



The Next 25 Years: The Future of Rural & Small Communities in Canada

Results from October 2006 Think tank in Lanark County, Ontario

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Rural Matters – Edmonton July 2008


National Rural
Research Network





A Think tank on the Future of Rural Canada

- What will Canada look like in 25 years?
 - A Think tank - What a great idea!
 - Instead of looking to the past (studies lose relevance quickly in a rapidly changing world), let's look to the future
 - Can help inform research, policy, programming & governance
 - How do we do it?
 - Started out trying to define four possible future scenarios (or stories)



What will Canada look like in 25 years?

Possible factors to consider

- Political
- Economic
- Environment
- Social
- Health/Cultural/Demographic
- Technological
- Media
- Transportation



Many different rurals – How do you break it down?

- Type of resource?
Agricultural, forestry, mining, manufacturing, amenity, etc.
- Size of population?
 - Less than 1000 (StatsCanada), less than 10,000, anything not a large metro centre
- Proximity to urban?
 - Adjacent, a bit of a drive, a long drive/flight



Many Rural Canadas

- A) **Metro Adjacent** Rural/Small Community or **Strong MIZ (within 2 hours)**
- B) Rural/Small Community or **Moderate or Weak MIZ (2 to 8 hours)**
- C) **Northern or Remote** Rural/Small Community or **no MIZ (8+ hours)**

MIZ = Metropolitan Influenced Zone



Format

- 120+ participants: across Canada; urban & rural; NGOs, researchers, governments, citizens
- Full Day – Setting the context
 - Ray Bollman, Statistics Canada
 - Bill Reimer, Concordia University
 - Young People (research, policy, practice)
- Workshop Groups (The Fuller Report available at www.crrf.ca)
- Workshop Survey - 56 individual survey forms completed



The Results

The Fuller Report - Generalizations

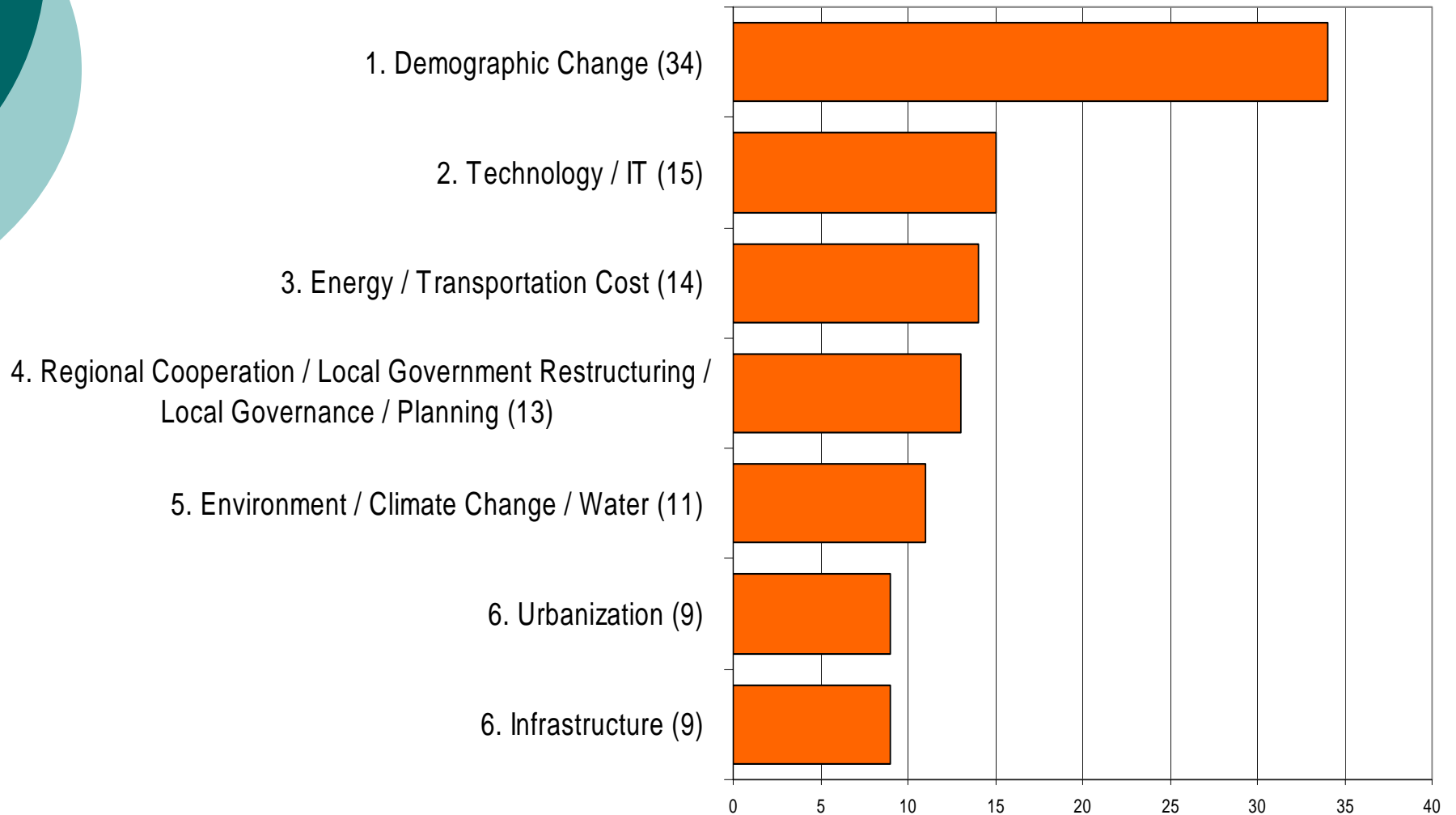
1. Positive
2. Responsible (not deferential)
3. Good ideas (not like sessions of the past where it was 'stay the course')



