our primary aim is to improve collaboration, coordination and communication with an ultimate goal to expand on the content and effectiveness without affecting usability.

- User feedback

- Network participants performance evaluation and testing

- Multi-mode distance collaboration capabilities

      chat capabilities,

      video,

      document/presentation shared mark-up

- Virtual environments (adapting gaming environments for more immersed user experiences)

- Document sharing with ease of use as a focus (e.g. Googledocs, etc).

- Team and project coordination tools (e.g. calendar, shared projects, etc.)

Preliminarily the collaborative network will need to provide the capabilities to support:

    - discussion boards, chat rooms, and other communication platforms

    - tools supporting distance collaboration and project management

    - potentially, virtual laboratories

As highlighted by the Great Plains Interactive Distance Education Alliance (Great Plains IDEA, http://www.gpidea.org), one of the most significant challenges that will be faced by

a collaborative network will be to coordinate and meld the relationships between the various institutions. Moxely and Maes stated emphatically that in their alliance is "an agreement on principles preceded agreement of policies". Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1994) identified three fundamental aspects of business alliances that apply to higher education:

- Successful alliances yield benefits for the partners and evolve progressively in their possibilities.
- Successful alliances involve collaboration (creating new value together) rather than mere exchange (getting something back for what you put in).
- Successful alliances are supported by a dense web of interpersonal connections and internal infrastructures that enhance learning; they cannot be controlled by formal systems.

## The Network – Creating Critical Mass and Supporting via Technologies

It is a well established theory in tourism that regional models are necessary to sustain a viable base of resources for attracting visitors. These principles for regionalism are now being embraced as necessary for all levels of economic development (see Rural Policy Conference hosted by the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, 2004).

We see an even broader implication of this understanding and envision, potentially, an entire restructuring of societies. Toward that end a critical element of this process will be the utilization of technologies for forming, and facilitating these network functions. To illustrate this idea we will use tourism, in this section, as a lead driver for this process. Thus the illustrations and "case-study" focus on tourism. However, since tourism as an industry touches most sectors of the economy in some form or fashion, it is easy to expand the idea of "critical mass" to the other aspects of regional and community development. The beauty of the Internet and computer software and technologies is that once the network is constructed the machine will actually coordinate, track, and monitor all activities, in perpetuity.

Diagram C5-13 depicts the need to establish a critical mass of attractions in order to attract more visitors and to be able to support an international branding effort for enhancing tourism development (the map in diagram C5-13 is the state of Iowa. In addition, through the pooling of organizational, institutional and community resources,

capacity building is enhanced via improvements in efficiencies and effectiveness due to improved communication and coordination.

Effective coordination is easily accommodated by utilizing Internet Communication Technologies (ICT). Due to the ease of "manifesting" and supporting "The Network" with ICT tools, we will be better able to support regional networking and collaboration. The model we employ is about cooperation and creativity rather than a competitive model. This focus results in the greatest benefits for the greatest number of people, "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts".
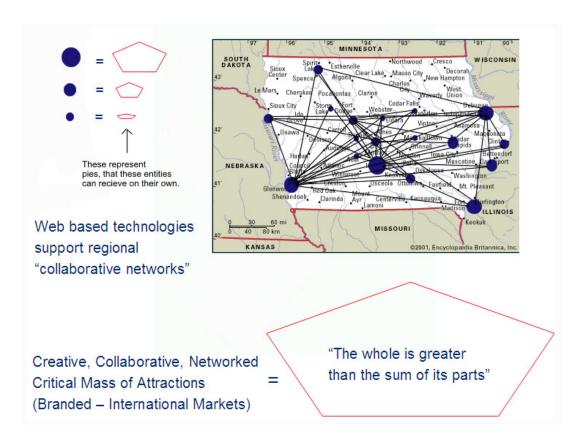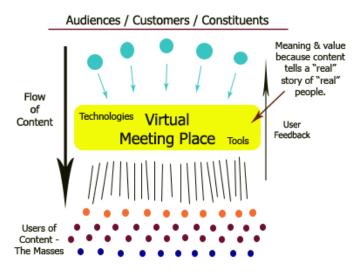


