



Evaluating the Effectiveness of the First Impressions Program in the Northeast

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+ Today's Presenters

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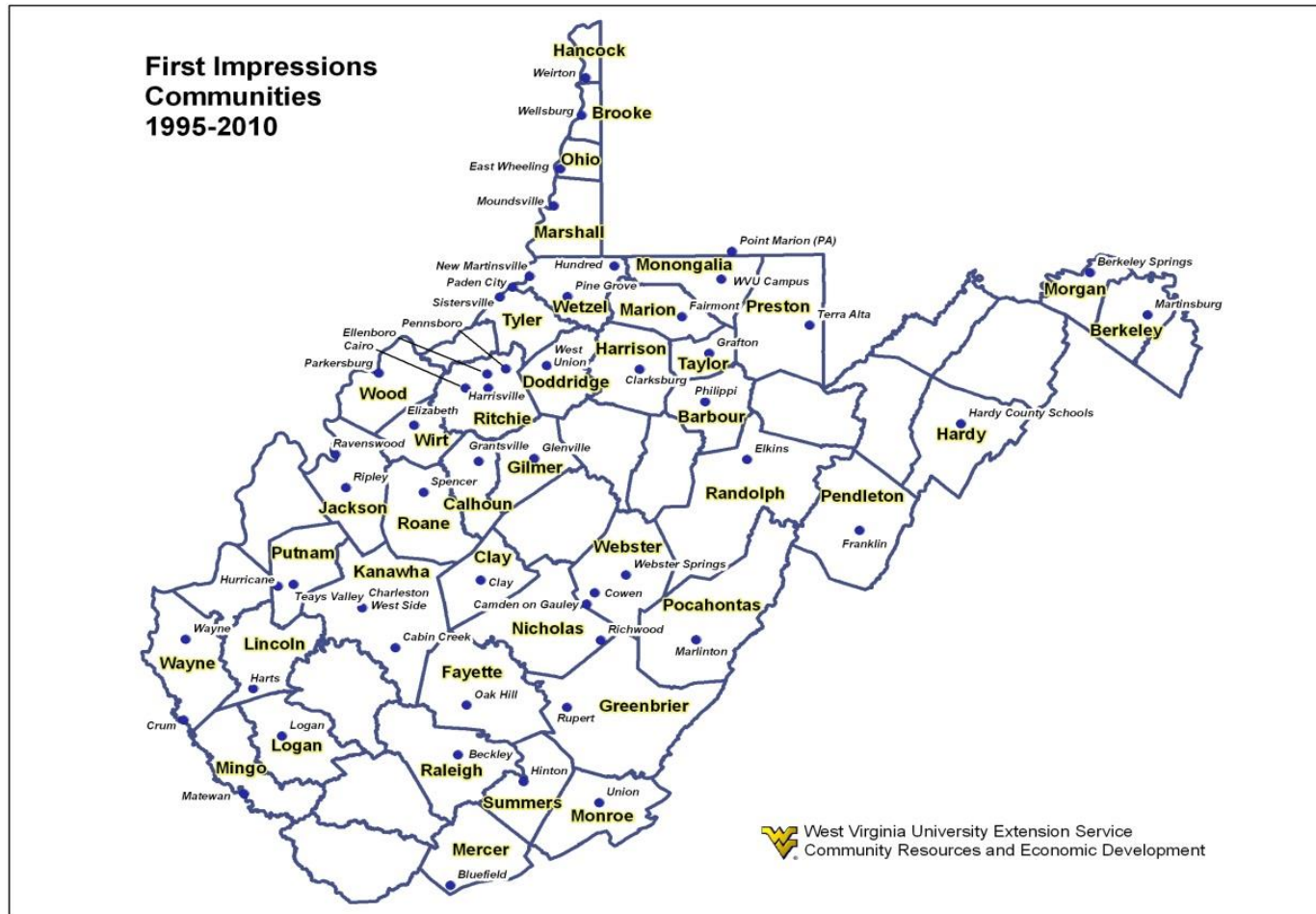
+ Today's Agenda

- Past Program Evaluation, a West Virginia Example
- Preparing a Future, Multi-State Evaluation – Where do we go from here?
- Logistics for VT trip – only a month away!