3 Defining Changes

- Demographic changes
 - Rural youth leaving, Population gains (urban adjacent – elderly, First Nation)
- Governance
 - Declining infrastructure, more collaboration required (partnerships, shared service agreements), under-resourced municipalities, loss of farm/rural voice
- Rich & poor
- Other
 - Climate change, energy costs & shortages, transportation issues, quality of life threatened, skilled & professional labour missing

3 defining changes in the next 25 years?

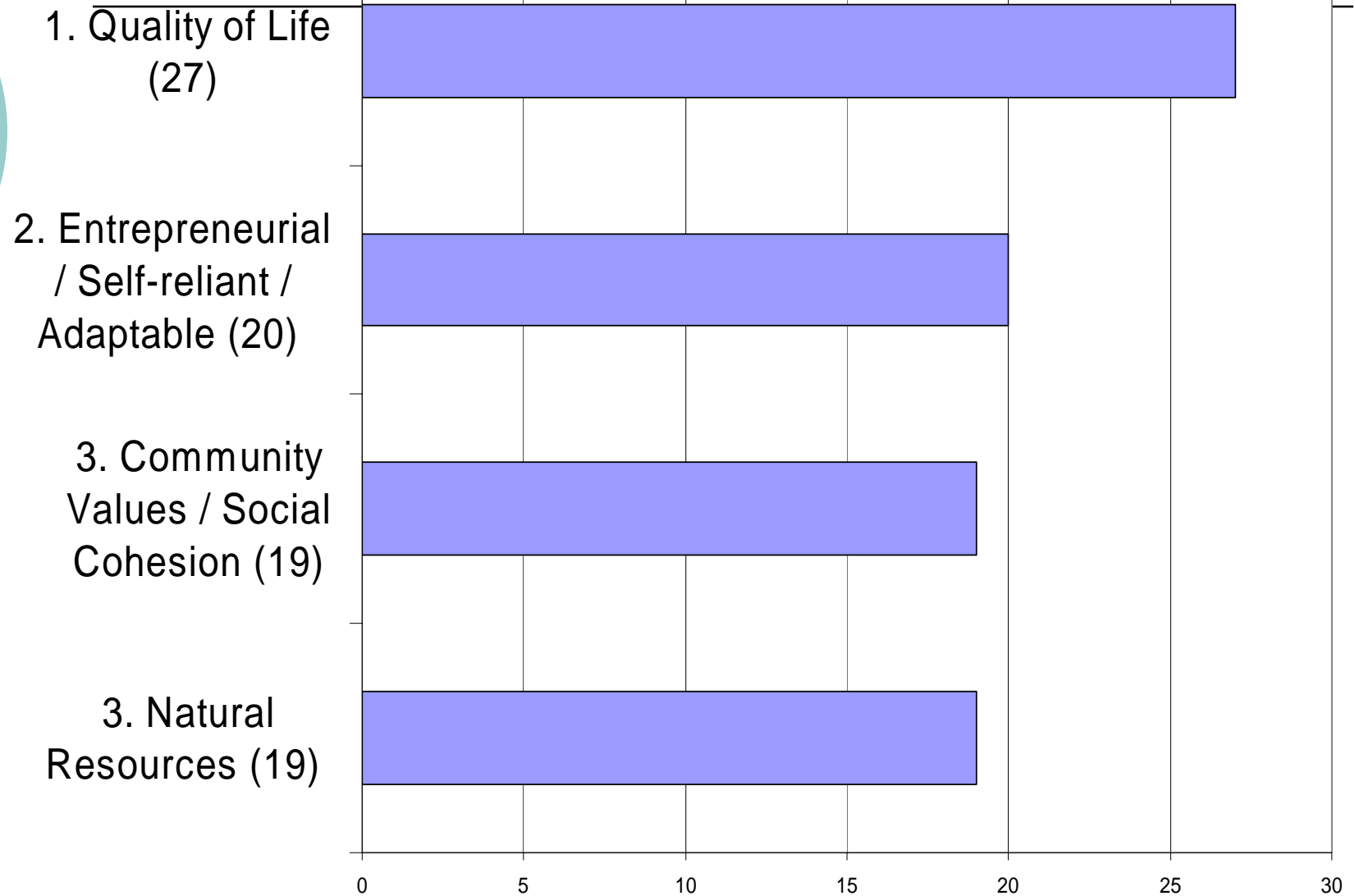




3 Defining Rural Advantages

- High quality of life
 - Community focus
 - Self reliance
 - “Sense of community”/empowerment
 - Work ethic
- Natural resource base of Canada
 - Untapped strength
 - Enormous stock of space, wildlife, water resources, wilderness
 - Value in recreation, ecotourism, natural habitat renewal, biodiversity, resource extraction

3 advantages or strengths





3 Key Elements to the Future

- Integrated sustainability
 - Integrate strengths into a sustainable future
 - Identify key interdependencies (vision will not be achieved by a single sector or rural acting alone)
- Economic diversity
 - Stimulating entrepreneurial cultures, capacity & courage to adapt, “creative class”, resourcing local gov’ts properly
- ‘Wild’ ideas
 - Car less society, take advantage of climate change, do away with rural urban distinctions