**Diagram C5-13**: Establishing a critical mass of attractions via coordination and technology – (example provided adapted from Iowa initiative – "Experience Iowa" - see complete case example Chapter 9)

**Electronic (Virtual) Meeting Places – An Interface for Commerce and Education**

Real, substantive content needs to be generated from the grass-roots. Otherwise information is superficial and doesn't get to the real story. Every place, business and person has a story to tell. In order to create this content we need to create a "grass-fire" of inspiration to provide a way for people to be able to tell their story – whatever it might be. This process of people catching onto a wave of new ideas or technologies is called "adoption-diffusion". This term describes the process by which people start taking part of a new phenomenon.



**Diagram C5-14:** Electronic (Virtual) Meeting Places – An Interface for Commerce and Education – supporting exchange between users and content provider

Diagram C5-14 depicts what we call the "Virtual Meeting Place" (web portal) which shows the flow of information and services from a group of content providers (e.g. businesses, institutions, organizations, or as depicted "Audiences, Customers, Constituents, etc.) to their customers or constituents. We believe the quality of the exchange is based upon two primary components 1) the efficiency and effectiveness of the technologies to facilitate the exchange (technologies & tools), and 2) the usefulness and usability of the information and services being exchanged – connected to the idea of "stickiness" in ICT circles. (Also see "flow experience" or optimal experience theory, Mihály Csíkszentmihályi)

Much could be written on these two items. For brevity we suggest that there are

challenges and tremendous opportunities to improve in both areas. Secondly, we see that for our objectives, the most critical element is to decipher existing information into useful materials for those entities that we intend to serve. Our observation is that within the Internet as a whole (including well established institutions) that there is more than enough information available to satisfy almost all purposes. The challenge, and opportunity, is to convert and/or translate this information into a form that is understandable and usable for various constituencies. We refer to this process as "sifting through the haystack", which for the Internet is becoming more challenging every day. This is because every day more content is being created and also the potential to get lost in the labyrinth increases. The next critical step is to develop the technology tools to facilitate these exchanges in a way that satisfies the users, and helps them to improve their lives.

## "Meaningful" Content is King!

In order for new ideas to move "across the landscape", metaphorically speaking, people need to see how these new services might benefit them. It seems entirely possible that with these technologies, and audience appropriate content, that the process of adoption-diffusion can be accelerated. A key to this will be using the tools at our disposal to carry the message of "benefits" and by making the adoption process painless.

In the domain of the services that we intend to offer, there may actually be more than one thing that is being adopted by our customers. For example, new environmental agricultural practices and the technology they are using. The need to consider and address our customer's fears, concerns and other obstacles that might deter their using our technology is paramount. The best way to address these issues is to understand our customers and make sure the services are user friendly and to provide rapid rewards that will help them realize the overall benefits in the shortest time possible.

## Case Study: Creating the Platform the Traveler Tourism and Community Network

What is the Traveler Tourism and Community Network?

The Traveler Tourism and Community Network (hereafter Traveler Network) was to be a network of free-standing kiosks (or panel displays) and virtual portals installed in various

locations throughout the region (hotels, airports, attractions, etc.). A pilot project called TexBox Tourism and Community Network" was developed and deployed in Texas in the United States in 2003. TexBoxes (electronic information kiosks), during the pilot project provided important travel information and services to the traveling public. The Traveler Network will create numerous additional benefits, a few include:

- a new "marketing" venue for rural communities and businesses interested in growing tourism.

- hubs for regional and community collaboration and networking.

- valuable capabilities to disseminate critical emergency/medical services to rural areas.

- a system to capture valuable information about the traveling public, their activities, preferences and feedback.

