



THE MONIESON CENTRE

TRANSFORMING BUSINESS IN THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

Discovery Workshop Report 1000 Islands *October 14, 2010*

INTRODUCTION

This report is part of The Monieson Centre's Knowledge Impact in Society (KIS) Project, a three-year endeavour to connect academic knowledge with economic development needs in Eastern Ontario. The report is a summary of information collected at a 3-hour workshop in Gananoque, ON. Twenty-six community leaders and business people from the 1000 Islands gave feedback on their community's economic development needs and research questions. This information, along with similar information gathered in 14 other communities in Eastern Ontario, will guide the research pursued over the course of the KIS project.

The workshop was hosted by Sandra Wright, Executive Director, 1000 Islands Region Workforce Development Board and Pam Staples, Cultural and Events Coordinator, Economic Development, Town of Gananoque. Dr. Yolande Chan, Director, The Monieson Centre, and Jeff Dixon, Assistant Director, The Monieson Centre, introduced the KIS project and Erik Lockhart, Associate Director, Queen's Executive Decision Centre, facilitated the workshop. The KIS project is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. For more information, visit www.easternontarioknowledge.ca.



QUESTION 1

What are the pressing issues, challenges and needs with respect to rural economic development and making the 1000 Islands a vital community (economic, social, health)?

Top Issues:

1. **Shifting Economic Base.** We need a strategy to replace lost jobs and businesses based on emerging economic trends and employment opportunities.
2. **Regional Cooperation.** We need to approach economic development from a regional perspective, rather than within political boundaries.
3. **Skilled Workforce.** We need a strategy to increase the local capacity for employers to attract and retained skilled professionals.
4. **Community Engagement.** We need to engage business leaders, the labour force and the broader population in moving the economy forward.
5. **Effective Plan Implementation.** We need to move forward with action, rather than continuing to discuss and plan.
6. **Aging Population.** We need to understand the opportunities and challenges of an aging population.
7. **Investment Competitiveness.** We need to make the community attractive to investment by reducing the cost of doing business here.
8. **Knowledge-Based Economy.** We should actively pursue small/medium-sized businesses in knowledge-based industries.
9. **Regional Capacity.** We need to be realistic about our local limitations.
10. **Sustainable Employment.** There seems to be a lack of good, sustainable jobs, as well as awareness of those jobs which do exist.

QUESTION 2

If you had access to our researchers for a year, what would you ask them to study? Given the immensity of the research "wish list" and scarcity of available resources, what are your research priorities?

1. **Economic Opportunities.** What are the projected opportunities in the new economy for rural areas? (occupations, skills training, education, etc.) What are economic activities in Eastern Ontario that we should be focusing on giving our demographics, geography, climate and other features?
2. **Sustainable Economic Development.** What are the successful working models for sustainable rural economic development from other regions? How do we make the best uses of the resources we have? What models are out there?
3. **Skilled Labour.** How can we best maximize the talent/skill base of the existing population in the region in terms of expanding economic growth?
4. **Business Engagement.** How do we get more businesses actively involved in the work of groups like BIAs, Chambers, etc.? (What tools, resources might we need? Are there best practices we can point to?)
5. **Tourism.** How can we transform the current tourism industry into a more leading edge industry? Complete an inventory of tourism attractions across the Leeds Grenville region.
6. **Aging Population.** What are the emerging opportunities for business in addressing the needs of an aging population?
7. **Immigrant Attraction.** How can we effectively implement immigrant attraction/recruitment? What are the drivers that would attract recent newcomers to Canada to smaller, non-urban communities? What are the subsequent drivers that would retain them in those communities?
8. **Regional Promotion.** How do we effectively market the region using best practices?
9. **Regional Cooperation.** What defines a region? What are the characteristics of a successful, unified region? Is this a region?
10. **Effective Plan Implementation.** Take all of the studies, workshop reports and mapping exercises undertaken in the past 2 years in this community and translate them into measurable action plans. What is the leadership skill set required to move from study to action in the region?

QUESTION 3

What local resources (organizations, reports, past work etc.) might contribute to addressing the issues identified above? What in-kind support can you contribute (office space, personnel, etc.) for research?

