

SMALL TOWN SURVIVAL:

Implementing a Rural Development Strategy for the US

SUMMARY

In response to the deteriorating situation in rural America, the Institute of Cultural Affairs has embarked on a three phase program called Small Town Survival: Implementing a Rural Development Strategy for the United States. A series of Rural Development Symposia provide a primary vehicle for the task of phase I and will result in articulation of a rural development strategy to be implemented by public, private, voluntary and local sectors. The Rural Development Symposia are incorporated into a larger three year system of action research and leadership training, including an International Exposition of Rural Development in India in February 1984. As organizing sponsor, ICA will make available methods formulated out of thirty years of national and international experience in comprehensive, integrated development at the local level.

INTRODUCTION

The Institute of Cultural Affairs has been working for 30 years in the fields of practical education, strategic planning and comprehensive community development. It's TRAINING, INC. curriculum has achieved a 90% placement and 85% job retention level for previously hardcore unemployed people. 5000 Town Meetings conducted as part of the 1976 Bicentennial Celebration launched many communities on programs of self-development. 17 Human Development Projects in the United States and massive replication projects in India and Kenya have demonstrated the effectiveness of ICA's comprehensive, integrated grassroots approach. ICA programs provide people with practical problem-solving methods which help them make their communities self-sufficient, self-reliant and self-confident. Support for the work of the Institute comes from corporations such as Standard Oil, from religious organizations such as the Iowa Methodist Conference, from service groups such as Rotary International, from governments such as Canadian International Development Agency, from foundations such as the Ford Foundation and from concerned individuals.

NEED ADDRESSED

People have for some time been aware of the tensions, fractures and decay in urban, industrial America. Today the weakened global economy has exposed a serious situation in rural America as well: a dramatic decline in small farms due to increasing farm bankruptcies, unreplicable energy consuming agricultural methods, loss of farm land to housing and urban development and through industrial pollution and industrialized agriculture, the isolation of minority groups to pockets of poverty in the rural areas.

Within the national priority on economic recovery, real economic progress is critical in rural communities where the rate of poverty and unemployment is higher than in urban areas. Low rural incomes result not only from unemployment but also from low wages and part-time work due to limited skills and training and a shortage of employment opportunities. Small, isolated population concentrations have made delivery of services difficult. Housing, health, transportation and education have all remained below urban standards.

Beneath both urban and rural issues is the gnawing problem of decreasing national productivity. The US today is necessarily as concerned about 'development' methods and approaches as any Third World nation. Neither the single issue project approach nor the top-down capital intensive approach is appropriate to today's realities.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

It is the intent of the Institute of Cultural Affairs to create a rural development strategy to be implemented over three years by launching comprehensive, integrated zones of human development in cooperation with private, public, voluntary and local sectors of society. The objectives of the Small Town Survival: Implementing a Rural Development Strategy for the United States program are:

1. Articulating a rural development strategy involving all sectors.
2. Transmitting the technology of human development to implementing agents.
3. Forging new partnerships among formerly disrelated sectors of society.
4. Engaging development practitioners in systematic action research.
5. Training local leadership to understand different perspectives and frameworks.
6. Involving citizens in choosing new alternatives through facing realities.
7. Revealing the meaning and purpose of people's experiences.
8. Launching comprehensive, integrated zones of human development.

PROGRAM METHODS

The ICA has organized its three year launch of 'human development zones' into three phases: I. Location of potential partnerships, II. Training of leadership cores, and III. Designing launch mechanisms for human development zones.

Phase I: Location of Potential Partnerships

Activities of the first phase (1982-83) are designed to precede and flow out of a series of Rural Development Symposia across the nation. A Rural Symposium will be held for the eastern states, midwestern states, southern states, western states, and one for US-based international development agencies. These symposia have been created to provide a forum for locally-focussed groups to formulate and exchange their learnings about effective methods and gain a more comprehensive picture of the task of rural development in the '80s.

Each symposium will include presentations and reports from significant projects and activities in the area, major speakers on national and regional development trends, panels, workshops and think tanks on current edges in development. Facilitated by the ICA, participants will experience a consensus-building method and active research mode which make possible co-ordinated efforts. At the end of the two and a half day symposium, a document will be produced outlining a rural development strategy for the geography represented.

As the organizing sponsor, ICA will conduct interviews and sitevisits throughout the geography served by each symposium. The most innovative and replicable projects will be documented in depth for sharing in phase II. Relationships formed through the work of the symposium will be valenced relative to interest in and potential for collaboration on launching 'human development zones'. Individuals will be named to serve on the National Steering Committee for the International Exposition of Rural Development.

