



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

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Results from October 2006 Think tank in Lanark County, Ontario

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**National Rural**  
Research Network






# A Think tank on the Future of Rural Canada

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- 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

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



## Many different rurals – How do you break it down?

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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](http://www.crrf.ca))
- Workshop Survey - 56 individual survey forms completed



# The Results

## The Fuller Report - Generalizations

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



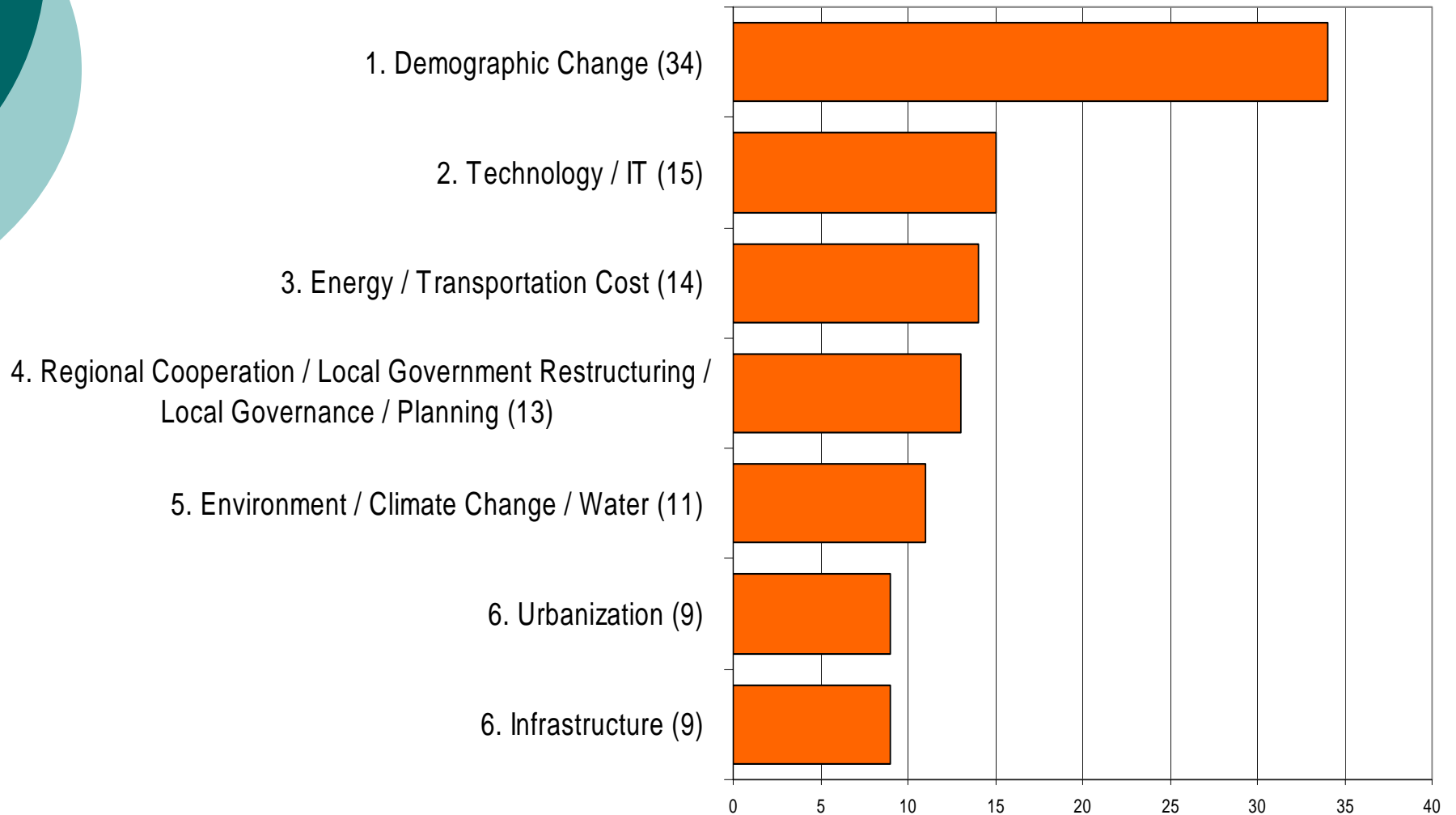
## 3 Defining Changes

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- 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?