Past Program Delivery in West Virginia



+ Long-term Program Evaluation

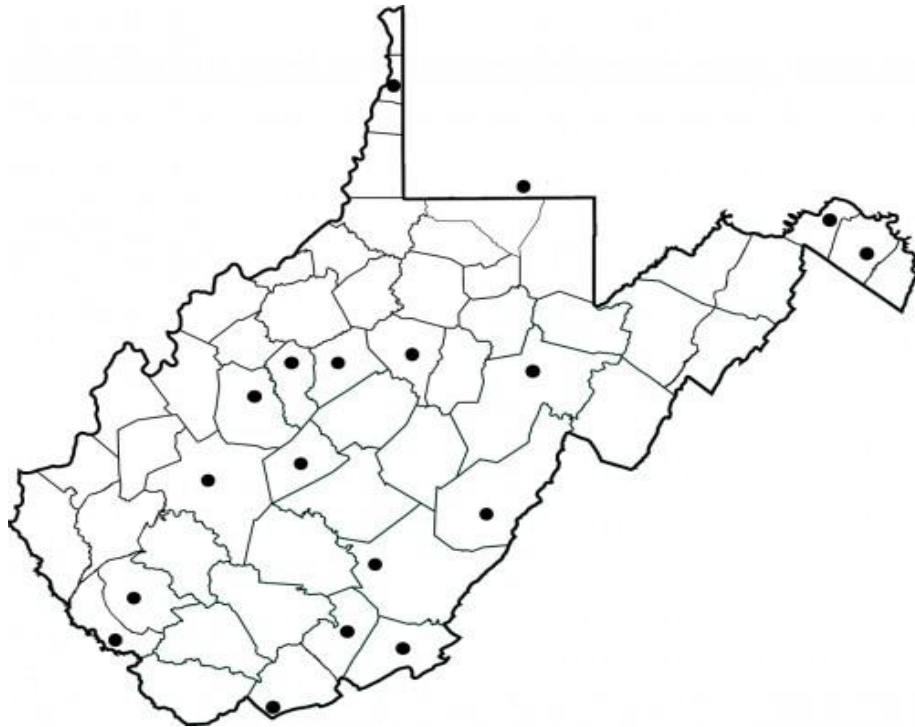
Did recommendations from FI program visit lead to changes in community and economic development activity?

- 1) Impact on general condition of the community
- 2) Program suggestions that led to improvement
- 3) Did participation encourage additional improvement
- 4) Barriers that prevented recommendation implementation





Long Term Program Evaluation



- 32 participating communities
- 7-14 years post-visit
- 18 willing/able participants (56% response rate)



Survey Questions

- Overall, do you believe the First Impressions Program had a beneficial impact on your community? [Yes, No]
- As a result of the First Impressions Program, has the general condition of your community... [Improved, Not Improved, Unknown]
- Out of the program suggestions that were made about your community, which ones have directly led to community improvements?



Survey questions cont.



- Has the First Impressions Program impacted your community in terms of other improvements?
- Were there barriers that prevented you from implementing the suggestions?
- In addition to the First Impressions Program, what other programs has your community been engaged with?



Overall Results

- Beneficial impacts were made as a result of participation – 89%
- General condition of their community improved – 67%





Program Suggestions Implemented by Communities

	Frequency	Percent
Improved Signage	10	56%
Beautification	10	56%
Historic Preservation / Tourism Promotion	8	44%
Community Recreation	8	44%
Infrastructure Improvements	7	39%
Business Recruitment	6	33%
Increased Lodging	5	28%
Increased Partnerships	4	22%
Other / Self-Directed	9	50%
No Program Suggestions Implemented	2	11%



Program Barriers



- Money and Resources – 72%
 - ARC Flex-E Grants
 - WV Brownfields Assistance Center
- Human Capital and Vision – 28%
 - Power of Ten and CDT
 - Main Street West Virginia
- Turnover in Government Leadership – 11%
 - WV Hub
 - FHLBank Pittsburgh



Implications/Recommendations

- Several communities looked inward and identified additional areas for improvement;
- Report findings were used to secure monetary resources;
- New partnerships were formed at the state and regional levels;
- Broader community participation in decision making at the local level was noticeable.

Inputs	Participants	Activities	What is learned	What is done	Impacts
Extension staff Manual of procedures and guidelines Community Design Team	Community Champions/Community Leaders	Community leaders review the report	How to identify community issues to be addressed	Changes in one or more of the following: signage, beautification, historic preservation, recreation, infrastructure, business recruitment, lodging, partnerships	Increased/improved: Beauty of community Attractiveness to tourists Selection by new businesses Preservation of buildings Collaborations with other communities
		Community leaders select issue/s to be addressed	How to monitor progress on changes		
		Community leaders and member make specific changes	How to promote changes/positive aspects of the community		
		Community leaders promote the community	How to overcome barriers to change		
	Anonymous Visitors (AV)	Select AVs	How to complete survey	A useable report is generated that can be used by the community to make changes	Community continues to assess ways to improve over period of years
		Train AVs	How to observe sites		
		AVs go to communities with checklists and access multiple sites			
		Data is aggregated and a report is produced			
	Community members	Participate in making changes	How to be a part of community change	Community members participate in the changes that are made	Continue to have good community participation in community changes over period of years
		Evaluate the changes			
	Visitors to the community	They come to the community	Learn about the positive aspects of the community through enhanced PR materials and activities	Number of visitors increase	
			Visitors improve on favorability indexes		

Questions	Indicators	Methods
Are community leaders able to identify potential community needs?	Each community leader completes a list of 3 potential needs with feasibility, estimated \$\$, and timeline	Content analysis
Do community leaders have a plan for monitoring progress on changes? What is it?		
Are community leaders consistently measuring community change?		
Have changes occurred? What are they? What is the quality of the changes?		
Have community leaders gained skills in promoting community needs and gains to the public?		
What public relation activities have been put into place?		
Does the public “buy into” the need for changes in their community?		
What have been the obstacles communities have faced in implementing their plan?		
Have anonymous visitors mastered the skills necessary for observing communities?		
Are anonymous visitors observing and completing forms correctly?		
Is the report generated by the anonymous visitors useful to communities? How are they using it?		
In what ways are community members participating in the process?		
Is the change process going to continue? In what ways?		
How has the community changed because of the experience?		
Have the number of visitors to the community increased?		
Have the number of new residents increased?		