

*Community Engagement by Visioning –
Looking at One Community's Success*



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Abstract

Community visioning is a valuable way to engage diverse stakeholders to determine community goals. The workshop will outline how one community engaged volunteers in the visioning process and developed volunteer teams to implement the community goals. The workshop will address the volunteer organizational issues with tools and current research.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT.....	2
INTRODUCTION	4
HISTORY	4
CREATING THE VISION WHAT SHOULD WE DO?.....	5
THE RCCI MISSION	5
<i>Organizational Structure</i>	5
<i>The Core Team</i>	5
Mission of the Core Team.....	6
Vision of the Core Team.....	6
Strategy of the Core Team.....	6
ORGANIZATIONAL CHART	6
COMMUNITY VISION 2000: FINDING THE VISION.....	7
COMMUNITY VISION 2000 ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE.....	7
<i>Community Vision 2000 Team</i>	7
RESULTS FROM COMMUNITY VISION 2000.....	9
<i>Top Twenty Consensus Goals</i>	9
<i>Top Five Consensus Goals By Category</i>	9
Community Development.....	9
Economic Development.....	9
Education.....	10
Health	10
Infrastructure & Image.....	10
Service To Citizens.....	10
LESSONS LEARNED FROM COMMUNITY VISION 2000	10
IMPLEMENTING THE COMMUNITY VISION BY ENGAGING VOLUNTEERS	11
DETERMINE COLLEGE’S GOAL IN THIS PROCESS	11
ASSETS	11
CONSTRAINTS	11
DETERMINE ACCOUNTABILITY, PROCESS & ORGANIZATIONAL SETUP.....	12
<i>Accountability</i>	12
<i>The Process</i>	12
Design the Marketing & Communication Plan.....	12
Press Conference	12
<i>Organizational Setup</i>	13
Organizational Structure of Carlsbad RCCI.....	13
Organizational Structure of the Implementing Teams	13
FIRST MEETING.....	13
TRAINING THE IMPLEMENTING TEAMS	14
<i>Goals & Objectives</i>	14
<i>Research</i>	14
<i>Process</i>	14
<i>Communication</i>	14
<i>Leadership of the Team</i>	15
Team Leader.....	15
Co-Team Leader	15
Secretary	15
ANALYSIS	15
UPDATE OF THE COLLEGE AND COMMUNITY RESULTS.....	16
NEXT MOVES FOR THE COLLEGE	16

Introduction

History

The Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI), funded by the Ford Foundation, was a national demonstration assisting community colleges in economically distressed regions to move communities toward prosperity. It supported and promoted aggressive and creative efforts to increase jobs, income, and access to education in rural communities. The goal of RCCI was to strengthen rural community colleges, enhancing their capacity to provide economic leadership for their regions and serve as agents for community development. It was grounded in five principles:

- Rural America matters
- Healthy communities focus on their assets
- Change begins with self-assessment
- Effective change requires collaboration
- Equity and high expectations should undergird education and economic development goals

Carlsbad RCCI evolved from a planning grant from The Ford Foundation that was given to New Mexico State University at Carlsbad. This grant provided for a team-based approach to community change through opportunities for collaboration and the strengthening of relationships among the university's stakeholders. The planning grant then evolved into the award of a \$150,000 grant from the Ford Foundation, allowing for an ambitious goal of integrating and linking educational access and economic development as one strategic and long-term initiative. The awards build upon the RCCI's planning activities and laid the framework to sustain the initiative past the initial five-year period. New Mexico State University at Carlsbad was then awarded another \$100,000 to facilitate and implement this framework into the culture of the college and the community. This integrated process of involvement linked internal and external partners and resources to address common goals and needs.

The groundwork began with the formation of a Core Team – a small group of citizens positioned in an advisory capacity and available to coordinate the many activities of future events through the phases of the plan. Working with the community, the Core Team came up with Core Values that became the essence of what RCCI in Carlsbad was all about:

- Learning to build consensus throughout the community
- Building inclusiveness
- Respecting diversity
- Building respect for each other
- Respecting the will of the majority
- Re-discovering our democracy
- Improving the quality of life for all

The goal was to establish community leadership through group consensus, enhancing but not duplicating the ongoing efforts of other community stakeholders. Operationally, the Core Team, using the expertise of staff at New Mexico State University at Carlsbad, developed a community visioning process, based on the success of the Chattanooga model which identified consensus community goals. Success breeds success. The college was then faced with how to help the community implement the goals and sustain the success.

