

Crisis Response: Community Economic Development within the Traditional Extension Model

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Abstract

- In January 2013, a Plainview, Texas meat-packing plant announced its closure, resulting in losses of
- 2,000+ direct jobs equivalent to 13% of the labor force in Hale County, where most employees lived
 - 2,600 total jobs across the regional economy
 - \$1.0 billion in output (gross sales) across the regional economy
 - \$97.5 million in labor income

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension immediately responded to the crisis by addressing job-seekers, families, and the community and surrounding region. The ongoing response to this economic crisis demonstrates the role of community development in the traditional extension model.

Extension Response

- The Extension response included agents and specialists from ANR, FCS, Youth, and CRED program areas, the national Extension network, and other agencies.
- Agents provided interviewing, budgeting, and stress management tips to families, many with low levels of education and limited English.
- An economic and tax impacts publication that relying on local job loss data and input from local real estate professionals and school administrators helped regional leaders budget for impending but unknown decreases in the local tax base.
- Agents, community development specialists and partners from several state and federal agencies received a *Stronger Economies Together (SET) Phase IV* regional economic development planning grant.

Community Outcomes

- Community members are transitioning to new careers.
- Regional leaders recognized the need to work together to identify new economic opportunities.

“Well, I say we do it. We have to do something.”

- a county judge on applying for SET

- An expanding team of regional leaders is engaged in the Stronger Economies Together process. The SET team’s target industries include agribusiness and drought technology; energy industry services, transportation, and call centers.



Economic loss impacts of packing house closure on Hale County, net of workers residing in surrounding counties.

Impact Type	Output	Value Added	Labor Income	Employment
Direct Effect	\$866,616,700	\$199,865,500	\$45,719,100	1,462.0
Indirect Effect	\$132,918,800	\$63,935,400	\$39,784,700	767.4
Induced Effect	\$36,872,300	\$22,056,100	\$11,667,400	366.0
Total Effect	\$1,036,407,800	\$285,856,900	\$97,171,200	2,595.4

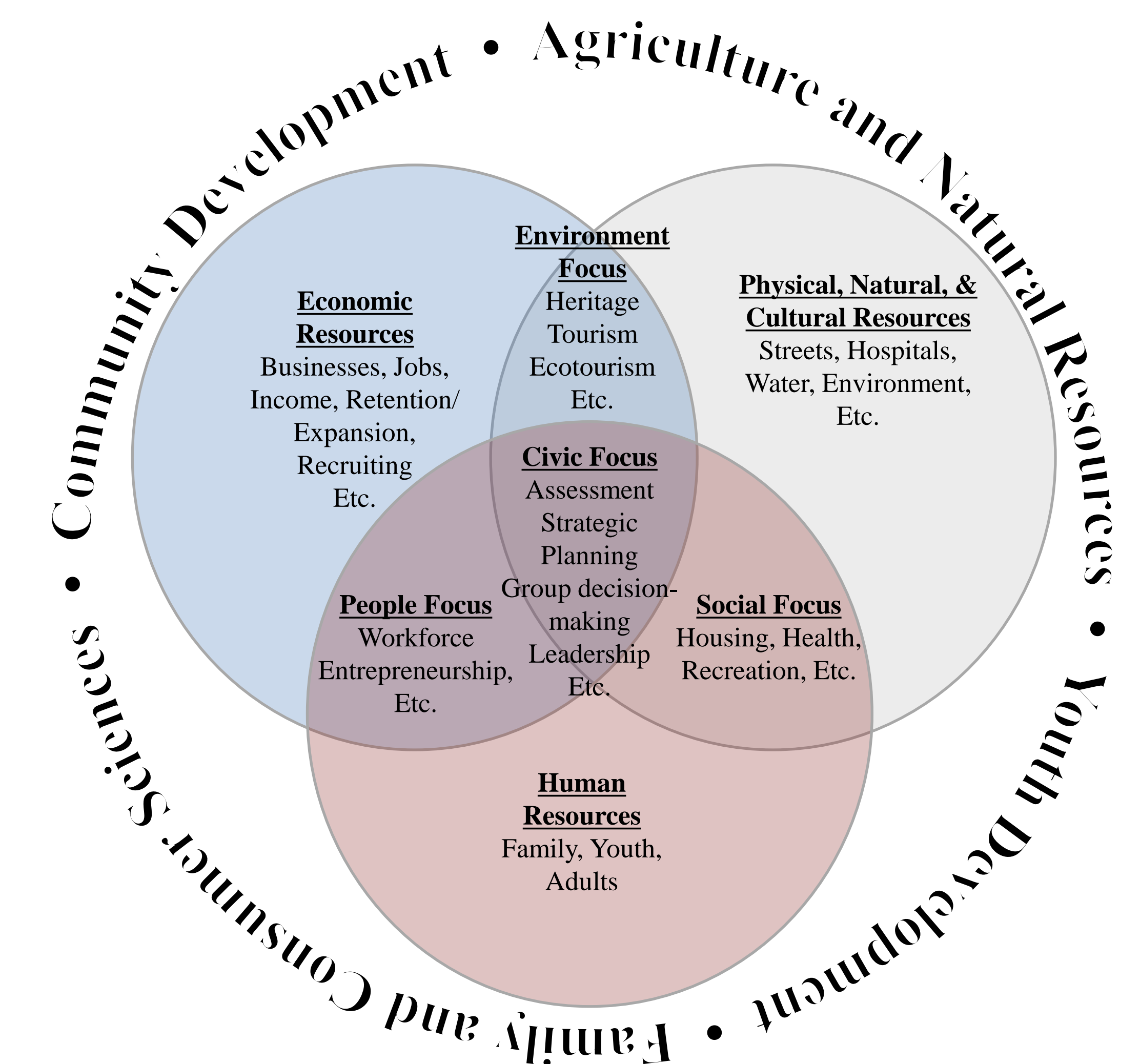
Induced economic loss impacts to surrounding counties resulting from reduced labor income.

County	Output	Value Added	Labor Income	Employment
Castro	\$70,800	\$44,700	\$25,000	0.6
Floyd	\$436,000	\$278,500	\$122,000	4.6
Lamb	\$284,600	\$180,900	\$78,700	2.6
Swisher	\$418,600	\$250,500	\$113,000	4.4

Implications for Extension

Sustained broad-based collaboration between agents and specialists across the four Extension program areas is uncommon, often due to time constraints. Such collaboration enhances long-term impacts of programming and marks the ideal of the Cooperative Extension System.

Expanding the focus of existing programming to include a community component may be a successful model for future efforts. Building on this collaboration, efforts to enhance community development programming through traditional county-based commodity-crop programs are being piloted.



Adapted from Taylor, 2009.