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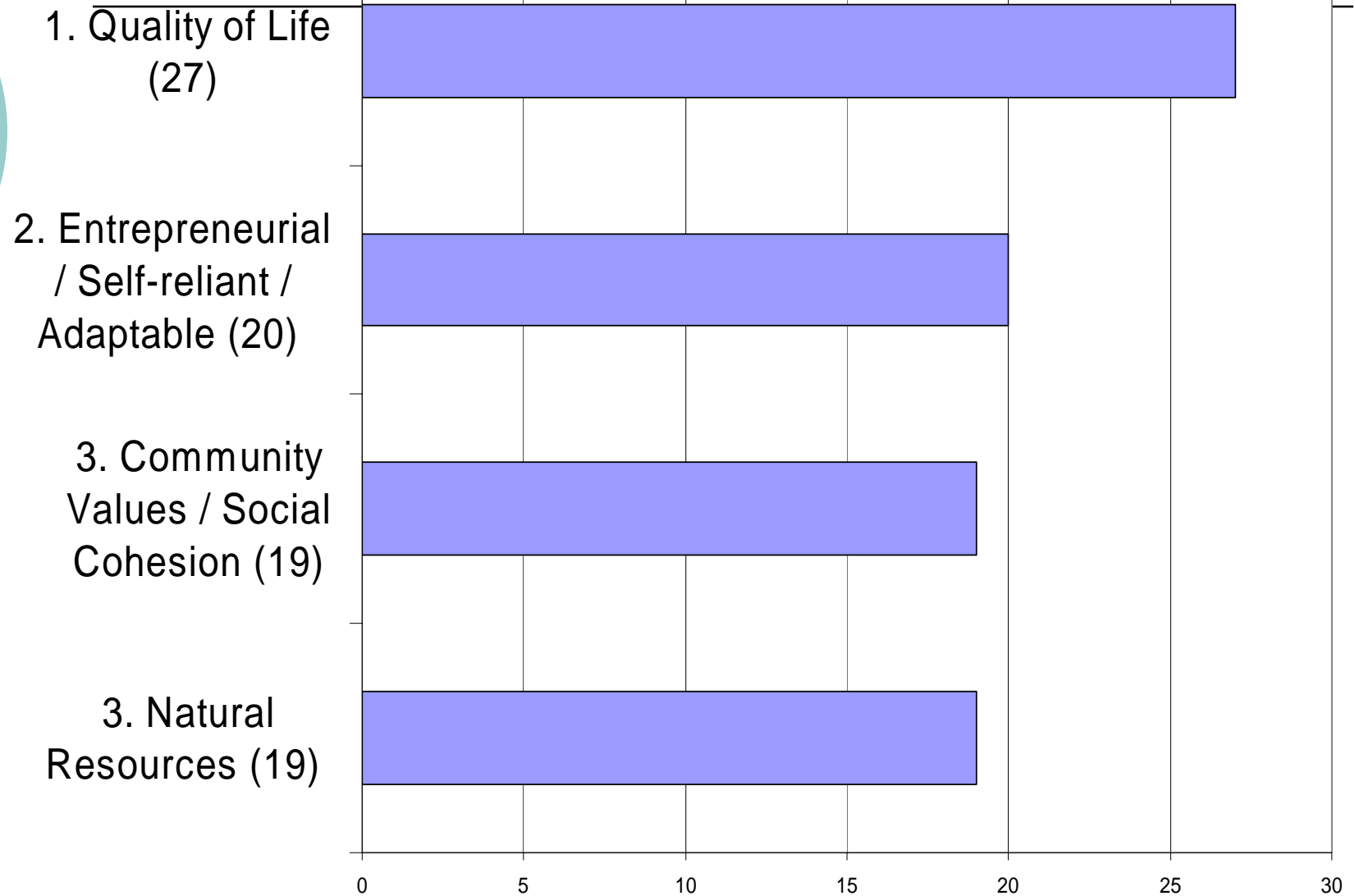


