



## Image Isn't Everything for INEEL

*J D Wulfhorst, Asst. Professor of Rural Sociology*

When determining whether something is an opportunity or a threat, on what do we base our knowledge and assumptions? Even more difficult, how do we assess an entity or program that, collectively at least, is perceived to have both pluses and minuses associated with it?

The Idaho National Engineering & Environmental Laboratory (INEEL) in southeastern Idaho is an example. Usually referred to as "the Lab" or "the Site," many praise INEEL's research accomplishments while others blame INEEL, the Department of Energy (DOE), and the federal government for radioactive and heavy metal contaminants reaching the Snake River Plain Aquifer. Although the Lab itself touts its many benefits to the state, region, and communities within which it operates, rarely have the communities surrounding INEEL been asked to weigh the costs and benefits of the Lab. *In other words, how do the people who live in the region and who are most directly impacted by INEEL feel about its operations and contributions?*

This article is part of an ongoing study funded by the Inland Northwest Research Alliance (INRA)—a consortium of universities in the Pacific Northwest (now including Alaska). As a partner to Bechtel BWXT Idaho, LLC—the current contractor at INEEL—INRA has an educational mission. Two years ago, INRA began its efforts by funding a subsurface science research program in conjunction with a new initiative at the Lab focusing on underground environmental effects.

This project addresses notions of "community" and natural resource policy as an integral part of INEEL's everyday life within southeastern Idaho and the region. As the largest employer in the region, INEEL deserves a great deal of attention in relation to how it affects economies, politics, and the social structures of people's lives.

### Community Survey

In fall 2001, the University of Idaho Social Science Research Unit (SSRU) distributed a mail survey to 2,900 households in a 22-county area covering all of southeastern Idaho and Teton County, Wyoming. One section of the questionnaire, which yielded an overall response rate  
*(cont'd on page 2)*

## Creating Jobs in a Rural Community

*Valdasue Steele and Neil L. Meyer\**

*"The future of every community lies in the passion, imagination, and the resources of its people."*

Ernesto Sirolli

Rural communities in Idaho have been struggling for the past decade to maintain themselves. With national policy changes for natural resource use, the high paying jobs of the mining and timber industries are vanishing. In some communities a void is left; in other communities, fulltime jobs are replaced by seasonal jobs.

In the first situation, families are eventually forced to migrate to other communities. In the second situation families are forced to exist with lower incomes and reduced benefits. In both situations, fewer dollars are available to be spent in the local community.

Another alternative is possible for rural communities in decline—enterprise facilitation. This process can nurture local enterprise development and expansion, encouraging economic growth from within the community, which is creating new wealth and jobs in communities. Ernesto Sirolli is the "father" of Enterprise Facilitation, a grass roots approach to economic and community development where local organization and support is established to help creative local people and entrepreneurs to start and/or expand their businesses.

The need for a more creative, non-traditional, approach to developing businesses and creating income in rural communities has never been greater. Traditionally, three ingredients are necessary for businesses to become established, grow, and be sustainable: (1) an opportunity is identified by a local entrepreneur, (2) the quality and/or availability of physical infrastructure, such as roads, power, water, sewer, and communication systems is determined, and (3) the availability of financing, a trained work force, specialized training, legal services, accounting, facilities, etc., is researched.

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\*Valdasue Steele is an extension educator in Benewah County, and Neil L. Meyer is extension economist emeritus, Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, Moscow.

of 59 percent,<sup>1</sup> asked respondents to match perceptions they have of the Lab to costs and benefits generally associated with the Lab operations.

INEEL has existed since 1949 with a combined employment among the Lab's different affiliates as high as 12,000 workers in recent years. The Lab currently employs about 8,000 workers. One-half of the workforce at INEEL has at least a bachelor's degree and outpaces Idaho's general population 2-to-1 in executive, managerial, and administrative positions, and nearly 10-to-1 for professional/specialty occupations. The Lab's own publications claim responsibility for over \$450 million in annual wages and estimates an additional 6,000 to 7,000 full and part-time jobs are found in the local economy to meet INEEL's materials and supplies demands.