1. **Economic Opportunities.** What are the projected opportunities in the new economy for rural areas? (occupations, skills training, education, etc.) What are economic activities in Eastern Ontario that we should be focusing on giving our demographics, geography, climate and other features?
 - United Way of Leeds Grenville Town Hall meetings Report
 - 1000 Island WDB(TOP Report, Studies), OMAFRA(REDDI site), United Counties(Economic Workshops)
 - 1000 islands workforce dev board, community profiles
 - CFDC's, Economic Development offices
 - Creative Corridor
 - First Impressions. omafra twinning exercise eg. Westport and Buckhorn both have a large arts community .. secret shopper exercise
 - Newfoundland - Toursim / "Vision"
 - Economic Development - "White Papers"
 - Creative City Network

2. **Sustainable Economic Development.** What are the successful working models for sustainable rural economic development from other regions? How do we make the best uses of the resources we have? What models are out there?
 - Go to EDAC and EDCO website for best practices examples and also recent conference PowerPoint presentations
 - OMAFRA

3. **Skilled Labour.** How can we best maximize the talent/skill base of the existing population in the region in terms of expanding economic growth?
 - Ministry of colleges and universities- studies completed for targeted initiative for older worker
 - Employment service providers - KEYS, Workforce Dev Board
 - Stats Can information available
 - MCTU

4. **Business Engagement.** How do we get more businesses actively involved in the work of groups like BIAs, Chambers, etc.? (What tools, resources might we need? Are there best practices we can point to?)
 - United Counties of Leeds and Grenville panel series report on this subject done by the Economic Development Office - Deanna, Ann Weir
 - Contact the Ontario BIA association located in Brockville
 - Consult the Canadian Tourism Council
 - Ministry of Tourism Toolkit, Occupation forecasting tool(TIWDB) Ontario and Canadian Chamber of Commerce

5. **Tourism.** How can we transform the current tourism industry into a more leading edge industry? Complete an inventory of tourism attractions across the Leeds Grenville region.
- Regional Tourism Organization Area 9
 - Ontario Tourism (OTMEP)
 - 1000 Islands and St. Lawrence Premier Ranked Destinations Study
 - Premiere ranked destination studies
 - Consult with Destination Marketing Organizations re: marketing, branding, asset identification
 - Thousand Islands International Tourism (bi annual business survey)
 - Premier rank report- Ministry of Tourism
 - DMF and DMO statistics
 - Chambers, BIA's and stakeholder statistics
 - Tap into the research libraries of consulting firms
 - Stakeholder consultations
 - Hire Gord Phillips EPG
 - Contact Canadian Tourism Council
 - Attractions Ontario
 - Ask Dave Paul for advice on professional assistance
6. **Aging Population.** What are the emerging opportunities for business in addressing the needs of an aging population?
- SAIL, LHINs
 - Sandra Wright at WDB
 - KEYS
 - David Paul at Brockville ED - how to balance (youth & aging) the demographic profile?
 - L&G demographics projections (David Foote study on County/Municipality)
 - Country Roads CHC - Portland
 - Would be good to tap into wisdom & experience of retirees
 - Prof Linda Duxbury (data on Eastern Ontario)
7. **Immigrant Attraction.** How can we effectively implement immigrant attraction/recruitment? What are the drivers that would attract recent newcomers to Canada to smaller, non-urban communities? What are the subsequent drivers that would retain them in those communities?
- Conference Board of Canada Leader Series
 - OMAFRA Cirro initiative- tool kit to be released shortly- immigration for NBay, Chatham Kent & Brockville
 - Leeds and Grenville Immigration Partnership (offices at City of Brockville and United Way) has gathered knowledge and a library of publications on the topic
 - Kingston Immigration partnership
8. **Regional Promotion.** How do we effectively market the region using best practices?
- 1000 Islands International Council annual reports
 - Area tourism advisory committee workplans
 - Ontario East website

9. **Regional Cooperation.** What defines a region? What are the characteristics of a successful, unified region? Is this a region?

- Premier Ranked Destination Study
- Lower Town Study
- Steering Committee for Gananoque Cultural Plan - Pam Staples
- The Leeds Grenville United Counties round-table report, available on the county's new website leedsgrenville.com
- United Counties of Leeds Grenville has office space which may be available

QUESTION 4

If this project is to be successful, what are the things that you would see in place in the next two years? What must happen in order to ensure that the KIS project makes a positive impact on your community?

Note: the group brainstormed ideas which have been categorized into the following buckets by the KIS team. Notes in *italics* provide suggestions on how the KIS project can support these deliverables.

