



Proposal for CARCI Funding: Research Related to Agricultural Rural Communities:

July 29, 2000

Project Title:

Building Capacity in Agricultural Communities

Project Objectives

This project will contribute to the viability of agricultural communities in a number of specific ways. It will:

- provide systematic, **comparable information** regarding the response of producers, organizations, businesses, and households to the transitions in agriculture;
- **answer questions** critical to understanding these transitions;
- **build local capacity** to choose and take appropriate action in the light of these understandings; and
- establish **collaboration** opportunities with regional, national, and international networks.

Background

This project will build on work conducted by the *Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation* (CRRF) as part of their education and research project entitled *The New Rural Economy: Options and Choices* (NRE). Since 1997, CRRF researchers have been examining the changes taking place in rural Canada, analyzing how they relate to more general economic and social processes, and exploring appropriate responses to these changes. As part of this work, they have prepared materials regarding the economic and social profile of several agricultural communities, their access to services, and overviews of their voluntary organizations. These communities are part of the national sample of 32 rural sites selected as part of the NRE Project (cf. attached documents).

This summer (2000), CRRF researchers and community members are gathering information on the problems faced by businesses and co-ops, entrepreneurs, volunteer groups, and major institutions as well as the ways in which they have responded to these problems. It will allow each community to identify where they stand with respect to the others, the nature of the problems they face, and possible strategies for responding to these problems. All participants will benefit from meeting

directly with people from other communities to further these discussions.

Rural people have already benefitted a great deal from their collaboration with CRRF. The broader view that the research brings to their concerns has helped them see their specific problems as part of more general processes. In the farming community of Hussar, Alberta, for example, it has started them considering ways they might provide services for the population of Calgary and other urban centres rather than limit themselves to servicing the local region. It has also helped them identify the resources at their disposal for taking action.

Project Activities

Our CARCI proposal is for support to develop this work, with a particular focus on the ways that changes in agricultural production have affected their associated communities. More specifically, we wish to accomplish the following.

- Conduct a series of interviews with household members in regions where agriculture is a significant component of the local economy, in order to determine such things as:
 - how local people have reorganized their lives in response to changing economic and social conditions (this may include job, business, education, consumption, housing, recreation, and family activities);
 - the extent to which they participate in local activities and groups;
 - what they consider to be the important issues faced by their community;
 - what are their plans for the future; and
 - what they feel are important options for the community that should be considered for the future.

These interviews will be designed and conducted in collaboration with researchers of the NRE project in order to ensure comparability with other NRE sample sites.

- Utilize the information (plus other data collected as part of the NRE project) to develop our understanding regarding the relationship between the industrial and environmental features of local economies.
- Hold community and regional focus groups and meetings within our agricultural sites to discuss the results from our research and the options emerging from them.
- Meet with other communities that are part of the NRE project in order to compare insights and options for action.
- Prepare materials to support agricultural communities in their search for innovative approaches to the changing rural economy.
- Make the materials available on the NRE Web site
- Participate in the national workshops and conferences of CRRF.

Some of the questions to be addressed by this research are the following:

- How are changes in agriculture related to changes in industry and the environment?
- How might governments help build the capacity of rural communities so they may take

- advantage of these changes?
- What local actions have improved the condition of agriculture and the social relations on which it is based?
- How do leading and lagging agricultural communities differ and what actions are likely to change their status?
- What conditions facilitate the development of sustainable responses at the local, regional, and national levels?
- What policies are most likely to produce sustainable agriculture and communities in rural Canada?

Benefits of the Project

This project will provide benefits to local people through their participation in all aspects of the project. It will also benefit rural people, researchers, and policy-makers throughout the country by building on the NRE network of communities and researchers. More specifically:

- those living in agricultural regions will benefit by learning more about their community, understanding how it is integrated into broader economic and social changes, developing new ways to explore their options, and identifying some of those options;
- local residents and NRE researchers will benefit by having comparative data from many sites to differentiate the idiosyncratic effects of agricultural change from those that are more generally shared; and
- policy-makers will benefit from the data, analysis, and documents provided when developing programs and policies for dealing with agricultural change.