Creating the Vision

What should we do?

The community conversation is based on the Core Values

Learning to build consensus throughout the community

Building inclusiveness

Celebrating our diversity

Building respect for each other

Respecting the will of the majority

Re-discovering our democracy

Improving the quality of life for all

Which results in

A community that grows through involvement, compassion, and communication, and exceeds the needs of the citizens in terms of social, economic, and cultural benefits.

The RCCI Mission

The mission of RCCI is to collectively involve citizens in creating an effective means of spurring community development in order to enhance and ensure prosperity and quality of life for all residents in our region.

The Team Rules of Conduct

Prepare for meetings

Read materials that are to be reviewed

No personal attacks

One person talks at a time

There are NO bad ideas/opinions

Must have CAN DO attitude

Be prompt to meetings

Attend when possible

Encourage participation and ideas from all

No sales pitches from business owners or overly expounding on “pet” projects during meetings

Keep politics out

Respect the will of the majority

Organizational Structure

The Core Team

The groundwork began with the formation of the Core Team comprised of a group of citizens positioned in an advisory capacity, representative of community organizations, and available to coordinate the many activities of future events through the phases of the plan. This was supported by a project director who had a full-time administrative assistant, part-time financial assistant, temporary full-time administrative assistant (assisted with Community Vision 2000), and a student intern (assisted with Community Vision 2000)

Mission of the Core Team

Core Team will facilitate the efforts of citizens in achieving commonly shared community vision.

Vision of the Core Team

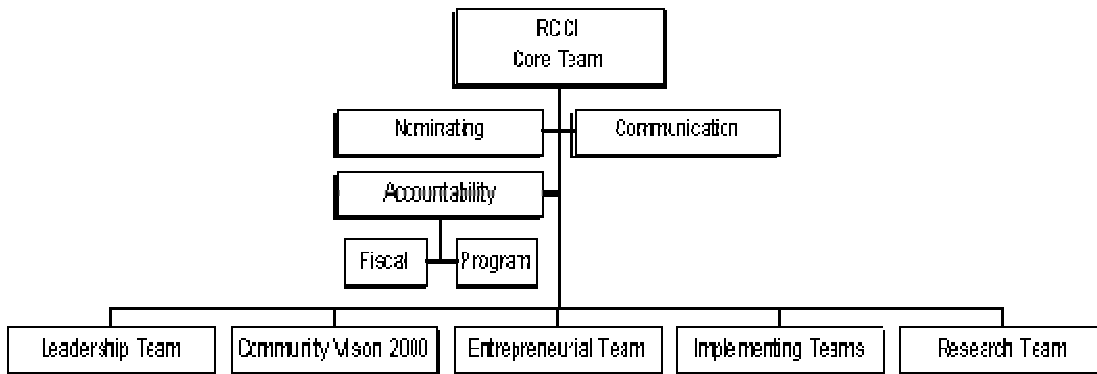
Our vision as a core team is to sustain the consensus building process through our commitment to shared values in support of the community vision.

Strategy of the Core Team

- Bring vision team members on a board of the core team
- Find funds to sustain the initiative beyond the current funding cycle
- Leadership development
- Meet with implementing teams
- Community outreach – communicate
- Monthly meetings