3 key elements to the future

1. Economic Diversification / Sustainable Development (17)

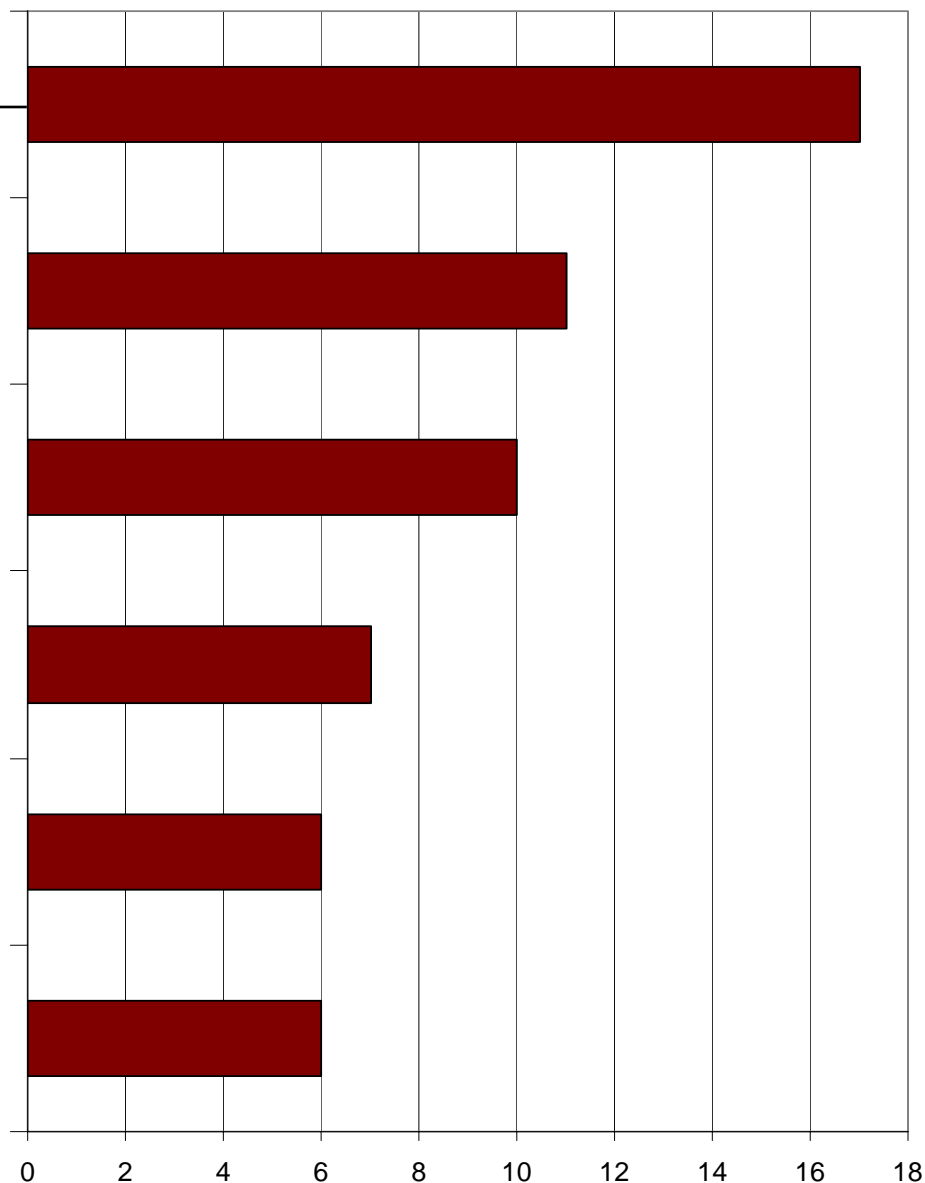
2. Community Development / Planning (11)

3. Social Cohesion / Collaboration (10)

4. Youth Engagement / Retention (7)

5. Rural-Urban Collaboration (6)

5. Local Government Capacity / Devolution (6)





Directions for Research - Topics

- Broadband usage & benefits
- Youth retention
- Entrepreneurship
- Impacts of climate change
- Labour market/economic studies that showcase revitalization



Directions for Research - Practices

- Action-oriented research
- Research that deals with conflicts and resolution
- Understanding & utilizing what is special about the community
- Benchmarking/ Tracking/ Measuring

