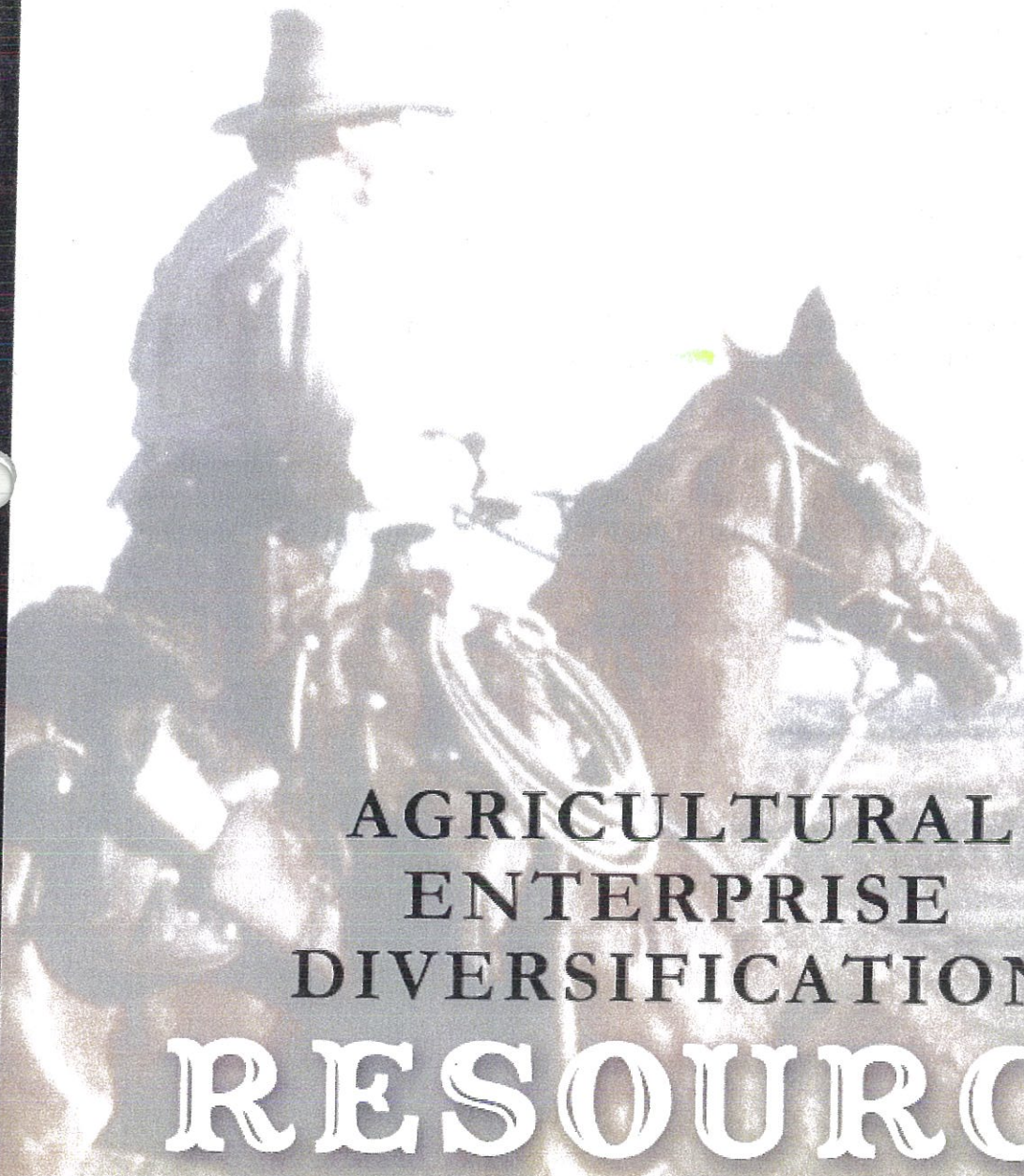




Sustaining Western Rural Landscapes, Lifestyles & Livelihoods



AGRICULTURAL
ENTERPRISE
DIVERSIFICATION
**RESOURCE
GUIDE**

To Whom It May Concern:

The *Sustaining Western Rural Landscapes, Lifestyles and Livelihoods* partnership completed the comprehensive agricultural diversification resource guide as a valuable tool in assisting professionals in delivering technical assistance to agricultural producers as they evaluate their current operations and research the feasibility of diversifying.

The information, at first glance, may look overwhelming, but is divided into the following sections:

- Foreword
- Introduction to Agricultural Enterprise Diversification
- Enterprise Assessment
- Enterprise Feasibility
- Enterprise Implementation (Business Planning, Legal, Finance, Marketing, Human Resources, Natural Resources and **Community**)

If you would like further information on how to best use this guide please don't hesitate to contact me at the following address. In addition we have access to professionals who can assist agricultural producers develop an agricultural diversification strategy, so please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Cindy Garretson-Weibel

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A. Community defined

There are many ways to define community – it can be a sense of feeling, a match of interests, houses of caring people, a sense of belonging or a society of where we like to reside. Webster defines community as, “a body of people having common organization or interest or living the same place in a common home under similar conditions – joint ownership or participation.”