Organizational Chart

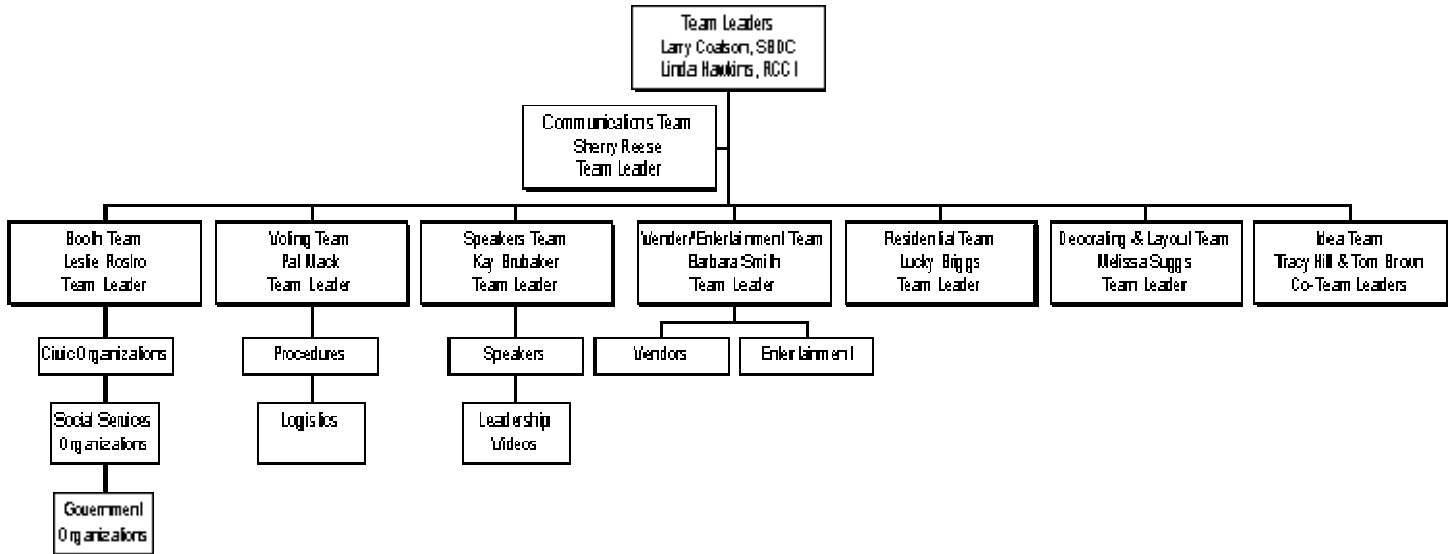
RCCI Organizational Structure



Community Vision 2000: Finding the Vision

Community Vision 2000 Organizational Structure

Community Vision 2000 Day Organizational Chart
September 23, 2000, Carlsbad Civic Center



Team Job Descriptions

Community Vision 2000 Team

Community Day Team Leaders, Linda Hawkins, RCCI Project Director, and Larry Coalson, Director of Small Business Development Center, provided coaching and staff support to the Community Day Division Teams. Their responsibility was to work with, monitor, and coordinate each division's activities in preparation of Community Day. They were also responsible for marketing and communications of the entire project including the purchase of advertising and media. The RCCI Project Director was also responsible for maintaining the databases and managing the support staff. This will be accomplished through weekly Division Leader group meetings.

Booth Team

Booth Team Leader's responsibility was to work with a core group of volunteers who will recruit civic organizations, government organizations and social service organizations in the Carlsbad area to have booths at the Community Day. The purpose of the booths was to provide the citizens with information about each organization. The Booth Division was organized and support the location of the booths, helping each organization "put their best foot forward". The Booth Division had coaching and staff support NMSU-C staff involved in RCCI.

Voting Team

Voting Team Leader's responsibility was to work with a core group of volunteers who organized and established the logistics for the community vote of the ideas. The team arranged for the presentation of the categories of ideas in a

pleasing manner, with appropriate decorations and logistics. The Voting Division had coaching and staff support from NMSU-C staff involved in RCCI.

Speakers Team

Speakers Team Leader's responsibility was to work with a core group of volunteers who organized and arranged for the speakers and continuing motivational videos throughout the day. The team arranged for the set up of each motivational speaker and ensuring the necessary equipment was on hand for both the speakers and the videos. The team was also responsible for setting up small group and chat teams to generate group discussion sessions throughout the day focusing on topical categories developed from the Idea Team. The Speakers Division had coaching and staff support from NMSU-C staff involved in RCCI.

Vendors Team

Vendors Team Leader's responsibility was to work with a core group of volunteers who invited, organized, and arranged for the food vendors at the Community Day. The team arranged for the proper set up for each vendor and had the necessary equipment on hand for the vendors. The Vendors Division had coaching and staff support from NMSU-C involved in RCCI.

Entertainment Team

The Entertainment Team Leader's responsibility was to work with a core group of volunteers who invited, organized and arranged for the entertainment for two areas, children's entertainment and adult entertainment. The team arranged for the proper set up for each entertainment group and had the necessary equipment on hand for the entertainers. The Entertainment Division had coaching and staff support from NMSU-C staff involved in RCCI.

Communications Team

The Communication Team Leader's responsibility was to work with a core group of volunteers, who included members from the local media, who planned and organized the communications and marketing efforts for the Community Day. The team met with members of the local media to help meet the media's need in covering the Community Day. The team was responsible for the establishment of a newsletter whose purpose is not only informational but also motivational. The Communications Division had coaching and staff support from NMSU-C staff involved in RCCI.

