

# Regional Solutions for Rural and Urban Challenges A Delta Conversation

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SCHOOL OF  
GOVERNMENT



# Hypothesis

- Regional collaboration and solution-seeking can be an effective way of improving social and economic opportunity and health for *all* people and *all* places within a region.

# Objectives

- Identify and curate examples of policy and practice that demonstrate boundary-crossing, multi-sector solutions to regional challenges
- Intentionally advance equity of opportunity, health, and well-being in a region
- Use learning and insights to inform policy, practice, and research

# Team



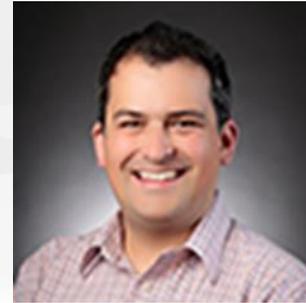
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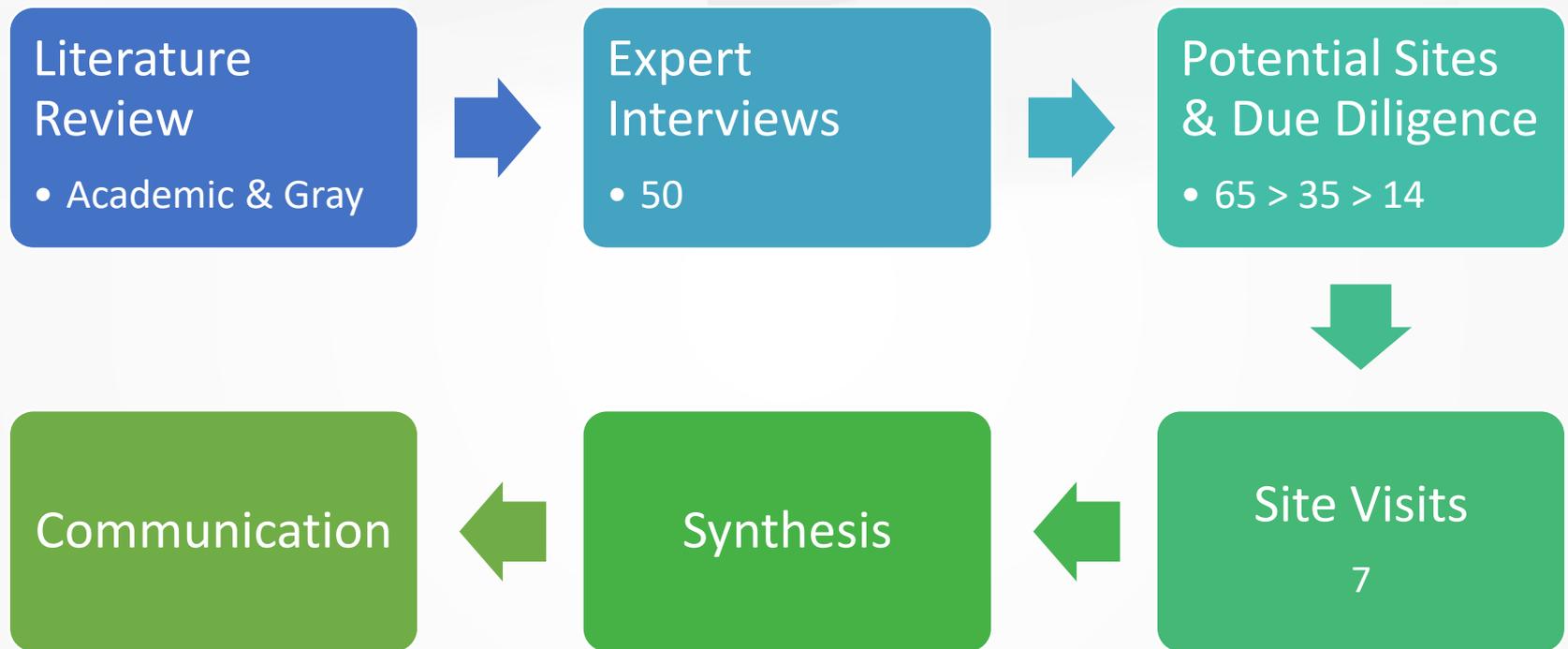


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# Process



# Selection Criteria

## Threshold Criteria

- Rural-Urban Linkage?
- Equity?
- Collaboration?
- Multi-Sector?