## Introduction and Demonstration Project Overview

Proposed is the development of a demonstration version of free-standing computer information kiosk including: cabinet, computer hardware (CPU, touch-screen monitor, etc.) and software necessary to facilitate access to an online based system that will provide information to the traveling public. Initial information provided will include:

Tourist information (accommodations, attractions, services, etc.)

- Weather          - Road conditions          - Route information

- Safety Information          - User surveys          -Emergency services

- Interpretive information about the area (natural, cultural, etc.)

- Local industry contact information

Each chosen site will need to have Internet access available to the kiosk, preferably high-speed.

## Justification

Travelers typically know little about the places they are traveling through. They also have questions that need to be answered (e.g. road conditions, weather, etc.). In conjunction with the efforts of various tourism development entities, this proposal outlines the creation of a network of digital information kiosks/portals that will provide answers to traveler's questions.

## Purpose

The purpose of the Traveler Network is to provide:

1) a complete "package" of answers to questions that traveler's might have,

2) customized information about the places they are traveling through,

3) support for small businesses in rural communities and regions, and

4) contribute to coordination of tourism development efforts throughout the region.

The intent of the Traveler Network is to help the region and communities be better hosts to visitors and do a better job of "Marketing Your Region". In addition, the Traveler Network can provide dynamic, interesting and timely information to users at locations where it is not practical to have the facilities staffed. In addition, the Traveler Network can serve as a template that can easily be adapted in other regions.

## Steps in the Process

The following tasks need to be completed as part of this project:

Conduct on-site reconnaissance and perform research in the areas and communities where the kiosks/portals will be.

- Contact communities located near each kiosk for assistance with gathering local information about attractions, accommodations and other pertinent information.

- Purchase, assemble and test the hardware, software and other equipment for the physical kiosk system (including the cabinet and any accessories).

- Research and identify Web based resources and information that will constitute the "informational content" of kiosk system.

- Develop Graphic User Interface (GUI) necessary to provide touch-screen access to information provided through the kiosks.

- Develop Web based resources (Web pages, text, graphics, maps, etc.) that will be stored locally on the computer CPU that will be housed in each of the kiosk units.

- Develop Web based resources (Web pages, text, graphics, databases, maps, etc.) that will be accessed from a Web server housed at a centralized location

The final "pilot" product will present a prototype with some, but not all, of the information developed.

**Benefits:**

A Regional Tourism Development Hub?

The Traveler Network can become a tourism hub, creating a communication and collaboration network to assist communities and businesses to share information and resources. The Traveler Network is a system that can provide "marketing" exposure for rural communities to travelers who stop in communities and tourism attractions and Travel Information Centers annually.

*Partners in the Traveler Network*

A cornerstone of the Traveler Network is that the "content" of each will be developed and maintained by regional groups (local Chambers of Commerce, Convention & visitors bureaus, etc.) who live near the visitor facilities or attractions. Local responsibility can transform the project into a community grassroots-based effort. This design distributes responsibility of developing and maintaining the content to local groups who are one of the primary beneficiaries of the system, besides the traveling public.

Regional tourism destinations can become more important for nearby communities because the information technology infrastructure outlined in this proposal might very well establish regional and community tourism information centers as "Hubs" for community and regional tourism development. The Traveler Network can answer customer's questions while it can also address several other important issues that are facing the tourism industry, rural communities, and citizens in the Department. A few of these are outlined briefly below.

*Addressing the Needs of Both User Groups*

The Traveler Network can help regions and the tourism agencies to satisfy the needs of communities' *and* travelers. Communities need to promote their areas to the traveling public, and travelers need travel information and ways to find tourism opportunities. The Traveler Network accomplishes this while satisfying several goals for regions and states, its citizens, and the people that are visiting the country. A few of these include:

*Easing Traveler's—Travel Anxieties—Safety & Security*

The Traveler Network will provide important safety and security information which can

potentially reduce traffic fatalities and ensure that traveler's concerns are minimized, while maximizing public awareness of safety issues.