Decorating & Layout Team

The Decorating & Layout Team Leader's responsibility was to work with a core group of volunteers who planned and organized the decoration of the Civic Center for the Community Day. The Decorating & Layout Team had coaching and staff support from NMSU-C involved in RCCI.

Idea Team

The Idea Team Leader's responsibility was to work with a core group of volunteers who carefully reviewed each idea generated from the RCCI community presentations and community conversation meetings. The ideas needed to be categorized and consolidated to retain all ideas and enable a voting format. The work of the team had to be done in a timely manner to allow the Voting Division time to present the ideas to the community. The project leaders provided coaching support and along with staff support from NMSU-C involved in RCCI.

Residential Campaign Team

RCCI tried to conduct a residential campaign prior to the Community Day in order to give each member of the Carlsbad

community an opportunity to learn about RCCI and encourage civic attendance at Community Day. The Residential Campaign Team was responsible for planning and organizing the residential campaign beginning July 1, 2000 and ending August 31, 2000. Coaching support and staff support came from NMSU-C involved in RCCI.

Results from Community Vision 2000

From a population base of 25,000, 2,287 people voted at the one-day event. The following results spoke volumes about the true needs in the community:

Top Twenty Consensus Goals

1. Improve playgrounds	1,061
2. Build a waterpark	656
3. Build a skateboard park	570
4. Offer affordable four-year degree programs	514
5. Develop, implement, & fund a street repair plan	454
6. Bring in manufacturing/industrial firms	396
7. Construct & improve sports facilities (softball, soccer, tennis, golf, etc.)	310
8. Retain good doctors through community support	306
9. Re-activate amusement park rides at beach	303
10. Restore or remove unoccupied buildings	284
11. 2000 jobs by 2010	274
12. Increase pay for teachers	273
13. Build boot camp for juveniles	251
14. Create left turning lanes on Canal Street	242
15. Attract an Art & Crafts store	239
16. Support a river restaurant	236
17. Advertise and use incentives for regular city & county-wide cleanup	225
18. Remove gross-receipts for medical services	220
19. Develop model vocational-technical program	216
20. Build an upscale miniature golf course	212

Top Five Consensus Goals By Category

Community Development

1. Develop, maintain & communicate Master Plan	131
2. Build tourist information centers	101
3. Train businesses in customer service	89
3. Become a college town	89
4. Support Mainstreet Program	77
4. Enhance communications to the public	77
5. Build memorial to Eddy County war veterans	73

Economic Development

1. Improve playgrounds	1,061
2. Build a waterpark	656

3. Build a skatepark	570
4. Bring in manufacturing/industrial firms	396
5. Construct/improve sports facilities	306

Education

1. Offer affordable four-year degree programs	514
2. Increase pay for teachers	273
3. Develop model technical vocational program	216
4. Offer additional master degree programs	172
5. Establish all-day kindergarten	159

Health

1. Retain good doctors through community support	306
2. Remove gross receipts tax from medical pricing	220
3. Enhance & expand medical facilities	168
4. Recruit & retain more general practitioners	122
5. Encourage competitive medical pricing	118

Infrastructure & Image

1. Develop, implement & fund a street repair plan	454
2. Restore or remove unoccupied buildings	284
3. Create left turning lanes on Canal Street	242
4. Advertise & use incentives for regular city & county-wide cleanup	225
5. Make it a priority to defend our water rights	202

Service To Citizens

1. Build boot camp for juveniles	251
2. Provide consistent enforcement & prosecution of all laws	195
3. Rehabilitate abandoned buildings for shelters	141
4. Provide additional recreational facilities & activities for youth	127
5. Establish, support, & provide affordable day facilities for elderly	116

Lessons Learned from Community Vision 2000

1. Building community interest was critical to the success of the project. This was accomplished by carefully listening to the issues, providing staff and volunteer support and thinking outside the box to meet the needs of the members raising pertinent issues.
2. Once the enthusiasm is sparked, a system for managing the community interest needs to be in place so folks feel involved and empowered.
3. Never underestimate the power of informal communication networks.
4. Involve organizations, businesses, groups representing those less fortunate in the process. Work with the power brokers and effective service organizations.
5. Patience, good humor, investing in leadership training, have achievable, agreed upon broad goals and specific strategies