Not only does INEEL provide jobs to southeastern Idaho, but these jobs are well-paid. Although INEEL is classified as a "service industry," employment at the Lab carries more significant wages and benefits than more traditional "service" sector jobs. By this measure alone, INEEL is an important direct and indirect economic force in the development of southeastern Idaho infrastructure, workforce, and...*community*.

## Survey Results

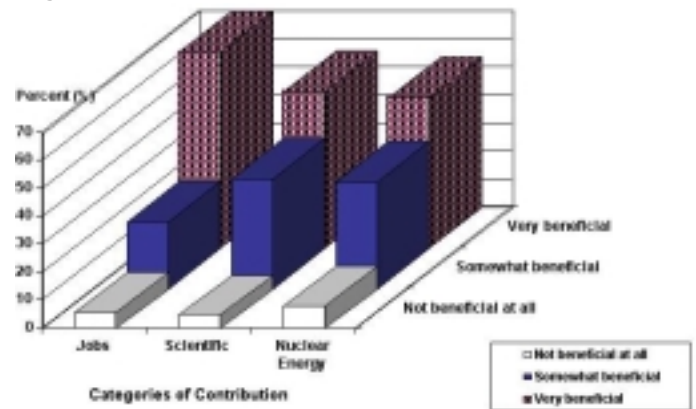
Because of the nature of its operations, the Lab's reputation, association with Department of Energy (DOE), and controversial missions, the Lab often finds itself under environmental and political microscopes attempting to monitor activities at INEEL. Respondents to the survey were asked a series of close-ended questions about the images they think of and associate with the Lab. Several key trends emerged from responses:

- Respondents did not strongly disagree or agree with the image of the Lab *as a steward of the environment*.
- Respondents overwhelmingly disagreed (82 percent) with the image of the Lab *using old technologies*.
- Nearly half the respondents noted strong agreement with the image of the Lab *as a source of contamination*.
- Nearly 75 percent of respondents noted strong agreement with the image of the Lab *as an asset to the community*.
- Over 70 percent indicated some disagreement with the image of the Lab *as negative to the community image*.

These results reflect variation among citizens' views about the Lab's operations.

<sup>1</sup>While a 59 percent response rate is within the range of acceptability, we should not ignore the remaining 41 percent. Of those, 14 percent were households that refused to complete the questionnaire and 27 percent were nonrespondents. Telephone followup calls to respondents in these two categories revealed additional explanation. The higher than average refusal rate included many individuals who declined to participate because they work(ed) at the Lab. In reference to the nonrespondents, the survey administration period (9/21/01 to 12/10/01) followed September 11, 2001, and was likely affected by those events, the Anthrax scare, as well as concerns related to INEEL's national security mission based on comments we received.

Fig. 1. Greatest perceived benefits from INEEL contributions.



As a part of the same survey, respondents were also asked how beneficial they perceived some of the Lab's contributions to be. Fig. 1 presents this data in a summarized format showing those who indicated that a contribution was either "not beneficial at all," "somewhat beneficial," or "very beneficial" for a series of items.

These results indicate the strongest contributions of the Lab are: (1) jobs, (2) scientific advances, and (3) nuclear energy development. Respondents also considered the Lab's contributions to national security, alternative energy development, and financial sponsorship of local programs to be substantive measures that were beneficial.

A different set of measures on the survey revealed a more complex picture of community viewpoints relating to the Lab's local contributions—especially economic ones—and risks posed to environmental and human health as a result of the Lab's location and operations. Over half of all respondents (54 percent) indicated concern about risks to their community due to contamination at the Lab site.

Results listed above noted strong sentiments that the jobs provided by the Lab are valuable. Still the community economy/environmental health measure indicated 48 percent selected environmental health as more important than the community's economy. About 27 percent of respondents disagreed and answered the reverse. The remaining 25 percent neither disagreed nor agreed that one was more important.

This question measures values and how people might compare particular tradeoffs. The measure should also be looked at critically as a false dichotomy. At any rate, the result shows substantial support for concern about environmental health as a priority, even in the context of the local economy. These mixed results also indicate greater awareness on the part of this population understanding the inextricable relationship between a community's economy and environmental health, rather than as a dichotomy.