Relationship to CARCI's Objectives

Although this project is directed to the **research** objective of the CARCI program, it also addresses both of the other types of activities.

- By involving community members in the research enterprise, they will learn how to conduct such activities in the future, thereby **building local capacity** to understand and respond to community issues.
- It builds on existing **partnership relationships** with governments, universities, development agents, communities, and rural people that have been established through the NRE Project.
- It contributes to several **workshop, conference, and seminar** objectives by bringing people together locally, regionally, and nationally.
- It contributes to research regarding:
 - the **identification of new economic activities** (through its focus on understanding the dynamics of the new economy and their relationship to jobs, skills, networking, and voluntary organizations);
 - innovations in the **provision of government services** (by solicitation of experience and suggestions regarding the use of those services on the part of

- local households);
- the use and knowledge of **information technology** (by exploring how household members use them and by supporting the CRRF experiment in web-based research and education for rural Canada); and
- the ways in which rural communities **adapt to change** (by collecting information about those adaptations and evaluating them through national and international comparisons made possible by the NRE project).

Special Considerations

This project request is for funds above the ‘normal’ limit identified in the CARCI-Operating Guidelines. We feel this is justified given the special needs and significant advantages provided by integration with the NRE Research Project. For example the Project makes possible,

- an ongoing program of collaboration with citizens in the selected sites;
- access to a network of other sites - both agricultural and non-agricultural;
- access to sites representing a variety of conditions and experiences with agricultural transformation;
- the ability to compare between agricultural sites and with non-agricultural sites in order to identify those transformation that are agricultural-based from those that are not;
- access to a program of research and education with a track record of informed insights, collaboration, wide-based dissemination, and a commitment to rural development; and
- international comparisons of agricultural communities through the *Canada-Japan* project of CRRF.

We estimate a financial cost of approximately \$14,000 per site per year to conduct our research and education program. At 50-50 sharing, this would mean that only 3 sites could be supported by the \$50,000 limit identified in the CARCI Guidelines since the project is 2 years in length. Increasing the number of sites will produce some ‘per site’ savings, however, by making training, dissemination, and coordination more efficient. The specific savings will depend on the number of sites included.

Within the NRE sample, there are 20 sites with some agricultural employment, but only 12 of them have a percentage of agricultural employment greater than 10% (cf. Appendix 1). We propose that a minimum of 4 sites be supported by CARCI funds. This would permit us to make comparisons between 2 leading and 2 lagging agricultural locations (leading: **Wood River, SK** and **Rhineland, MB**; lagging: **Ferintosh, AB** and **Hussar, AB**). Total CARCI costs for this option would be \$56,000. Should expansion of this selection be possible, we propose the addition of at least one leading (**Usborne, ON**) and one lagging (**Ste-Francoise, QC**) site from central Canada. These additions would provide a useful comparison between the structure of agriculture in the prairie provinces and that found in Ontario and Québec. To include these 2 sites would mean that CARCI costs would be \$81,000 (some ‘per site’ savings can be made due to the larger number of sites). Further expansion of the number of sites might include **St Roch de Mékinac, QC** (lagging) and

North Plantagenet, ON (leading). Including these sites would mean that CARCI costs would total \$104,000. It would provide the opportunity to compare 4 leading and 4 lagging sites: 2 each in the Prairie region and 2 each in Central Canada. Other arrangements using the NRE field sites are open for discussion.

Time Frame

October, 2000: Presentation of current research results at the CRRF National Conference (Alfred, ON). These results provide a basis for the formulation of questions in anticipation of the survey to be conducted in the summer of 2001. Products include academic papers on the impacts of world trade, the contribution of voluntary organizations, and rural governance, as well as popular style flyers for distribution to rural communities. Several of these include international comparisons with agricultural communities in Japan as part of the CRRF-supported Canada-Japan Project.