## Diversity Criteria

- Geography
- Collaboration Structure
- Issue Areas
- Impacted Populations

# Sites



- 1 Craft 3 (WA & OR)
- 2 Sustainable Northwest (WA & OR)
- 3. Sacramento Area Council of Governments (CA)
- 4. Partnership for San Joaquin Valley (CA)
- 5. Amarillo Area Foundation (TX)
- 6. Initiative Foundations, Growth & Justice (MN)
- 7. Land of Sky Council of Governments (NC)

# Case Studies

1	<b>Craft3</b>	WA & OR	CDFI	Multiple urban, rural, and tribal locations across two states.	Balanced rural-urban loan portfolio, 8 subregional offices, mixed place-based and sector-based, equity and tribal initiatives, triple bottom line
2	<b>Sustainable Northwest</b>	WA & OR	Nonprofit	Primarily forestlands in two states	Conflict resolution, technical assistance, advocacy: economy & environment; sustainable forestry and value chains; collaboratives
3	<b>Sacramento Area COG/RUCS</b>	CA	COG	6 counties around Sacramento	Rural-Urban Connections Strategy (RUCS) – rural outreach/policy strategy and GIS/analytical tools – rural integration into metro planning
4	<b>Partnership for San Joaquin Valley</b>	CA	Public-private partnership	8 counties in central California	Governor-initiated, broad-based state and local partnerships across multiple sectors and issues, intentional equity focus
5	<b>Amarillo Area Foundation</b>	TX	Community foundation	26 counties in Texas Panhandle centered on Amarillo	Community foundation plus three banks, social services agency – early stage regional efforts newly linked to public agencies to create entrepreneurship system
6	<b>Minnesota</b>	MN	Statewide system	Statewide system of regional organizations and investments	Six regional foundations (Initiative Foundations) plus nine regional development commissions plus statewide structures plus Growth & Justice nonprofit
7	<b>Land of Sky COG/WestNGN</b>	NC	COG, partnership	4 counties in western North Carolina around Asheville	West Next Generation Network, a public-private-university initiative to bring broadband to rural mountainous counties

# Insights

- Nature of rural-urban connections
- Policy and political context
- Equity
- Collaboration
- Regional innovation

# Nature of Rural-Urban Connections

- Take many forms
  - Supply chains, ecosystem services, provision of materials/natural resources, commuting patterns, urban expansion, collective identities
- Econometric models emphasize
  - Benefits of rural-urban interactions favor urban centers
- Rural contributions ‘hidden in plain sight’
  - Unrecognized, undervalued, unmonetized
- Rural-urban compact, once strong now frayed
  - Rural-urban divide, zero-sum arguments
  - Way forward – everyone benefits if both urban and rural are doing well: balanced investments

# Policy and Political Context

- Power Disparities
  - Can be addressed by consolidating voices to combat regional power differences and by focusing on regional issues that are common to rural and urban and require statewide action
- Political and Cultural Divides
  - “Checking partisanship at the door” has been an effective strategy in some regions to address political and cultural divides, but polarization everywhere makes regional collaboration harder

# Policy and Political Context *contd.*

- Investment Flows
  - “Hostage-taking” has replaced “horse-trading” which makes negotiations over resource allocation more difficult. Highlighting the contribution of rural economies to the overall economy can lead to shifts in public investments
- Institution Building
  - Concerted efforts through public and philanthropic policy and investment in some states have created an environment for building and sustaining regional institutions and capacity
  - But policies and regulations can also inhibit collaboration and actions

# Equity

- Regional context matters in the way equity is defined. Can be geographic, income, gender, class as well as race.
- DEI requirements by federal agencies and foundations drive a new focus on equity
- Intentionally targeted programs can overcome specific inequities such as access to business capital and assistance and digital divide, as well as for specific communities such as Indian Country
- Demographic changes necessitate capacity building for welcoming new immigrants and assisting process of community acceptance and integration
- Equity promoted by giving voice to groups and communities who could not otherwise participate in decision-making

# Collaboration

- Different Degrees of Formality
  - Some highly evolved statewide and multi-state alliances
  - Some incented and encouraged by funders
  - Some built-in to the institutional design
  - Some informal
- Role of Soft Power
  - Regional organizations rarely have coercion or taxation powers; must rely on education, persuasion, cooperation, advocacy to get things done
  - Lack of resources and capacity creates challenges for implementation, but evidence of the launch of new initiatives and organizations, negotiation of agreements on contentious issues, influencing flows of resources into and across the region

# Regional Innovation

- Regional Ecosystems
  - Developing institutions and systems that work collaboratively and consistently to coordinate and pool resources and expertise on multiple issues across a region.
    - Rural Development Hubs
      - Regional intermediaries that meet a range of criteria identified by Aspen Institute's Community Strategies Group.
- Agents for Transformation and Reinvention
  - Helping regions and communities tackle major economic and structural changes – agriculture, natural resources, urban development, new economic opportunities, new populations

# Regional Innovation *contd.*

- Integration of Community and Economic Development
  - Working on multiple, inter-related issues – housing, childcare, healthcare, workforce preparation, transportation, air and water quality...
  - These are the social determinants of health
- Rural Economic Centers
  - Focusing investments in stronger, assets-focused communities as place-based efforts to stabilize rural regions.

# Next Steps

- Complete synthesis of learnings from case studies, interviews, and literature review
- Develop recommendations for policy, practice, and research
- Create a website to present all the materials, learnings, and recommendations
- Develop and implement a communications plan – presentations, webinars, blogs, articles

# Points of Resonance and Dissonance

- Which of these findings resonate with your experience in the Delta?
- Which of these findings do not align with your experience in the Delta?
- What nuances or regional differences are missing?