Mid-America: Access to the Future

Mid-America: Access to the Future, will take place at a conference center in Des Moines, Iowa in late March. It will provide a platform for high-lighting successful programs in developing community partnerships. Representatives of thirteen states of Mid-America are being invited to share results of their projects through documented audio-visual presentations and reports in order to discern practical learnings for future development of the central states.

Des Moines has been selected for the site as it represents the heartland of the US and the Breadbasket of North America. It is also the urban link to Midcrest, a potential site for launching a comprehensive integrated zone of human development. Midcrest is an eight-county area of Southwest Iowa which has long been a depressed part of a state otherwise noted for its high quality of life.

The Des Moines event will be conducted with the guidance of a coalition of co-sponsoring organizations from Iowa and the Midwest. The Iowa co-sponsors will be the host committee. Organizations symbolic of the state's heritage are being sought, such as Pioneer Seed, Iowa State University and the Iowa Department of Agriculture. Co-sponsors from across Mid-America will assure participation from the total area. These will be organizations which have already made a commitment to community development and are looking for new opportunities for collaboration, such as Rural Ventures, Inc. in Minneapolis, Minnesota; Force One in Detroit, Michigan; University of Wisconsin in Osh Kosh, Wisconsin; and the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana. The Institute of Cultural Affairs, organizing sponsor for the International Exposition of Rural Development, will provide overall co-ordination and methods facilitation.

Phase II: Training of Leadership Cores

Phase II (1983-83) will utilize the International Exposition of Rural Development to prepare people from all sectors for new partnerships in implementing rural development. The Exposition will take place in India in February, 1984. This event will involve delegations from 50 nations in sharing exhibits and learnings about their efforts to further effective rural socio-economic development. United States participation in this event will be decided by a National Steering Committee which will be selected from those participating in and supporting the Symposia. The US delegation will be trained in presentation and dialogue methods so they can adequately share the learnings of selected projects and learn from implementing agents in other parts of the world. They will be trained in the ICA's method of strategic planning.

Phase III: Designing Launch Mechanisms for Human Development Zones.

Phase III (1984-85) involves the returning delegation in a series of events to share the products of the Exposition broadly across the US. It also involves the National Steering Committee and returning delegation in creating implementation designs and methods and systems for launching human development zones. Zones will be launched in 1985.

EVALUATION

This proposal is for Phase I of this three phase program. As such, the evaluation program is for the first phase only. In the US, ICA operates 18 regional offices, four area offices and one headquarters in Chicago. November, 1982 representatives from the four area offices will meet to evaluate the interview and sitevisit procedures and rationales for the Rural Development Symposia. Participation targets will be checked to ensure that all four sectors and the total geography will be represented. Work on the methods and format of the Symposia will be finalized. In January, 1983 the project documentation method will be refined by ICA's global research staff. When the National Steering Committee meets in April, 1983 it will examine the results of all of the Symposia and select potential projects for participation in the International Exposition. Evaluation of project documentation and exhibits will take place in July, 1983 along with clarification of the methods to be used in training the delegation to the Exposition.

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PHASE I PROPOSED BUDGET *

Expenses

ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK (IERD)		\$5,000
Program Design	2,000	
Advisory Board & Steering Committee	1,500	
Co-Sponsoring Organizations	500	
Funding Activities	1,000	
PROJECT PARTICIPATION		10,000
Project Research	1,000	
Project Evaluation	5,000	
Project Documentation	4,000	
RURAL DEVELOPMENT SYMPOSIUM		28,800
Speakers Fees	1,500	
Facility & Equipment	3,000	
Participant Materials	1,500	
Local Travel	1,800	
Project Exhibits	6,000	
Reception	3,000	
Facilitation Fee	10,000	
Document Production	2,000	
ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES		7,000
Promotional Materials & PR	3,000	
Communications (phone/mailings)	2,500	
Office Operations	1,000	
Financial Records	500	
TOTAL		\$50,800

Income

PARTICIPANT DELEGATE FEES (200 x \$100)	\$20,000
PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS	3,800
CO-SPONSORS	5,000
CORPORATIONS & FOUNDATIONS	8,000
LOCAL BUSINESSES	7,000
SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS	7,000
TOTAL	\$50,800

*This is a regional budget. National costs and area costs have been divided by the number of regional offices.