January 1st, 2001: The CARCI project begins.

Spring, 2001: Meetings with local people and researchers to prepare the questions and methodology for the survey instruments to be used in the selected NRE sites. These will be formulated in preparation for the NRE National Workshop to be held in April, 2001.

May 1st, 2001: **Interim report 1** - including:

- a report on progress to date
- draft proposal for data collection instruments

Summer, 2001: Data collection and analysis in the selected NRE field sites.

October, 2001: Presentation of results from data collection and cross-community meeting at the CRRF National Conference (Saskatchewan).

November 1st, 2001: **Interim Report 2** - including:

- a report on progress to date
- research reports providing initial summaries of survey results
- a financial report

Winter, 2002: Preparation of academic and public documents integrating the materials and insights from the research (2000 and 2001). These will be prepared for the NRE National Workshop in April, 2002.

May 1st, 2002: **Interim Report 3** - including:

- a report on progress to date
- analytical reports based on the field work
- public documents prepared for communities and policy-makers
- a financial report

Summer, 2002: Consultations with other NRE sites and researchers, focus groups, analysis, and evaluations of results, and preparation of reports, articles, and public documents.

Fall, 2002: Presentation of research results and cross-community meeting at the CRRF National Conference.

Winter, 2002: Preparation and evaluation of final report and documents for public distribution.

March 31st, 2003: Submission of **Final Report** - including:

- analytical reports
- public documents
- policy proposals
- a financial report

Budget: CARCI plus Partner Funding (Dec 2000 - March 2003)

	4 sites	6 sites	8 sites
Student and local resident salaries (interviews and focus groups)	\$30,240	\$43,740	\$56,160
Transportation and accommodation for local residents to meet with other site people	\$32,480	\$46,980	\$60,320
Transportation and accommodation (Students and Researchers)	\$33,600	\$48,600	\$62,400
Materials/supplies/communication/translation	\$15,680	\$22,680	\$29,120
Total Cost	\$112,000	\$162,000	\$208,000

During the first year, the major part of the funds will be used to support the consultation with field site residents and the data collection. This includes expenditures for local and regional meetings; the preparation of the survey instruments; and salaries, travel, and accommodation expenses for student researchers and local residents who are involved in the data collection and processing. During the second year, most of the funds will be used to pay for travel and accommodation for working sessions and so that local residents can visit other NRE field sites and participate in regional and national meetings. Several focus group meetings related to the preparation and evaluation of the research products will also be held, entailing additional costs. Materials and supplies refers to the preparation of survey instruments, reports and other documents, as well as telephone and office supplies. Translation is included within this item since the NRE field sites include those from both english and french-speaking communities.

All financial activities will be conducted through the NRE administration, thereby subjecting them to standard accounting and auditing procedures. The proportion of expenses going to the management and coordination of the NRE field sites is less than 9%.



Funding Sources

Source	4 sites	6 sites	8 sites
NRE Project (SSHRC Funding)	\$56,000	\$81,000	\$104,000
CARCI Request	\$56,000	\$81,000	\$104,000

The NRE funding is provided as part of a Social Science and Humanities Research Council Strategic Grant on Social Cohesion. Most of the work will be conducted by volunteer researchers and citizens and is therefore not included in these figures.

Payment Schedule

May 1 st , 2001	22% upon receipt of Interim Report 1
Nov. 1 st , 2001	22% upon receipt of Interim Report 2
May 1 st , 2002	22% upon receipt of Interim Report 3
March 31 st , 2003	22% upon receipt of Final Report
	12% (holdback) for release upon approval of deliverables

Evaluation Procedures

The success of the project will be evaluated using a number of criteria and techniques. They reflect the multiple audiences to which the results apply.