The following suggestions fit within the scope of the KIS project and may be completed if identified as a priority across Eastern Ontario:

1. The community has used the research & knowledge to successfully influence or get at the table of key policy makers, funders, etc.
2. Further evidence of breaking down silos: examples with respect to the joint ventures in the region (e.g. China delegation, business attraction, immigration, biospheres); are there best practices for regional cooperation, collaboration, silo melting? *KIS has already developed several different resources on these issues.*
3. Increased emphasis on remote rural entrepreneurship best practices, success stories, lessons learned. Evidence that rural entrepreneurs have participated, benefitted positively. *KIS has developed case studies of business success stories in a range of different contexts, including small urban and more remote rural settings.*

The following are beyond the scope of the KIS project, but may be completed if the KIS project is expanded through additional funding or if an external partner provides leadership; they may also find helpful strategies and ideas through the KIS project's information resources:

1. Two (or more) initiatives have moved forward as a result of the KIS project. *The Discovery Workshop has highlighted key issues which the community can now use to prioritize local action plans.*
2. Bring together a forum of "doers" - folks that can actually implement some of these findings... The researchers have brought useful knowledge to this group ... Beyond just talking. *The Monieson Centre is currently pursuing funding to host follow-up workshops which would include opportunities for developing action plans on key issues. Local funding would also help support this.*
3. Buy-in to a regional approach with a regional champion. There has been an effort to have someone who is politically neutral move the regional agenda forward. Need a plan and the buy-in of doers, champions. *The KIS project can support this work with resources on regional collaboration.*
4. Identification of some common threads from all the studies, consulting projects; advice on an action plan on 2-3 of these themes. *The KIS project final report will identify common economic development themes across the region. Additional funding would allow the KIS team to help support development of action plans.*
5. Macro success/impact: employment increase, immigration, BRE. *KIS has developed resources to assist with these issues.*

The following are beyond the scope of the KIS project:

6. We have found the \$\$ and the people to make something happen.

Appendix A – Rough Ideas for Question 1

What are the pressing issues, challenges and needs with respect to rural economic development and making the 1000 Islands a vital community (economic, social, health)?

Voting Results

Multiple Selection (maximum choices = 6) (Allow bypass)

Number of ballot items: 17

Total number of voters (N): 26

Rank	Votes	Issue	Comments
1	14	Shifting Economic Base	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transitional shifts on economic drivers; acceptance of community to change Move from old to new economy How to replace lost jobs & businesses Developing a realistic plan based on emerging trends, employment opportunities Must recognize that the old economy is gone Develop a strategy - resources to build on, opportunities for product-market matching, find where money and capacity can be found, develop action plans
1	14	Regional Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thinking regionally We are so focused on our indiv communities WRT rural econ dev, we need to think regionally (sometimes difficult!) Political boundaries - lots of parochial thinking
3	13	Skilled Workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of a skilled workforce, including the manufacturing and tourism sectors Do we have the necessary supply of educated and skilled labour to meet the looming demand? A strategy to create the capacity for employers in the region to attract and retain skilled professionals Skills development Transition from industrial model to something new
3	13	Community Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community engagement. Engaging the business leaders, labour force, and broader population in moving the economy forward
3	13	Effective Plan Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stop the talking...take action Clarification and measurement of goals Need to see deliverables ... so many workshops, studies, naval gazing Coordination of planning initiatives Rebirthing a sense of hope in the community

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tangible outcomes • Using the right approaches to strategic planning (move to action earlier)
6	12	Aging Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the opportunities created by an aging population • Aging population and related challenges • Aging population and resistance to change
7	10	Investment Competitiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty getting a return on business investment. I.e., is this the best location? • Seasonality challenges • Increased cost of doing business
7	10	Knowledge-Based Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attraction of knowledge based industries and the associated creativity and skill-intensive jobs. • Identifying economic growth opportunities • Actively pursuing small medium business to develop full time employment • Lack of employment opportunities
7	10	Regional Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be realistic: acceptance of limitations of this area, need to make some tough choices. e.g. aging population, youth outmigration, big manufacturing gone
10	9	Sustainable Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of "good, sustainable" employment opportunities (& awareness of these jobs) • Actively pursuing small medium business to develop full time employment • Lack of employment opportunities
11	8	Tourism Markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of product in the tourism sector • Do we understand how big our market is?
12	7	Tourism Models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on the new tourism model - change in the marketplace. lots of old tourism attractions are no longer appealing to visitors e.g. visitors seeking personal enrichment, lasting value etc.
13	5	Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure shortcomings, including communications • Access to technology (hi speed broadband)
14	3	Supporting the Manufacturing Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manufacturing, retention and after care
15	2	Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of transportation (people movement, public transit, accessibility)
16	1	Isolation of Remote Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geographic isolation of community and its challenges

Appendix B – Rough Ideas for Question 2

Question 2: If you had access to our researchers for a year, what would you ask them to study? Given the immensity of the research “wish list” and scarcity of available resources, what are your research priorities?

