



Youth Engagement in Beaver County

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Introduction

1. Youth-based dynamics are a long-established element of rural “decline”
2. Often framed in terms of:
 1. Economic development (no jobs)
 2. Economic diversification (no services)
 3. Curriculum (“learning to leave”)
 4. Culture (a “success” leaves for school, work, etc.)
 5. Demographic “reality” – most people live in cities (approx. 85%)

Context (national)

1. Absence/loss of youth largely framed as an indicator of a broader set of issues/dynamics (see slide 1)
2. Often reflects a broader, dichotomized worldview:
 - Urban/rural = young/old; diverse/agriculture; innovative/conventional
3. Young(er) people in rural areas often seen/framed as external (a population we do things for, or to...rather than with)
4. Structural factors (distance/density) can be compounded by local attitudes (eg. From business, council, parents, even teachers)



Context (local)

Youth engagement in Beaver County

- 1) FCSS:
- 2) Schools:
- 3) Beaver County Partnership:
- 4) BRAED: “Voices of Prosperity”
Symposium (2011)
- 5) Municipal assets



The project challenge:

Goal: Find pathways to retain and attract youth to pursue a future in BC (after) post-secondary education

Sub-goals:

1. Build capacity in leadership
2. Build capacity in volunteerism
3. Build capacity in governance
4. Recognize and work with economic and employment assets and resources



The Project (Overview)

- 1) Start with youth (12 – 24);
 - Engage and map assets
- 2) Start with community (x5):
 - Engage with parents, teachers, business owners and other youth “stakeholders”
- 3) Consider organizational mandates, strategies and goals (Strategy Road Map);
- 4) Consider decision-support, evidence, partner capacity and evaluation as value-added outcomes as well;

Methodology

- 1) Asset mapping workshops (1.5-2 hrs each)
 - Jr High School/High School students
 - University student facilitator
 - Teachers present (new content for many)
- 2) Student surveys
 - Where/who/why/when/how long?
- 3) Community workshops
 - Validate/respond to/build upon 1 & 2
 - Limited uptake (wide invitations)
 - Parents...



Methodology

1) Thematic priorities:

- 1) Volunteerism
- 2) Leadership and governance
- 3) Employment

2) Functional priorities:

- 1) Support FCSS and schools re: planning, strategy and assessment;
- 2) Link (1) to both local and extant (ie, academic and grey literature) evidence (718 items)
- 3) Support the expansion of (1 and 2) through partnership

Outputs

In temporal order:

1. Asset maps
2. School-specific and aggregated surveys
 1. Descriptives AND SEQ models
3. Strategy Roadmap
4. Workshop and asset reports (for schools, etc.) (x38)
5. Evaluation Resources (100+)
6. Recommendations (86)
7. The Portal....



Outputs

All outputs can be accessed, viewed, downloaded and synthesized via a customized youth engagement portal:

www.beavercountyyouth.ca/



FCSS Implementation

The Beaver County YES Portal became live at the end of April and following some initial training and determining access levels, we were free to explore the portal on our own. Implementation First Steps:

1. Sharing the project background and public portal link with our interagency partners including other FCSS offices, education, RCMP, and mental health amongst others.
2. Development of an action plan to start responding to the recommendations.
3. Portal Exploration – addition of an age group (ECD), uploading reports/resources, review resources within the portal.
4. Loading the portal calendar with community events and school division days off.

FCSS Action Plan

The action plan is a work in progress as there are a number of recommendations to respond to. Action Plan First Steps:

1. Determine partners and resources (from portal or otherwise) that would be best-suited to assist with a response and share accordingly.
2. Brainstorm programs/workshops etc. that align with the recommendations.
3. Establish timelines that align with the rollout of responses.
4. Aligning responses to other Beaver County reports such as the Municipal Sustainability Plan.

FCSS Action Plan

Action Plan Next Steps:

We received minimal response when we first shared the portal with area partners to peruse on their own. First Steps for Solutions:

1. Extract and share specific recommendations with the parties that they pertained to.
 - Eg. Short-term Recommendation - **Positive relationships with the police and the justice system**
 - Result – Positive Ticketing Campaign being rolled out.
2. Include Youth Engagement initiatives in existing programs.
 - Eg. Short-term Recommendation – **Volunteer Board Governance could include youth**
 - Result – Board Orientation Workshop included a presentation to educate groups about how to include youth.



Beaver County Priorities

The response to recommendations is not always triggered by us. It is important to act on opportunities when they align with Beaver County's priorities. An unexpected partnership with REACH (Rural Enterprise Assistance and Coaching Hostel) has resulted in "Junior Achievement" being rolled out in two county schools in the new year.

Junior Achievement aligns with the Beaver County's Municipal Sustainability Plan "Home Grown" which identifies a number of "First Priorities" for 2017/2018, one being the development of a youth entrepreneurship program. It also responds to various recommendations from the Beaver County Youth Engagement Project:

- Eg. YES Portal Short-term Recommendation – **Youth Leadership and Entrepreneurship Opportunities**
- Eg. Beaver County MSP Priority Item - **Support Entrepreneurial Talent Development to Attract and Retain "Independents"**



Future

- Continue to use recommendations to drive youth and community programming.
- Create unique partnerships or strengthen existing ones using the recommendations as a guide.
- Expand resources contained within the portal.
- Expand use of the Beaver County YES portal - one stop shop for Beaver County events, recreations programs and otherwise.



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