Implementing the Community Vision by Engaging Volunteers

Determine College's Goal in This Process

The RCCI staff at the college spent hours brainstorming what is the best way to implement these community goals. From the internal discussions, the college staff, after carefully reviewing the college's mission and core values, which were in line, determined it was dealing with a different set of stakeholders to implement the goals. The staff determined that the college's goal for the implementing phase of RCCI was to teach the community to sustain these projects by offering leadership, training the community to implement the goals and to sustain the implementation efforts, and to help procure resources for these projects. In essence, the college's goal was to teach the community how to "plant," not actually "plant the fields." The other goal the college decided to pursue was to use its administrative resources and continue to provide administrative and facility support by publishing the minutes and team documents on the website, using the databases the college built to call team members and remind them of team meetings, manage local and regional media, and provide grant funding research as each goal evolved into a community project.

Assets

During this brainstorming, review and planning phase, the college's staff came up with the following assets it had to work with from the initial RCCI phase:

- Almost 2300 citizens voted on the community goals and the college had a database of 1200 names of people who wanted to be kept informed of RCCI and the implementing of the goals.
- The college had a database of 120 volunteers who were directly involved in planning Community Day 2000 and were highly motivated to help RCCI.
- The college had been conducting a number of leadership training classes for all kinds of groups of current and future community leaders which was another database of potential volunteers.
- In the short-term, the success of RCCI had raised the "profile" of the college, and, with wide-spread local and media coverage, increased community awareness by raising expectations of the college and its offerings to the region, beyond serving as an academic institution.
- The college's RCCI staff was dealing with highly enthusiastic group of citizens who were surprised at how successful Community Vision 2000 was, and yet suspicious that the college could produce results in the implementation phase.

Constraints

- The college was in the process of hiring a new campus executive officer. The interim campus executive officer instructed the RCCI staff not to secure any further funding because he did not want to burden the new executive with grant management issues.
- Because a decline in student enrollments and the way the State of New Mexico funds higher education, the college was facing declining state funding for the next three years.
- The Ford Foundation grant funding was ending. The RCCI staff was mandated to only conduct extensive research of future resources that were available to the college to fund administrative costs for community engagement projects and the resource support for the community on these community engagement projects.

Determine Accountability, Process & Organizational Setup

Accountability

The community was nervous about the quality of the community vote and the credibility of the college in counting the consensus goals. The staff approached a local, well-regarded CPA firm, to volunteer their time to count the votes and report to the community on the outcome of the community vote.

The Process

Design the Marketing & Communication Plan

The RCCI staff decided that it should design the initial marketing and communication plan. It decided to set up a press conference announcing the results and use this press conference as a mechanism for soliciting volunteers. Because the key in implementing the goals depended on large volunteer groups working together to implement the goals, the staff decided that the six groups of consensus goals should become six groups of implementing teams that are charged with implementing the goals: Community Development Implementing Team; Economic Development Implementing Team; Education Implementing Team; Health Implementing Team; Infrastructure & Image Implementing Team; and Service to Citizen Implementing Team. These teams needed to be accountable which meant that there needed to be a communication system to report back to the community on the status of the implementation of the consensus goals. This was done with quarterly reports showing the status of each goal. The final pieces of the marketing efforts included buying a one-page ad thanking the community for its support, reporting the results, soliciting volunteer support to implement the goals, and setting up local speakers to talk to civic groups. The communication plan meant coming up with a communication system, using Microsoft Outlook for email, the internet website which updated the community with current team reports and publications the college developed, and a communication internet tool that had been developed by Sandia Laboratories, where team members could communicate and share documents behind the shield of a firewall.