From the point of view of rural residents, the primary method of evaluation will be through their active participation in all aspects of the project – from problem identification and data collection, to the discussion of results and preparation of documents. This feedback will not only come from residents in the sites selected, but from rural residents in the other NRE research sites. This means that the accuracy of the material and the insights that it generates will be regularly subjected to evaluations and modification so that they meet the local demands and needs.

Following the precedent in CRRF, salient insights will be published as flyers and brochures, written in easily understood language so that those outside academic and bureaucratic milieus have easy access to the results for comment and support.

From the point of view of researchers, the methods of evaluation will include the usual techniques developed as part of the academic milieu. The first level will be the comments from the researchers in the NRE Project. Since all documents will be circulated through this network, there will be considerable opportunity for feedback. The second level is the quality control mechanism of the NRE Steering Committee. A quality control committee has been established and all public documents are

passed through this committee for review and comment. The criteria for review include scientific integrity, theoretical relevance, clarity, value for rural communities, and policy significance. The third level includes the public mechanisms of peer review that are used by academics. Since several of the research products will be presented to conferences and published in academic journals, they will be tested through the review processes involved.

From the point of view of policy-makers, the products will be made available in a number of forms. First, policy-makers are part of the NRE network and therefore able to comment and influence the nature of the research and product. Second, the results will be presented at conferences and workshops where policy-makers will participate, thereby providing another way that their comments can be considered and incorporated. Finally, some of the results will be published in policy-oriented journals that make them subject to peer review and evaluation.

Intellectual Property

The results of this research will be considered part of the public domain. All reports will be made available to the public and participants in the NRE project will be encouraged to use them so long as recognition is provided for their sources. The data arising from this research will be made available through the NRE network. Measures will be taken to protect confidentiality of individuals, but aggregated information will be provided for research and education objectives.

Appendix 1: NRE Sites with Agricultural Employment (1996 data)

Site	% Agricultural Employment
Wood River, SK	63%
Rhineland, MB	35%
Usborne, ON	27%
Ferintosh, AB	23%
Ste Francoise, QC	21%
Lot 16, PE	18%
Hussar, AB	17%
St. Roch de Mékinac, QC	16%
North Plantagenet, ON	13%



Site	% Agricultural Employment
Armagh, QC	13%
Girouxville, AB	13%
Spalding, SK	11% (1991)
Cap-à-l'Aigle, QC	7%
Benito, MB	6%
Carden, ON	5%
Blissfield, NB	3%
Neguac, NB	3%
Springhill, NS	2%
St. Damase, QC	2%
Tweed, ON	1%
Mackenzie, BC	.5%

Attachments

- “Understanding the New Rural Economy: Options and Choices” flyer
- Map: “NRE Sample Sites”



Understanding the New Rural Economy: Options and Choices
a project of
The Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation
July 2000

The New Rural Economy Project (NRE) is a five-year research and education program underway in rural Canada. It is a collaborative undertaking bringing together rural people, policy-analysts, researchers, the business community, and government agencies at all levels to identify and address vital rural issues. It is conducted at the national level with historical and statistical data analysis, and at the local level with case studies involving community and household surveys. The project will produce:

- **learning forums** to discuss and debate opportunities, options, and choices that include the interests of all rural Canadians and stakeholders;
- documented **recommendations** for long run rural business performance, inclusive development, and public policy; and
- **informed questions** on new issues, unimaginable in the present, but requiring timely answers for the future.

The project is conducted within the framework of 4 research themes:

- **spatial dynamics** of settlements and activities in rural Canada;
- processes of **inclusion and exclusion** of rural people and communities;
- the changing structure of **rural enterprises and institutions**, and
- processes of change in **natural resources** and their associated communities.

Since its inauguration in May, 1997 the project has held seven national workshops and conferences, prepared 14 major reports, established a Centre for rural data, profiled 32 carefully selected rural sites for research and education activities, and organized a network of more than 11 partners, 18 researchers, 13 universities, and six government departments in all provinces and territories of Canada. Through its connection with the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation (CRRF), the NRE project has involved over 100 partners and created a research and education network of international stature. Representation from Canada is complemented by colleagues from Europe, Mexico, and Japan.