## 3 Defining Rural Advantages

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- 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

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- 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)

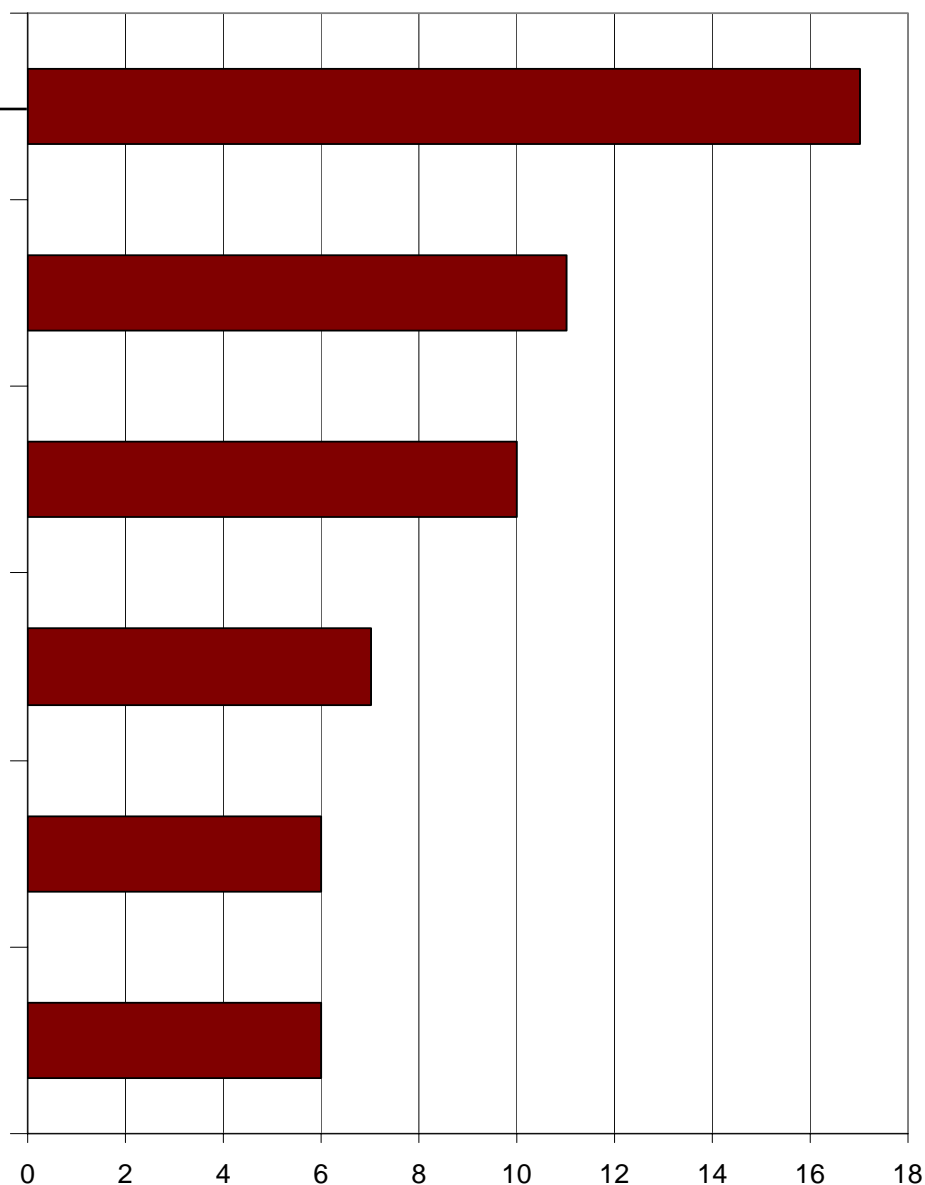
2. Community Development / Planning (11)