In order to further assess the relationship between employment at the Lab and potential environmental consequences of the Lab's operations, respondents were also asked to agree or disagree with the statement: "The employment benefits of the Lab outweigh my concerns with human health risks." Responses to this measure indicated strong disagreement with the statement, presented in

**Fig. 2. Employment benefits of the Lab outweigh my concerns with human health risks.**

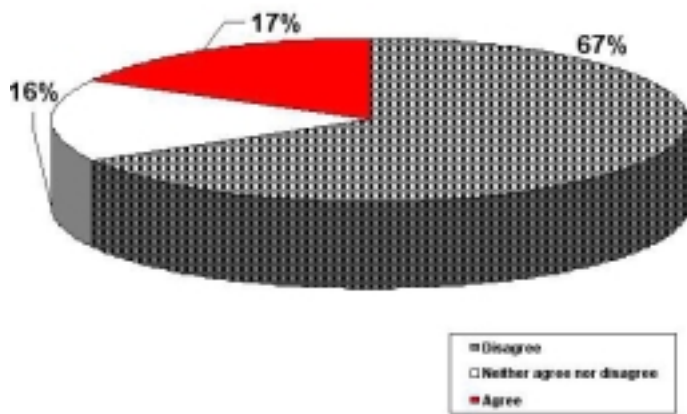


Fig. 2. Over 67 percent of all those completing the survey disagreed with the statement to some extent.

While the importance of a good job *is not devalued* in this response, the pattern suggests many people recognize potential tradeoffs to human health as a significant concern. Moreover, many may find it difficult to comparatively value human health in a monetary sense. This result also serves as an indicator that reiterates the higher level of awareness about potential risks associated with INEEL operations.

### Summary and Discussion

This univariate analysis is basic, especially for a complex issue. However, this respondent sample is statisti-

cally representative of the region as a whole and thus tells us how people across this region perceive and feel about these issues. In the most simple terms, residents:

- Perceived the Lab at INEEL to be a leader in progressive technology;
- Appreciate and support the number of quality employment opportunities available at INEEL; and
- Also perceive risk from contamination associated with the INEEL site.

Presumably, the large workforce at INEEL is more familiar with the levels and types of risk associated with the contamination by virtue of their employment than are most people who do not live or work near the site. Thus, taken together, the responses here reflect: (1) a perception of how substantial INEEL operations are relative to the local and regional economies; (2) how the complex environmental and human health of a community or region are likely tied to the economic opportunities characterizing that place; and (3) the need to address the risks at the INEEL site are more of a focus for those living in the region than a negative image that may result from those same operations. As such, we could interpret the overall community response as a local belief that the Lab’s work makes a difference in accomplishing a challenging mission. Further, each of these points reflects the rural and non-metropolitan community setting that characterizes this place socially and economically. A full report for this project will be available in 2003.

## Creating Jobs in a Rural Community

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During the past 10 years, small companies have generated the majority of new jobs and by the year 2025 the Small Business Administration estimates half of the North American workforce will be self-employed. Clearly, small companies are the fastest growing market segment in the business world today.

A common mistake made by rural communities is to focus their economic development efforts on recruiting “big business” to town or to recruit business people from outside the community to buy an existing, or previously existing business. This article will focus on the often neglected, but most important, key to any local job creation effort—the local entrepreneur. The authors will share the information and testimonials they received as participants in a weeklong Enterprise Facilitation course presented by the Sirolli Institute.

According to Sirolli, the perfect entrepreneur would need to master the three elements necessary for a business’s success. Experience and successes demonstrated by the Sirolli Institute have shown the elements absolutely necessary for a new or existing business to be successful are: (1) *product or service*—the manufacture and delivery of a product or service; (2) *marketing*—the identification of individuals, firms, or organizations that need or want the product or service and the education of consumers; and

**Table 1. Job creation and preservation using the Sirolli method.**

Location	Businesses started	Months of operation
Baker County, OR	25	23
West Minister, BC	70	70
Esperance, Australia	450	144

(3) *financial management*—the analysis of the cost of production or service is used to make projections and decisions related to business goals.