*Create Tourism Marketing Opportunities for Communities and Businesses*

The Traveler Network will provide communities a way to attract travelers to spend some time in their region. Marketing for rural areas is constantly a challenge. The kiosks and portals at designated locations would provide useful information to travelers and create a new vehicle to reach potential customers who at the present time are driving by with little knowledge about the area.

*Avoid Creating a New Government Agency or Bureaucracy*

The Traveler Network will provide additional information without creating a need for additional on-site personnel. The design of the Traveler Network facilitates gathering information and providing a network for inputting, accessing and updating the information. The majority of content production and management will be the responsibility of the communities where the tourism kiosks are located.

*Collect Important Information About Tourism's Impact*

Embedded in the Traveler Network kiosks technology are the capabilities to capture important information about users of the system. Several strategies have been developed and can be used to gather important information about tourism in the chosen region. In addition, this information will be invaluable to policy and decision makers (local, regional, national) and researchers interested in studying tourism's impacts.

**Internet Access Kiosk**

Internet access Kiosks will be installed in designated facilities in a well-lit, secure location. They will be secured to the floor to prevent theft. The kiosks that are being considered will be heavy-duty with durable components, designed specifically for use in areas without supervision. Other components such as a security camera will be included to discourage vandalism.  An example of a kiosk is shown in Diagram 8.

The kiosk will be attractive with a modular design. It will include the following components:


1) Kiosk Enclosure

2) Color monitor (optional touch screen)

3) Computer CPU with CD drive (up-to-date processor

   and RAM/ROM memory)

4) Durable keyboard

5) Durable trackball mouse (optional outdoor)

6) Camera

7) Speakers/sound system

8) Internet ready with wireless capability

   (optional wireless Internet "hot-spot")

9) Promotional space

**Figure C5-2:** Example kiosk

**Promotion and Public Relation Campaigns**

Working in concert with the existing projects in the region, "*Experience Your Region*"  will launch a public relations campaign to promote this project in the region, nationwide and internationally. It is likely that this project will be the first of its kind in  and it will serve as a model for other states considering this type of offering. To sustain the positive publicity about this initiative, "*Experience Your Region*"  (see branding discussion in Initiative II) will actively promote this service utilizing its media contacts and outlets and through its relationships with governmental offices, other businesses, tourism associations and other organizations.

**Action Center 4) RRES – Toolbox**

If the reader has not already gathered, we believe that metaphors or analogies are very powerful for helping people to grasp a new concept. One of the oldest analogies that we have been using has been that of a "toolbox". Originally conceived in 1998 as the Community Tourism Development Toolbox, we continue to evolve this idea.

For the purposes of the RRES we have adapted many of the original concepts Community Tourism Development Toolbox. We would highlight here, although it is addressed in other parts of this document, that here we emphasize the necessity for evaluation.

To boil all of the previous materials, the bottom line of our approach would be like a mechanic going to a town that needed to have their cars fixed. The RRES in very simple terms is our team going out to communities with a toolbox and a with access to experience and know-how to help them in the area traditionally called *community development*, but we are calling it *empowerment*, in order to establish a new paradigm of understanding and thinking. And, if we don't have the tool or the knowledge we will know where and how to get it.
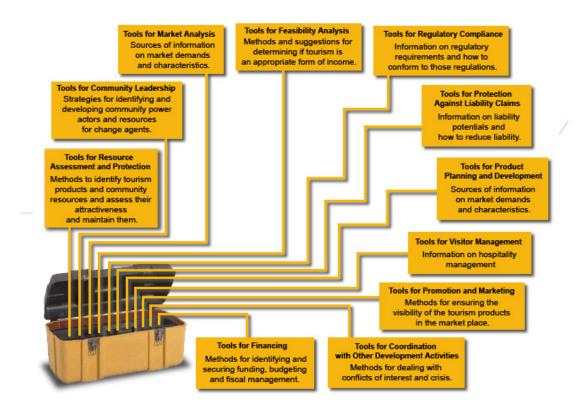