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

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



# Directions for Research - Practices

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

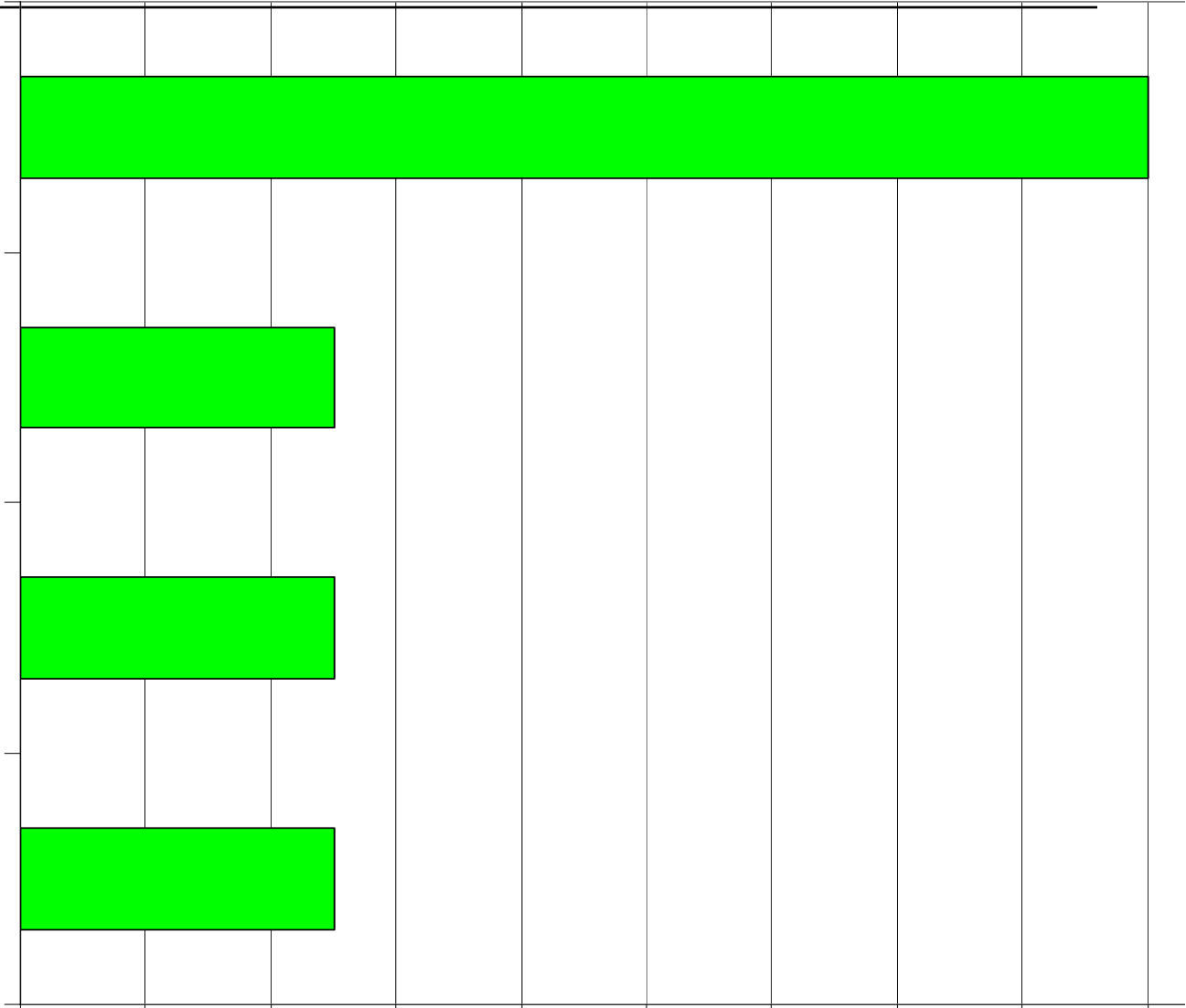
# Directions for Research

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

2. Environment  
(5)

2. Demographics  
(5)

2. Monitoring &  
Evaluation /  
Indicators (5)





## Directions for Policy

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- 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