After 17 years experience and exposure to thousands of entrepreneurs, Sirolli believes no perfect entrepreneur exists! The one-week introductory course focuses on the philosophy of Enterprise Facilitation, and offers an approach to local economic development that capitalizes on the passion and imagination of local entrepreneurs. The program emphasizes listening and evaluation skills, business management, and team building. It is a hands-on learning experience that includes interaction with real life, small town, entrepreneurs.

In addition to the philosophical perspective, the program shares the practice of simple, effective management coaching that encourages entrepreneurs to form passionate and competent management teams *before* seeking financial and technical assistance. The rationale for such an

approach is that it is impossible to find an entrepreneur who is equally passionate about, or skilled in all three of the previously mentioned major elements of a successful business. Perfected over many years by Sirolli, the coaching tools can be mastered in a few days and have proven to increase the success, and sustainability, of a business. Following are several testimonials for individuals who have been involved in the course.

“The stories and real experiences of Ernesto Sirolli make all the difference. The course has proven to me completely that Enterprise Facilitation works and is a necessary part of building a strong economy and community at least in this part of the world.” Bob Williams, VanCity, Vancouver, BC

“Sirolli’s social technology—the coaching method he trains and employs—is useful development technology, not ‘policy,’ planning, or some type of advocacy...It is not a goal—it is a how-to. I thought I knew what Enterprise Facilitation was, until I took Sirolli’s facilitator course. In the training course I learned how subtle and sophisticated, and yet how simple, was the method to align our values as individuals (and communities) with business development.” Peter Donovan, Wallowa County, OR

“Entrepreneurs know what they want to do, but often are void of the expertise to turn a dream into reality. Enterprise Facilitation provides the proper coaching and direction in business development for the entrepreneur to focus his or her attention to the business area that exemplifies their passion.” John Harmacy, Community Loan Officer, Assiniboine Credit Union, Winnipeg MB, Canada

### How Does It Work?

A local board is established of persons interested in the economic development. This is a fairly large board (20+ persons) with a broad array of skills and connections in the local community. They hire the local Enterprise Facilitator to work with local entrepreneurs who come to him for help. The facilitator assists in finding resources and breaking down barriers for the local entrepreneur. The Enterprise Facilitator must be available locally to assist when needed. However, the full responsibility for the production, marketing, and management for the business rests with the entrepreneur. For a view of the recent annual re-

port in Wallowa County, Oregon, check this web site: <http://oregonmag.com/BusinessCoachWCC302.htm>

### Policy Implications

One of the frustrations of many working in local economic development is the feeling of having limited control and ability to influence. The Enterprise Facilitation process creates a local special interest advisory board and encourages local entrepreneurs to create jobs and businesses right where they are currently living. There is no need to move businesses from other locations and to spend large amounts of funds to build homes, schools, and public safety infrastructure to accommodate the new business.

For the local community fostering economic development and job growth, the most economical per job created is going to be local business preservation, local business expansion, and local new business creation. Enterprise Facilitation is a process of listening to and helping local entrepreneurs develop ideas and to expand. The support board assists tapping into local networks and resources. The net effect can be a win-win for the entrepreneur, local citizens, and the community.

Any rural community can implement the Enterprise Facilitation model. Inland Northwest region has two counties, Wallowa County (Enterprise) and Baker County (Baker City), that have successfully implemented this model in recent years. We recommend reading Sirolli’s book, “Ripples on the Zambezi.” For information on Enterprise Facilitation contact the authors or:

The Sirolli Institute  
1-877- Sirolli  
DD: 1-780-413-4461  
Web site: [www.sirolli.com](http://www.sirolli.com)

For other economics-related material published by University of Idaho Extension write to Extension Economist, Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, University of Idaho, Moscow, ID 83844-2334. Visit our web site: <http://www.ag.uidaho.edu/aers/>

*Neil Meyer*  
Extension Economist

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