**Diagram C5-15:** The RRES Toolbox—Example Community Tourism Focus

**Purpose and Scope of the Rural Community Empowerment Strategies (RRES) Toolbox**

There are essentially two purposes of the RRES Toolbox. The first is to create a conceptual analogy in order for effective understanding of how the RRES components are applied as practical solutions. Practically everyone understands the idea of a toolbox, and this process of simplifying a seemly complex endeavor helps individuals in understanding. The second is to use this same analogy to provide access to information and resources that are

fundamental to community development, and to establish effective strategies for evaluation and monitoring for the continued evolution of services. (This concept will likely be developed in some fashion as an online resource, but at this time it does not exist). Diagram 16 illustrates a "tentative" overall organization of the Empowerment Toolbox. There are two major components: 1) resource linkages, and 2) resource and program evaluations. The resource linkages will create a functional organization of empowerment resources.

The RRES Toolbox will consist of a set of "functional drawers." Each drawer will provide information and resource linkages about a particular topic/issue associated with tourism development. See Figure C5-15 for a set of preliminary topics. More functional topics may evolve from the tourism resources evaluation phase of the project.

In each drawer are "tools" which will be resources or programs that are available from the various agencies or institutions, or those developed by the RRES. The second feature of the Empowerment Toolbox is an evaluation of the resources that are provided. In other words a concise "owner's manual" will be provided that overviews important information and an objective evaluation of the tools' (programs and resources) strengths and weaknesses.

Preliminarily, evaluation criteria for the "tools" include time required, cost (if there are any costs associated with the process), other inputs, expertise necessary (are there any special skills needed), and what audiences would this tool be effective for (regions, communities, individuals/families, businesses). Additional criteria will emerge from the review process. Some of the programs lead the user through an entire planning process. However, the toolbox will allow users to mix and match resources from various programs. The RRES Toolbox will promote both methods. Examples of the types of programs we will review and include in the toolbox are from various institutions in our network and especially extension programs in the U.S. and other places.

**Program Methods**

Methods focus on I) program development, and II) program evaluations.

### Program Development

To develop the program we will identify, consolidate, organize, and present appropriate materials in a way that assists users to find and use the right tools for

their needs. The tasks required to develop the program are as follows:

Task 1) Review and evaluate all technical assistance.

　　a)  Determine the functional links between the "Drawers" of the toolbox and the appropriate sections of the various technical assistance programs to identify the various tools to be included.

　　b) Organize and consolidate information for "ease of use" and, where necessary, make arrangements for cooperative agreements with other agencies and institutions.

Task 2) Design formats for review of tools (tourism resources and information).

Task 3) Write tool reviews.

Task 4) Identify examples and links to identified web sites. We will identify Internet sites that serve as good examples of rural tourism development. We will summarize these sites and provide linkages to them.

Task 5) Set up the Internet mechanism for on-line discussions and information exchange. We will provide and manage on-line discussion groups that will facilitate interactions among people interested in rural tourism development.

Task 6) Develop the "Toolbox"

　　a) Determine appropriate web site and graphic design for disseminating information

　　b) Design the web site and test functionality

　　c) Design hard copy version

Task 7) Promote use of the Toolbox

　　a) Collect mailing and e-mail lists of "target audiences". This project will be promoted nationally. In order to leverage our efforts and resources we will target Chambers of Commerce, Convention and Visitors Bureaus, and regional and other rural tourism development organizations that can disseminate information about the Tourism Toolbox to their constituents. In addition, we will identify state and federal agencies that are involved in tourism development.

　　b) Develop promotional plan—post cards, e-mail, Internet search engines

Task 8) Pilot-test the web-based Tourism Toolbox on a sub-set of identified audiences

a) Evaluate pilot-test

b) Re-design web site and toolbox organization as necessary

Task 9) Fully implement Web site toolbox and promote.

