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7-15-2015

Ripple Effect Mapping: A Tool to Document Change

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Cornhusker Economics

Ripple Effect Mapping: A Tool to Document Change

Market Report	Year Ago	4 Wks Ago	
Livestock and Products,			
Weekly Average			
Nebraska Slaughter Steers, 35-65% Choice, Live Weight.	155.33	150.00	151.00
Nebraska Feeder Steers, Med. & Large Frame, 550-600 lb.	269.16	288.28	280.09
Nebraska Feeder Steers, Med. & Large Frame 750-800 lb.	235.98	240.46	233.11
Choice Boxed Beef, 600-750 lb. Carcass.	250.54	249.87	242.21
Western Corn Belt Base Hog Price Carcass, Negotiated.	130.86	75.57	78.04
Pork Carcass Cutout, 185 lb. Carcass 51-52% Lean.	133.76	83.59	80.69
Slaughter Lambs, woolled and shorn, 135-165 lb. National.	154.75	153.86	159.41
National Carcass Lamb Cutout FOB.	362.61	349.15	361.12
Crops,			
Daily Spot Prices			
Wheat, No. 1, H.W. Imperial, bu.	5.83	4.50	5.15
Corn, No. 2, Yellow Nebraska City, bu.	3.63	3.43	4.11
Soybeans, No. 1, Yellow Nebraska City, bu.	12.46	9.57	10.08
Grain Sorghum, No.2, Yellow Dorchester, cwt.	6.32	6.84	8.14
Oats, No. 2, Heavy Minneapolis, Mn, bu.	3.79	2.79	2.91
Feed			
Alfalfa, Large Square Bales, Good to Premium, RFV 160-185 Northeast Nebraska, ton.	207.50	*	180.00
Alfalfa, Large Rounds, Good Platte Valley, ton.	*	*	85.00
Grass Hay, Large Rounds, Good Nebraska, ton.	100.00	130.00	95.00
Dried Distillers Grains, 10% Moisture Nebraska Average.	125.75	129.00	127.75
Wet Distillers Grains, 65-70% Moisture Nebraska Average.	59.00	45.50	42.50
* No Market			

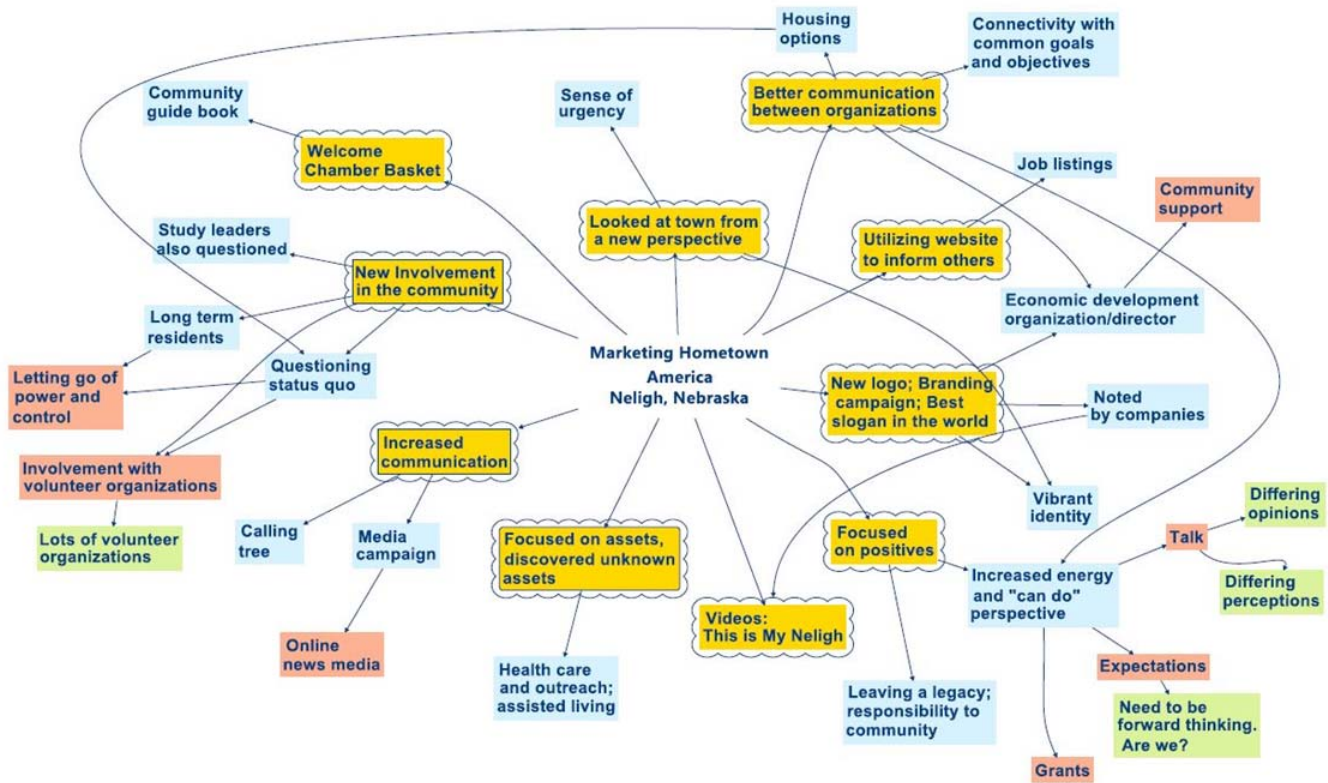
Do educational programs focused on community development produce real community change? And if so, how can you document that change?

