EREDI: THE NORTH COUNTRY & THE FOUR COUNTIES

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KEY INFORMANTS

- **Focus:** Economic Development and Value Added Agriculture
- Interviewees representative of the different counties in each region
  - 2 For Profit Corporations
  - 11 Not for Profit Organizations
  - 1 Municipal Government
  - 10 County Governments
  - 3 County Level Economic Development Organizations
  - 7 Regional Economic Development Organizations
  - 1 Regional Chamber of Commerce
THE CASE REGIONS: NORTH COUNTRY, NY

- Seven county region in northern New York State
  - One of ten regional councils
    - North Country Regional Economic Development Council (NCREDC)
    - Largest region by size, yet least densely populated
    - No metropolitan hub
- Collaboration: multi-county, top down
• Statewide initiative rolled out in 2011

• Replacing top-down economic development approach

• Based on Department of Labour boundaries: increases stakeholder buy-in

• Regional councils nominate projects for state consideration in conjunction with region defined goals
  – State ‘awards’ regions for specific projects
  – North Country named a Top Performer, Best Plan Award

Source: www.regionalcouncils.ny.gov

As of 2014, the NCREDC has won $342.7 million for 296 projects through this process.
THE CASE REGIONS: FOUR COUNTIES, ON

- Four county region in southwestern Ontario
  - One of 25 workforce planning boards across the province
    - Four County Labour Market Planning Board (FCLMPB)
    - Largely rural, urban areas to the south
- Collaboration: county level, bottom up
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<tr>
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<th>The North Country</th>
<th>The Four Counties</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unemployment Rate</strong></td>
<td>9.9 % (2012)</td>
<td>6.3% (2011)</td>
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<td><strong>Income (CAN$ 2011)</strong></td>
<td>47,912</td>
<td>60,725</td>
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<td><strong>Area (km²)</strong></td>
<td>29,531.8</td>
<td>14,219.16</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Population Density (/ km²)</strong></td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>20.6</td>
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<td><strong>Top Three Industries by Workforce Employment (2011)</strong></td>
<td>1) Government 2) Health care and social assistance 3) Retail trade</td>
<td>1) Manufacturing 2) Health care and social assistance 3) Retail trade</td>
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THE CASE REGIONS: REGIONAL IDENTITY

• **The North Country**
  – Historical existence of the “North Country”
    • Multiple organizations operating under ‘North Country’ boundaries
  – NCREDC boundaries based on already existing divisions in NYS: enhances stakeholder buy-in

• **The Four Counties**
  – Interviewees identified with county boundaries
  – FCMLPB only organization operating under ‘Four County’ boundaries
FINDINGS

THE FOUR COUNTIES

THE NORTH COUNTRY

Evaluating Regional Economic Development Initiatives [EREDI]
FINDINGS

SUCCESS FACTORS
- Embracing Regional Attributes
- Leadership
- Diverse Membership
- Varied expertise can smooth the process
- Embedded Regional Identity
- Insufficient Financial Capital
- To increase cohesiveness
- Mechanism for coordination to build momentum
- To necessitate collaboration to achieve mandates
- To overcome geographic challenges

BARRIERS
- Communication Technology
- Infrastructure and access challenges
- Insufficient Human Capital
- Outlook Toward Collaboration
- Volunteer burnout
- Impacts willingness to collaborate
- Impacts the long term sustainability of regional initiatives
- Unable to reach critical mass to be effective
- To necessitate collaboration to achieve mandates
RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Regional boundary creation**
  - Acceptance increased if based on existing boundaries
    - New York REDCs based on existing Department of Labour

- **Motivation for collaboration key**
  - Economic motivation can be a powerful driving force

- **Actively seek linkages beyond established relationships**
  - Avoid collaborative inertia

- **‘Right’ size of a region will vary**
  - North Country Council (7 counties) vs. Four Counties (two, two county pairs)
• **Structure Matters**
  – Government facilitated regional council process gives legitimacy and structure to collaboration in the North Country
  – The structure best suited to collaboration in the Four Counties remains unclear, as a diversity of structures were present

• **Success Factors & Barriers in VAA**
  – Reality of working with producers and marginalized populations
    • Role of communication technology mixed
    • Different tactics need to be used to engage these groups

• **Success Factors & Barriers in RED**
  – Outlook toward collaboration
    • Strong indicator of successful collaboration, and powerful barrier