### II. Program evaluation

Methods to evaluate the web site will include time on site, depth into site, an on-line user questionnaire, and response cards from users of the hardcopy version. Tasks to evaluate the program are as follows:

Task 1) Design evaluation instruments

a) survey (web and hardcopy)

b) time on site (web)

c) depth in-site (web)

d) on-the-ground evaluations (web and hardcopy)

Task 2) Formal evaluation of Rural Tourism Empowerment Toolbox

a) Collect and analyze survey data

b) Conduct on-the-ground evaluation of users of the toolbox

Task 3) Maintain e-mail and telephone contact with users of the Tourism Toolbox for an ongoing evaluation of the Tourism Toolbox.

Task 4) Evaluate descriptions of tourism activities actually developed as a result of the Tourism Toolbox.

## Expected results

The RRES Toolbox will help rural citizens to gain access to more information about community and business development. It will inform residents about the variety of tools they can use for income diversification.

The Internet provides one of the most effective ways to find information. However, available search engines do not necessarily locate the "best" information and the quantity of web sites returned from a "search" can be overwhelming, especially for people who do not use the Internet extensively. In addition, it is difficult to assess these resources (web sites) regarding costs and benefits, or their effectiveness for a particular application or user. The RRES Toolbox will address these issues by locating the most pertinent resources, then making them available from a single web site, and providing evaluation reviews

(quality assurance).

Based on current knowledge of communities and business owners that need assistance, we expect considerable response to the RRES Toolbox. This concept has developed from our experience and interaction with rural people as they consider creating new businesses, and or products. Most people who live in rural areas are there because they feel a special connection with the land, and would like to stay there. However, economic pressures are forcing people to abandon or subdivide farms and ranches. Increasingly rural people are recognizing the need to diversify their economies.

Another unique strategy of this program is to identify our target audiences and "market" the RRES Toolbox. Over time, as we correspond with its users, we will further refine the program to meet the needs of larger audiences.


## Conclusion: The Big Picture a Contextual Summary

As a conclusion to this extensive discussion we introduce a concept that we call "The Big Picture". This idea developed as a result of about twenty-two years of various "concepts" floating around my head. In the 1980's I was introduced to Maslow's Heirarchy of Needs, which I believe to be an important contribution to our understanding of humans and the various stages of development.

Maslow's model as a conceptual foundation is a good start, however, over the years we think there are some ways that it may be adjusted. It is not the point here to go into a lengthy discourse, however, we would like to introduce these ideas as *possibilities* to the reader. The first is that in our personal experience, and our observation of people, that there are opportunities to catalyze individual evolution. The term fairly commonly used for this would be "spiritual awakening". We believe there are increasing potentialities to raise people out of the lower levels of the Maslow's pyramid and allow them to experience dramatic transformations. Our approaches, especially related to empowerment will readily embrace these possibilities, although we understand in scientific circles these are difficult to support. We however will remain open to those possibilities because in a very real sense, we think that real empowerment, and a wholesale transformation of human life on the planet is going to require the introduction

of influences that fall way outside the paradigmatic realm of "modern" science.

A second point relates to this idea adapted to collective experience. We are recognizing as a real possibility that we may be able to stimulate with our RRES, a paradigmatic shift for the communities that we work with. To use another phrase would be a "technology leap". Our hope is that as we take the lessons that we have learned from our work in the United States, which some would suggest had "advanced" ahead of developing places, that the lessons learned, especially in regards to mistakes, could be avoided.

A specific example is where we are currently deploying the RRES in Colombia  S.A. One of our team is originally from Colombia but spent most of his career in the U.S. He had stated on a number of occasions that the U.S. is twenty years ahead of Colombia. I would argue that those twenty years are not necessarily all in positive ways. In fact, regarding food and agriculture and other systems, I believe developments have become more and more problematic. Many examples could be provided. The point here is the hope that we might be able to take the lessons learned, mistakes and/or successes from one place (United States), and help another place avoid the same problems, or implement the successes. This potentially could even contribute to, or stimulate, a paradigm shift and/or a technology leap, in essence advancing that place and its people ahead twenty years of potential trials and tribulations. We see this happening in numerous places around the globe, so this is not just a "pipe dream".