This seems to be the ultimate question for professionals working in this field. A relatively new technique, Ripple Effect Mapping (Kollock, Flage, Chazdon, Paine & Higgins, 2012), may have real potential in gleaning both intended and unintended consequences of the educational experience, a first step in long-term change.

This technique was recently used to assess the outcomes and impacts of an educational program, Marketing Hometown America. From 2013 to 2014, seven communities* in Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota piloted the program with the intended program goal of helping rural communities develop marketing action plans to better market themselves to potential new residents.

At the end of the program, participants in focus groups reflected in detail upon both the *intended* and *unintended* changes in their community. Using a structured set of probing questions, a

* Pilot Communities: Nebraska – Kimball, Neligh; North Dakota – Ellendale, High Plains Region (Adams, Edmore Lawton, Fairdale, Nekoma, Hampden); South Dakota – Wessington Springs, Faith, Hot Springs



variety of program outcomes were shared. As an example, the ripple map above documents what happened in Neligh, Nebraska within one year of starting the program.

Maps documenting community responses were created in all pilot locations. When maps were compared across communities using a qualitative meta-analysis, themes emerged. Marketing actions and amenity improvements were *intended* changes that occurred in all locations. In addition to these outcomes, several *unintended* changes were seen in the pilot communities. They included increased adult and youth engagement, expanded leadership, increased networking, and expanded civic awareness and community spirit.

Listed below are examples of actions associated with each category.:

Marketing Actions

- Entrance signs were created or renovated
- Videos were produced showcasing the community
- New logos and brands were created
- A group of communities banded together to develop a web presence
- Social media tools were developed

- Community brochures, guidebooks and community calendars were created
- Mailings were targeted to high school alumni

Amenity Improvements

- A variety of visual improvements were made
- Downtown murals were painted
- Lots cleared
- A depot was painted

Adult & Youth Engagement

- An increase in volunteerism
- Young mothers were connected to key resources
- New people were involved in community activities
- Increased support for volunteer fire department
- Expanded recruitment of new professionals
- Enhancement of community arts efforts
- High school students developed a community brochure in Spanish
- Youth planned and implemented a scavenger hunt via traditional and GPS methods for youth
- Playgrounds were created and renovated
- A summer school opportunity was developed

Leadership

- New people stepped up to mobilize, play a role and even lead the Marketing Hometown America process
- Noted change in the leadership continuum with new people supporting or replacing some of the traditional leadership
- People saw a value to the program beyond the immediate marketing focus

Networking

- Communication expanded in new and different ways
- New connections were made with Federal agencies, tourism boards, Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development groups, University Extension, schools and other higher education institutions
- Information gleaned from the program was integrated into discussions held with other groups resulting in organizational plans across the community linked to new resident recruitment issues

Civic Awareness & Community Spirit

- People noted a heightened sense of urgency and began to question the “status quo”
- A *can do* perspective was strengthened
- Intergenerational interaction increased during community improvement activities
- Groups recognized a need to fill key leadership positions. The need to improve communication between organizations was acknowledged.
- Recognition that we CAN make a difference in a community
- Communities can learn from each other

The ripple mapping process not only documented these outcomes; it was also very revealing to the community members involved in the focus group process. Participants knew what had happened in their small action group but the overall community impacts of the program were largely unknown. Both of these positive attributes could make Ripple Effect Mapping a very effective tool for documenting community development change.

For more information about the program go to: <http://tinyurl.com/marketing-hometown> or to see stakeholders talking about their community outcomes, go to: <https://youtu.be/m21vR9qnnKo>

References:

Kollock, D., Flage, L., Chazdon, S., Paine, N., & Higgins, L. (2012). Ripple effect mapping: A “radiant” way to capture program impacts. *Journal of Extension* [Online], 50(5). Available at: <http://www.joe.org/joe/2012october/tt6.php>

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