

“Building Entrepreneurial Capacity in Natural Tourism in Northwestern Pennsylvania”

**University of Pittsburgh at Bradford
Dr. Livingston Alexander
President
300 Campus Drive
Bradford, PA 16701
814-362-7510**

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**Dr. William Schumann
Assistant Professor of Anthropology
Social and Behavioral Sciences Division
University of Pittsburgh at Bradford
300 Campus Drive
Bradford, PA 16701
814-362-7620
wrs18@pitt.edu**

Final Report Narrative

Name of Project: Building Entrepreneurial Capacity in Natural Tourism in Northwestern Pennsylvania Grant Period: February 1, 2011 – June 30, 2012

Grantee Name: University of Pittsburgh at Bradford Project Director: Dr. William Schumann

Description of Project:

The objective of this project is to facilitate sustainable economic development in a multi-county area of northwestern Pennsylvania by encouraging entrepreneurial growth around a fledgling 'trail town' program organized by the In partnership with the Allegheny National Park Visitors Bureau (ANPVB), Pitt-Bradford faculty and students conducted four town hall meetings in McKean and Warren Counties (PA) to identify entrepreneurial local assets and needs; a secondary phone survey was conducted to identify successful trail-related development strategies in other areas of Appalachia. The project goals were:

1. Supply communities, development agencies, and entrepreneurs with data that will facilitate investment/business recruitment, local job creation, and coordinated planning for long-term, sustainable tourism development.
2. Equip UPB students for successful careers in sustainable economies by training them in applied research methods, project management, leadership development, and networking.

Activities:

- Course readings on applied anthropology methods and participatory development in Appalachia.
- Focus group research training, phone survey research training, and survey design.
- Town hall meeting facilitation; audio transcription of meetings.
- Phone surveys.
- Poster and presentation design training.
- Report writing.
- Public presentations of research results.

Project Outcomes:

- Four focus group meetings held in the towns of Bradford, Kane (also hosted for residents of Mount Jewett), Smethport, and Warren, PA. Different teams of students took turns facilitating meetings.
- Questionnaires designed and administered by students to approximately 90 town hall participants; data analyzed in Microsoft Excel.

- Audio transcribed for three of four meetings (technical problems prevented recording one meeting).
- Creation of an email database of citizens interested in trail town development.
- Seven phone surveys conducted with public and private interests in trail towns of Damascus, VA and Frostburg, MD; related survey design.
- Poster and presentation design for ATP conference.
- A master report was submitted to the ANFVB, which is scheduled to feature on the organization's web page; a research summary (attached) was created for citizens who signed up to be part of the trail town email database.
- Public presentations of research results: students presented their research findings live on WESB 1490 News Radio (December 17, 2011; Bradford); aforementioned e-newsletter distributed to approximately 75 persons (January 7, 2012); upcoming presentation to area trail associations (scheduled first week of February 2012).

Problems Encountered:

None of any substance. Excellent institutional support enabled an efficient and productive research process. Technical difficulties prevented one town hall meeting from being recorded.

Program Continuation and Sustainability:

This project has helped to identify low-cost ways that Pitt-Bradford can contribute to regional sustainability in northwestern PA through the promotion of area trail resources. One common concern raised in public meetings was the need for more public awareness and education. One solution Pitt-Bradford is currently developing to respond to this issue is a GPS trail mapping project in which photos and background descriptions of natural and historic points of interest on trails are digitally mapped and uploaded onto commonly used internet sites (i.e., Google maps) to encourage public health and raise the profile of area trail assets to tourists. A grant proposal of approximately \$9,000 will be submitted this week to support this project. Pitt-Bradford has also given support to the redevelopment and re-tasking of its Allegheny Institute for Natural History to support student-led, applied research initiatives in support of regional sustainability and campus-wide promotion of Appalachia issues/learning opportunities. In general, this project has better-connected Pitt-Bradford to several local and regional organizations who can serve as future research partners as well as hosts for future student internships and directed studies.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

Pitt-Bradford faculty, administrators, and students have shown a great deal of respect for our connections to the ATP and ARC, without which the Allegheny Institute would probably not have been refocused to support learning on and sustainability in Appalachia. It has raised the profile of Appalachian issues and encouraged several students to focus their career and graduate school choices around service to the region. This is a fantastic program. You are building a new generation of practitioners and professionals with skills to meet the opportunities and challenges of the twenty-first century.

Attachments:

Please see the e-newsletter designed by students and distributed to many of the town hall participants.

Click [here](#) to see the e-newsletter