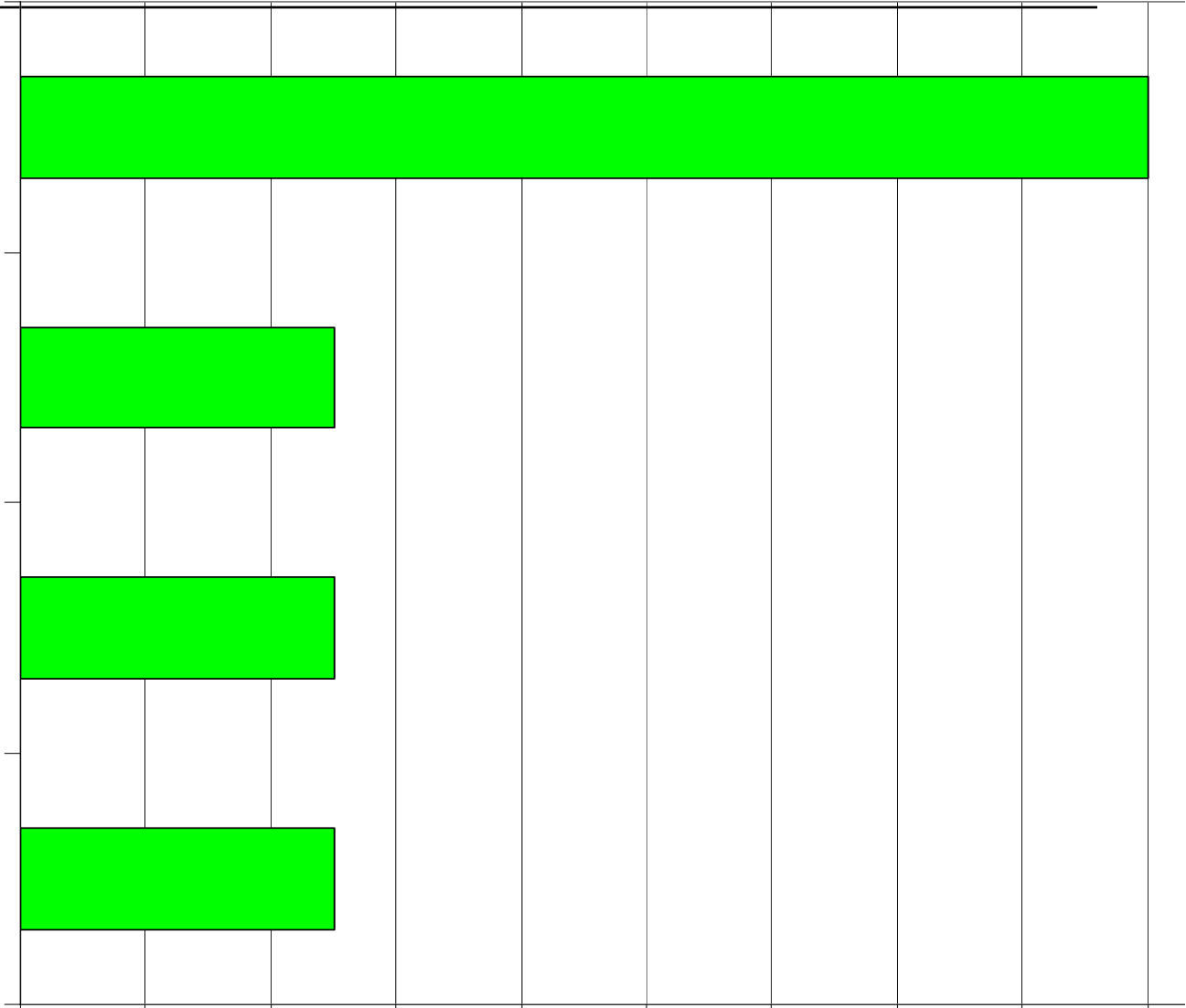
Directions for Research

1. Applied
Research / Best
Practices / Tools
(18)

2. Environment
(5)

2. Demographics
(5)

2. Monitoring &
Evaluation /
Indicators (5)





Directions for Policy

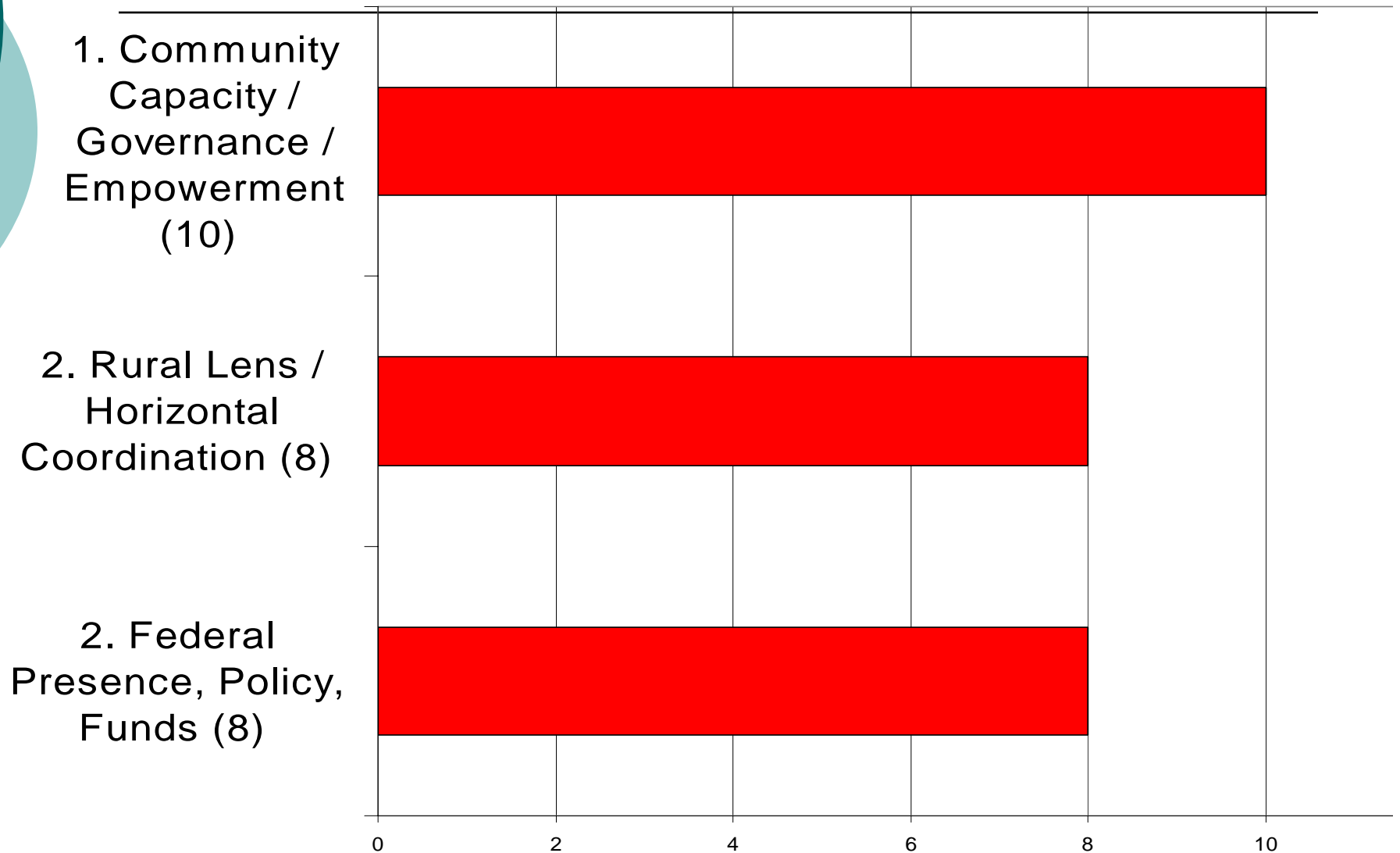
- Applying the Rural Lens/Continue & expand horizontal dialogue (feds, provinces, etc.)
- More attention to 'impacts' of policy
- Seek & use place-based evidence of what is good for rural development
- Commit to stable & long-term funding



Directions for Programming

- Local economic development – what works? (evidence & guidance)
- More on Community Capacity Building (CCB)
- Bottom up & learn from Community Futures program
- Look at transportation in rural Canada

Directions for Policy & Programming





Directions for Community Practice & Governance


- Growing interest in 'regional' scales of governance
- Call for 'strategic' capacity enhancement



Other Ideas

- Succession planning
- Watersheds as basis for planning?
- How to collaborate better?
- New governance models
- Service hubs (single counter ideas)
- More community ownership
- Co-operation above consultation
(meaningfully engage locals to accomplish endogenous development)