A community is shaped by its history, its patterns of development, its experiences, its location and the sequences of events, personalities, decisions and actions.

“People are like flowers, when you gather them, one by one, and put them together, they make a beautiful bouquet. If you nourish them, they bloom and together they make a marvelous community.”

The Community Connection, Linda Ann Smith

B. A healthy community

The term, “community” is truly defined by each community, on the basis of its individual interests, needs and culture. The issues affecting a community are economic, environmental and social – these issues are interdependent and integrated.

Economic issues include good jobs, good wages, stable businesses, appropriate technology development and implementation, and business development, to name a few. If a community does not have a strong economy, then it cannot be healthy and sustainable over a long period of time.

Environmental issues include protecting human and environmental health; having healthy ecosystems and habitat: reducing or eliminating pollution in water, air and land; providing green spaces and parks for wildlife, recreation, and other uses.





Social issues addressed in a community include education, crime, spirituality, and community building.

Another critical element in a healthy community is creating a sense of community. A community must make their citizens feel that only by caring and feeling a part of their neighborhood, town, county or city will individuals truly work together to develop a healthy community.

C. **Why are diversified agriculture operations important to rural communities**

“We can all picture the Currier and Ives print of the rural scene with the black and white cows, with the green pastures and neat rows of corn. But to maintain that picture, it has to be a profitable picture....”

Brymer Humphreys, May 2000

“Well, as a mom, who has a family, we sure wouldn’t be able to eat if no agriculture was around. There would be no meat to eat or breads or cereals, rice and milk. We’d all be very skinny if there were not farms and ranches.”

- The Impact of Agriculture

In the not too distant past, ranching and farming was nearly synonymous with “rural” communities. That is no longer the case. While ranching and farming remains an important source of income and jobs, it is no longer the dominant industry it once was.

Today, the largest share of rural jobs and employment growth comes from the services sector, which employs over half of all rural workers. Rural services related to recreation, retirement, and such natural amenities as mountains and lakes, have emerged as important new sources of rural employment and growth.





Given these changes in the rural economy, and its current structure, the economic future and well being of most rural communities now depends on the availability and quality of jobs in the rural services sector.

Diversified agricultural enterprises can be an amenity for rural communities. Educational and entertainment-based agricultural enterprises can become a new attraction for the local community, helping to increase visitation. Depending on the type of new enterprise, additional labor may be required, which can mean added employment opportunities locally. And, diversified enterprises like guest ranching, fee hunting, or that cater to bus tours, typically bring in clients from outside the local area. In addition to paying the agricultural entrepreneur for the ranch stay or hunting experiences, they often spend time and money at other businesses in the local community. This, in effect, brings in outside monies to the local economy.

D. Why is the local community important to a diversified agricultural business

“People who live in the cities, often marvel at the seemingly endless hospitality and generosity of people in the country. Those who have left the conveniences of the city for the country know better than most that a strong community network is a vital part of country life.”

- Clair Braund, June 2000

It is the support network of the community that can help a business survive. The community can provide components needed for a successful business venture: access to knowledge, access to capital, access to telecommunications, access to transportation, and access to a high quality living environment. By knowing the community, and being involved in that community, entrepreneurs will gain access and knowledge about the programs that can help them establish a business and be successful. There are many organizations and agencies that can provide this knowledge to gain help in job training, emergency loans, research, marketing, etc.





Partnership opportunities between individual agricultural entrepreneurs and local community business owners may exist. For example, guests at a working ranch may desire to shop in the local community. This is an opportunity to develop a partnership with local retail merchants, perhaps through an agreement to maintain evening store hours to provide service to these new clientele. Or, another working ranch may not have adequate lodging facilities. Therein lies another partnership opportunity with local community hotel or private campground owners. Communities also provide attractive amenities in the form of museums, theatres, and restaurants.

E. How to be involved in the local community

The following is a quick checklist of ways to become involved in the local community. The partnership that is formed with the local community can become a win-win situation!

- Join the Chamber of Commerce and be active! The Chamber can be a great source of advertising and promotion for a business – Chamber Offices will promote a business through referrals, mailings, brochures, newsletters, etc.
- Find out if the local community has an economic development plan. What is the vision of the future and how do individual agricultural enterprises fit into this picture?
- Meet the local community economic development specialist or Wyoming Business Council representative.
- Find out what state or federal agencies exist in the community, such as a State Employment Office or USDA Rural Development office.
- Become a participant in city and county official meetings.
- Contribute and give time to the local community for local functions, campaign drives, clean-up activities, and community volunteer projects.
- Develop relationships with local and distant schools. They can be a great source of clientele through field trips and other activities on the farm or ranch.





F. Resources

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Other excellent sources of information on community include local chambers of commerce, economic development agencies and city offices.





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The following information is provided for your reference:
 The first part of the document is a general overview of the project.