Note: prior to voting, the group brainstormed questions. Below is the result of selecting top questions

Voting Results

Multiple Selection (maximum choices = 5) (Allow bypass)

Number of ballot items: 14

Total number of voters (N): 25

Rank	Votes	Issue	Comments
1	20	Economic Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the projected opportunities in the new economy for rural areas? (occupations, skills training, education, etc.) What are economic activities in Eastern Ontario that we should be focusing on giving our demographics, geography, climate and other features What industries might best benefit from our regional comparative advantages? How do we implement effectively our creative economy strengths through life style and people attraction Is globalization going to reverse and are there prospects of manufacturing return locally?
2	17	Sustainable Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the successful working models for sustainable rural economic development from other regions? How do we make the best uses of the resources we have? What models are out there? How do we implement effectively our creative economy strengths through life style and people attraction?
3	16	Skilled Labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How can we best maximize the talent/skill base of the existing population in the region in terms of expanding economic growth?
4	12	Business Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do we get more businesses actively involved in the work of groups like BIAs, Chambers, etc.? (What tools, resources might we need? Are there best practices we can point to?)
5	11	Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How can we transform the current tourism industry into a more leading edge industry?

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete an inventory of tourism attractions across the Leeds Grenville region
5	11	Aging Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the emerging opportunities for business in addressing the needs of an aging population?
7	8	Immigrant Attraction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How can we effectively implement immigrant attraction/recruitment? What are the drivers that would attract recent newcomers to Canada to smaller, non-urban communities? And, what are the subsequent drivers that would retain them in those communities?
8	7	Regional Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to effectively market the region using best practices? (business, education etc.)
8	7	Regional Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What defines a region? What are the characteristics of a successful, unified region? Is this a region?
8	7	Effective Plan Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I would ask the researcher to take all of the studies, workshop reports and mapping exercises undertaken in the past 2 years in this community and translate them into actionables, deliverables and measurable What is the leadership skill set required to move from study to action in the region?
11	5	Creative Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate that the "creative class" model could/could not be applied in this region? Does the Richard Florida model work in a rural community like ours? FROM get the jobs here first TO quality of place...attract the skilled workforce... build it and they will come...
12	2	Green Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do we become a centre of excellence for electronic refurbishing, processing and recycling?
13	1	Population Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is our vision and associated strategy for the population in the region? Do we want to remain at 90,000+?

Appendix C – Session Overview

The **purpose** of the workshop was to engage community leaders and academics to collaborate in order to:

- Y Identify Eastern Ontario knowledge needs and resources
- Y Prioritize research needs and opportunities
- Y Share experience and knowledge
- Y Build lasting relationships and communication channels
- Y Serve Eastern Ontario

Discovery workshop groups **explore four topics**:

1. Burning issues. What are the challenges and needs with respect to rural economic development and making the 1000 Islands a vital community (economic, social, health)?
2. Research wish list. If you had access to researchers for a year, what would you ask them to study? Given the immensity of the research “wish list” and scarcity of available resources, what are your research priorities?
3. Local capacity. What are the local resources (organizations, capabilities, past work etc.) that might contribute to addressing the issues identified above?
4. Defining success. If this project is to be successful, what are the things that you would see in place in the next two years? What must happen in order to ensure that the KIS project makes a positive impact on the 1000 Islands?

Appendix D – Methodology

Information Gathering and Community Consultation process

The community consultation process included an information gathering component composed of a series of interactive workshops using facilitators from the Queen's Executive Decision Centre. The purpose of this component was to get input from a broad cross section of community stakeholders.

The consultation was conducted using a group decision support system also known as an electronic meeting system (EMS), an innovative facilitation process developed from research at the Queen's School of Business. The Queen's EMS, called "the Decision Centre", combines expert facilitation with a state-of-the-art group decision support system to enable groups to rapidly accelerate idea generation and consensus building. This facility consists of a network of laptops accessing software designed to support idea generation, idea consolidation, and idea evaluation and planning. The tool supports, but does not replace, verbal interaction; typically 25% of interaction takes place on the computers. Feedback from groups who have used the Executive Decision Centre process includes: meeting times can be cut in half; participation goes way up; better idea generation and alternative evaluation; a more structured process; and automatic documentation of deliberations.

Over 500 organizations around North America use the Centre for meetings such as: strategic planning, visioning, annual planning, focus groups, team building, budgeting, program review, project planning, risk assessment, job profiling, 360 degree feedback, alternative evaluation, new product development and a variety of other meeting types.

In the consultations, participants were asked, for example, "What are your region's burning issues with respect to economic development". Participants typed in ideas on the laptops all of which appeared on a public screen at the front of the room. These ideas were then discussed and categorized into common themes. The group was then asked "if we could only address five of these in the next year, which ones are most critical?" Individuals selected his/her top 5 and the overall results were then displayed to the group and further discussed.