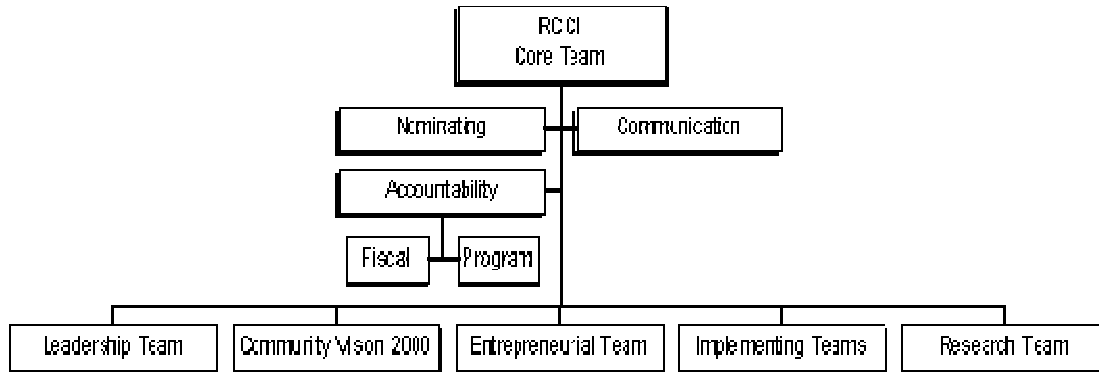
Press Conference

Because of the media reporting of Community Day 2002, the RCCI staff called a press conference at the civic center where the CPA firm was going to report the results of the community vote. To encourage a large public gathering, the results were not leaked prior to the press conference. Knowing that there would be a large group of community citizens, the RCCI staff decided that after the results were announced; six stations were set up at the civic center for each of the types of interest under which each of the community goals had been. The citizens who gathered to hear the results (over 250 people), were encouraged to volunteer to help to implement these goals. They did so by going to the stations they were interesting in helping, give their names, addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses. As a result, within a week the RCCI staff had volunteers for the six Implementing Teams ready to get started implementing the community goals. This program then moved from a program management process to a project management process with all of the associated project management tools that are currently available including organizing, managing, motivating, and leading broad citizen groups and projects.

Organizational Setup

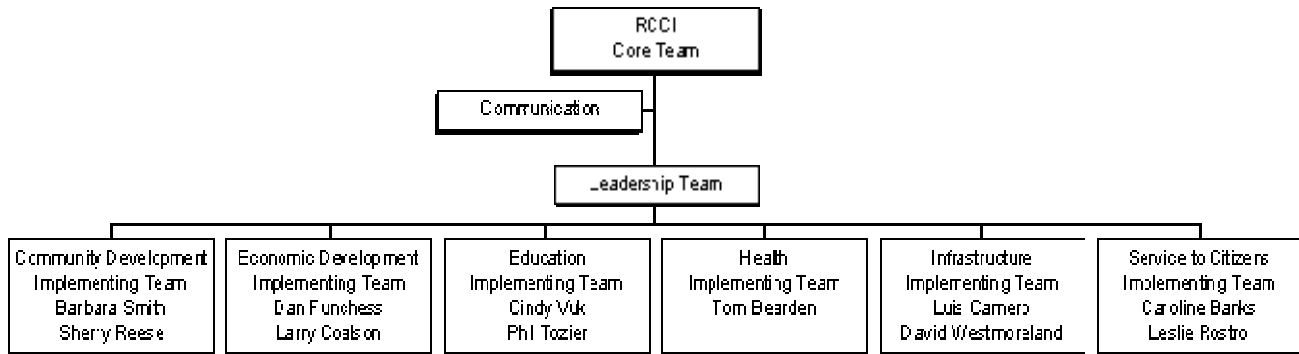
Organizational Structure of Carlsbad RCCI

RCCI Organizational Structure



Organizational Structure of the Implementing Teams

RCCI Implementing the Vision Structure



First Meeting

During the planning phase, the RCCI staff determined that one of the college's goals was training the community through the teams in how to implement the goals. This meant giving the teams a structure, measurable goals, and making them accountable to the broad community that voted on the goals. Drawing from experience derived from working with the earlier volunteer teams that organized Community Day 2000, the RCCI staff decided to have a training session. This was important to help the teams move into a positive direction.

Training the Implementing Teams

Based on the Core Values, that were originally developed, the RCCI staff trained each team in the following areas:

Goals & Objectives

The Implementing Teams established team goals and objectives and determined what is obtainable within the next six months (short run) or the next three years (long run).

Research

The Implementing Teams determined what has been done in the past, who did it, where was it done, and why was it done.

- Established long-term goals and objectives with a time line
- Established a cooperative strategy with existing community stakeholders and included them in the process with representation.
- Determine who could contribute individually within each group
 - Was there an individual who liked to write grants?
 - Was there an individual with CAD/CAM experience who liked to design plans?
- Used graduates of Leadership Carlsbad program and NMSU-Carlsbad personal leadership development programs conducted by Dr. Ray Sandoval
- Broke into subgroups, when necessary

Process

- Developed the proposal to meet the community consensus goal by:
 - Defining the problem
 - Researched and identified the resources
 - Developed possible options
 - Recommended solutions

Communication

The teams were responsible for deciding how to communicate among the group and how the college's RCCI staff would support their efforts. Communications were arranged by the team secretary with support from the RCCI staff who would call and remind team members about meetings. RCCI staff developed an internal internet communication system developed by Sandia Laboratory where chat rooms, common materials and minutes could be shared.