For further information see the CRRF Web site: http://arts-ci-ccwin.concordia.ca/SocAnth/CRRF/crrf_hm.html

or the NRE Web page: <http://nre.concordia.ca>

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Understanding the New Rural Economy: Options and Choices

SUMMARY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

July, 2000

Administrative Infrastructure

1. **Research Business Plan** prepared
2. Steering Committee established: Bruno Jean (UQAR); Tom Beckley (Forestry Canada); André Joyal (UQTR); Bill Reimer (Concordia)
3. Data Curator hired (Roger des Ormeaux)
4. Network of Researchers established: 18 core researchers (field work); 13 universities
5. Initial Partners Welcomed: HRDC, Rural Secretariat, DIAND, Statistics Canada, OMAFRA, FedNOR, Gov't of NFLD, Alberta Government, Centre for the Study of Cooperatives, Concordia University, McGill University

Research Products

1. **Sampling Frame** designed and **32 Sites Identified** on 5 critical dimensions:
 - exposure to global economies
 - economic stability of the site
 - adjacency to metro centres
 - community institutional capabilities
 - leading or lagging status
2. Data Centre expanded with site profiles, reports, photo gallery and other research tools, (Concordia University)
<http://nre.concordia.ca>
3. **Site Profiles** prepared for 25 field sites
4. **Rural Canada Database** under development (1986, 1991, 1996)
5. Report: **A Preliminary History of Rural Development Policy and Programmes in Canada, 1945-1995**
6. Report: **Analysis of Leading and Lagging CSDs in Rural Canada**
7. Report: **Economic Integration and Isolation of First Nations Communities: An Exploratory Review**
8. Report: **Access to Federal Government Services in Rural Canada: Field Site Findings**
9. Report: **Leading and Lagging Areas in Ontario: Huron County in the Provincial Context**
10. Report: **Measuring the Dynamics of the Local Labour Market in Huron County 1997-98**
11. Report: **Predictability and Trapping: Under Conditions of Globalization of Agricultural Trade**
12. Report: **Review of the Literature Relating to the Role and Impact of Government Involvement in Rural Canada**
13. Book: **Dynamics of the New Rural Economy: An Exploration of Community-Sponsored Research from Huron County** (edited by Tony Fuller and Paul Nichol, 1999) Guelph: University of Guelph.
14. Report: **Voluntary Organizations in Rural Canada: Survey Results**
15. Report: **An Education Strategy for Voluntary Organizations in Rural Canada**
16. Report: **Leading and Lagging Sites in Rural Canada: a Literature Review**
17. Report: **Leading and Lagging CSDs: Statistical Summary**
18. Report: **An Analysis of the NRE Sample Sites Using Taxfiler Data**
19. Report: **Self-Employment in Rural Canada: Statistical Summary**
20. Network/Learning Forums
 - CRRF National Workshops (North Bay ON, 1997; St.Donat QC, 1998; Newtown NF, 1999; Nanaimo BC, 2000)
 - CRRF National Conferences (PEI, 1997; Nelson BC, 1998; Trois Pistoles, 1999)

Current and Planned Projects

1. Conceptualizing and Measuring Community Capacity
2. Co-ops and Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
3. Complex and Dynamic Systems in Rural Canada
4. Social Cohesion in Rural Canada
5. Dynamics of Leading and Lagging Regions in Canada
6. CRRF National Conference (Alfred, ON: October 11-14, 2000)

NOTE: items in **bold** can be found via the CRRF web page: http://artsci-ccwin.concordia.ca/SocAnth/CRRF/crrf_hm.html or the NRE web page: <http://nre.concordia.ca>; items in *italics* are available to NRE researchers and partners via the NRE web page