## THE BIG PICTURE - In Simple Terms (Moving from competitive to creative)

Foundation of Understanding Based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

**Basic Human Needs - community level** →

- Food - (Norman Borlaug)
- Econ. Dev. (Andy, Sanjay, Tazim)
- Security (J.R., & Paul)
- Environmental Stability / Safety

**Need a Spiritual Connection**
- to environment
- higher power (God)
- people (community)
via experiences - e.g. travel, learning

**Experiential Learning / Education**
TEACH: How to Think, Reason, Learn!!
Utilize mental faculties: perception, will, imagination
memory, intuition, reason (Bob Proctor)
**Basis of Eduction**
Awareness, Truth, Responsibilty
Neale Donald Walsch
*"One hundred percent of human potential is the
result of proper education"*- Dr. John Hagelin

**Education leads to higher level** →
- New thinking paradigm - Proctor
- Technology Leap
- Thinking Leap based on new
  spiritual understanding tied to
  knowledge of Human-Environment
  Connection
("The Great Work", Thomas Berry)

once these things go up - the systems
open up and corruption and exploitation
get reduced - potentially significantly

**to get education you need:**
- economic development - diversification
- extension / outreach - education
* materials presented in audience context
- people to assist - outside maybe to
  get started but ultimately
  *Local Stars*

Leads to utilization of technology
tools to solve problems related
to environment and education

Hyperspectral Sensor

Internet

Computers

(computers are a "tool" to help us
solve our complex problems)

Instilling HOPE in
the Masses!!

In the end we need:

# Inspiration!!
(Wallace D. Wattles)

Self-actualization — morality, creativity, spontaneity, problem solving, lack of prejudice, acceptance of facts
Esteem — self-esteem, confidence, achievement, respect of others, respect by others
Love/Belonging — friendship, family, sexual intimacy
Safety — security of body, of employment, of resources, of morality, of the family, of health, of property
Physiological — breathing, food, water, sex, sleep, homeostasis, excretion

We're all in this Together - We must save Ourselves *and* each other. - Andy Skadberg

**Diagram C5-16**: The Big Picture – In Simple Terms

Diagram C5-16 moves conceptually from the upper left to right to depict those factors that are needed to move people and communities forward through education. Each arrow in the diagram indicates movement and connection, but also identifying critical factors for evolution. Critical ideas regarding connection to the environment, spiritual connections and the potential for dramatic spiritual or personal transformation are also included. The flow of the diagram points to what we believe the bottom line to be – individual transformation (inspiration, empowerment). Also introduced is the ultimate role that technologies can serve as a means to expand communications, and the application towards managing and addressing the pressing problems that humanity faces.

The foundation of this diagram can be captured in the quote from John Hagelin "One hundred percent of human potential is the result of proper education". To that end, ideas that have been put forward by various people are also included in the diagram as

contributing to the idea of advanced, "out-of-the-box" thinking which will be necessary if we hope to create new paradigms of existence. Such authors and inspirational leaders such as Thomas Berry, Bob Proctor, Eckhart Tolle, Ken Carey, Miguel Ruiz and Neale Donald Walsch have introduced concepts specifically about our human capacities and foci that our education should take, in addition to our relationship to the planet.

All of these concepts lead toward what we hope to be a better life for everyone on the planet. An idea that I would introduce here has come from a life of experience and self searching: and that is the idea that I really am my own savior, but, in order to be aligned with Love, once I have realized my own blessed life, that it is my duty and responsibility to make the same available to others. That, in a nutshell, is the ultimate purpose of the RRES. To take the various experiences and things that I have learned and share them with others in hopes to provide to them the same opportunities and blessings that I have received so abundantly.