Leadership of the Team

Team Leader

Responsibilities include:

- Work with the administrative RCCI support staff at NMSU-Carlsbad whose responsibility is to provide coaching and staff support to the implementing teams.
- Serve as the leader working with a core group of volunteers on the implementing team who will organize and establish the logistics for the implementation of the consensus goals developed by Community Vision 2000 community vote of the ideas.
- Attend the Core Team meetings to represent the work of the implementing team
- Other duties as defined by the majority vote of the implementing team and in consultation with the RCCI support staff at NMSU-Carlsbad

Co-Team Leader

Responsibilities include:

- Work with the administrative RCCI support staff at NMSU-Carlsbad whose responsibility is to provide coaching and staff support to the implementing teams.
- Serve as the leader if the team leader was unavailable by working with a core group of volunteers on the implementing team who will organize and establish the logistics for the implementation of the consensus goals developed by Community Vision 2000 community vote of the ideas.
- Attend the Core Team meetings to represent the work of the implementing team
- Other duties as defined by the majority vote of the implementing team and in consultation with the RCCI support staff at NMSU-Carlsbad

Secretary

Responsibilities include:

- Work with the administrative RCCI support staff at NMSU-Carlsbad whose responsibility is to provide coaching and staff support to the implementing teams.
- Keep minutes of all implementing team meetings and maintaining the volunteer team list
- Attend the Core Team meetings to represent the work of the implementing team
- Other duties as defined by the majority vote of the implementing team and in consultation with the RCCI support staff at NMSU-Carlsbad

Analysis

The implementing teams started meeting and developed their goals, process, and communication methods with each other and the community at large. Since that date, the college led the effort to initiate a new 501(c)(3) community development organization called Community Vision. The purpose of this non-profit is to migrate the Carlsbad RCCI into a citizens group that continues the visioning process. A number of the teams disbanded but several teams were incorporated into the City of Carlsbad's advisory committees who are responsible on reporting to the Mayor.

Update of the College and Community Results

The following results are direct outcomes that benefited the community from the college's participation in RCCI and have been challenges for the college from its participation in RCCI:

- ◆ College's Educational Efforts:
 - Bachelors in Education in partnership with New Mexico State University
 - MBA in partnership with Eastern New Mexico University
 - Bachelors & Masters in Social Work in partnership with New Mexico Highlands University
 - Masters in Engineering Management in partnership with New Mexico Mining & Technology
 - Bachelors in Human & Community Services, web based, in partnership with New Mexico State University
 - Bachelors in Nursing in partnership with New Mexico State University
 - And a promise of a Masters in Environmental Engineering in partnership with New Mexico State University
 - Investment in ITV infrastructure to broaden distance learning efforts
- ◆ Community Development Efforts
 - Sports Complex & Skate Park, completed September 2003
 - Beautification, ongoing
 - Health Directory, completed Spring 2001
 - Citizen advisory teams for the mayor & City of Carlsbad staff, ongoing
- ◆ Challenges:
 - No success in selling the concept to the community's political leadership that regionalization is the best strategy for survival and growth.
 - Limited success in selling the concept that the community colleges are truly a partner in economic development – their value tends to be an afterthought
 - Developing a sustainability plan from the outset is vital insuring that the work of volunteers over this period continued to evolve in the future

Next Moves for the College

The funding formula in New Mexico continues to be a major constraint for the college. Several years ago, the college received a Title V grant of \$500,000 from U.S. Department of Education which, in the view of the executive staff, has done more than RCCI for the college's image and interest due to a combination of technology in the classroom and several outreach centers. The outreach centers were developed with the concept that their success will drive changes in the perception of Carlsbad's leadership regarding the role that the college can play in the economic life of the area. Also, the college has a more favorable community image in part because of the interaction of the new leadership of the school and key community leaders such as the newspaper publisher and the executive director of the Chamber of Commerce. Very recently, the college has received a FIPSE grant which has a leadership training component, developed a multi-media academy, been involved in the Permian Basin Consortium of colleges and universities and has broaden its community services division under well-directed leadership. In reality, the college continues to struggle with the view of how a community should develop. They are utilizing a variety of approaches to start a change in the thinking about the community's future.