Directions for Practice & Governance



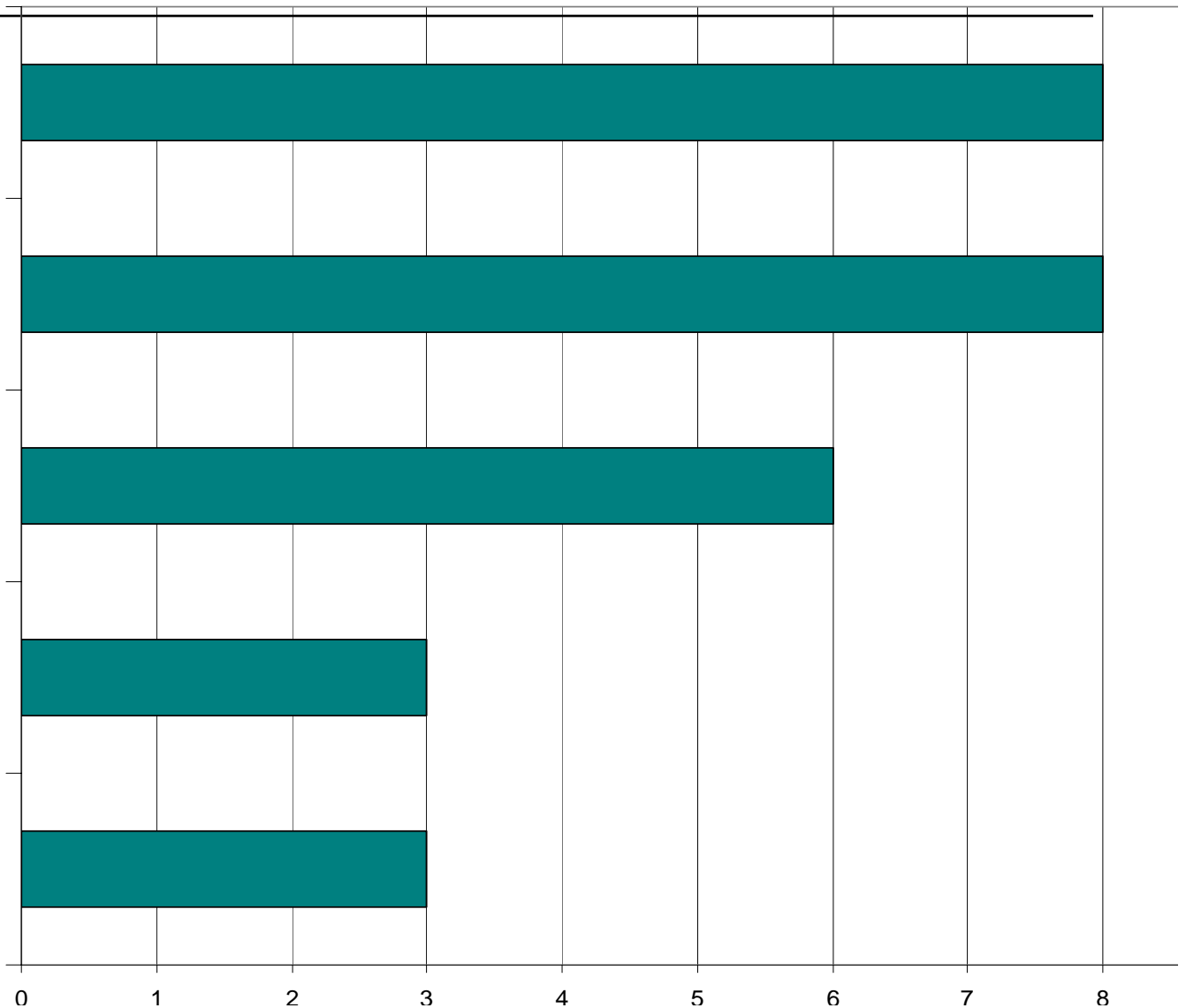
1. Collaboration
(8)

1. Devolution (8)

2. Engagement
(6)

3. Urban-Rural
Collaboration (3)

3. Attitude (3)





Thank You!

Comments?

Questions?

Ideas?

Copy of Report: www.crrf.ca

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