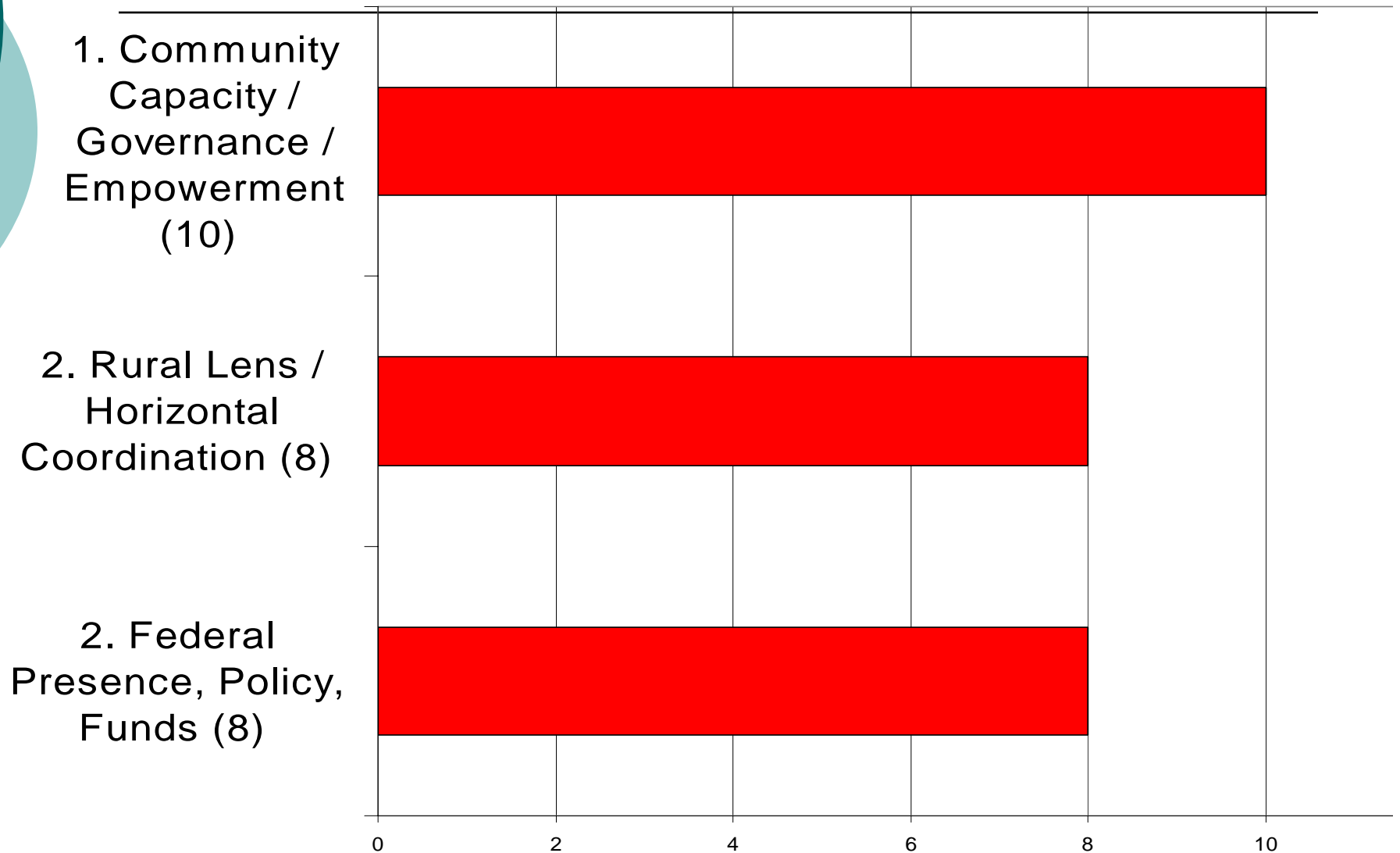


# Directions for Programming

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- 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

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




## Other Ideas

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- 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



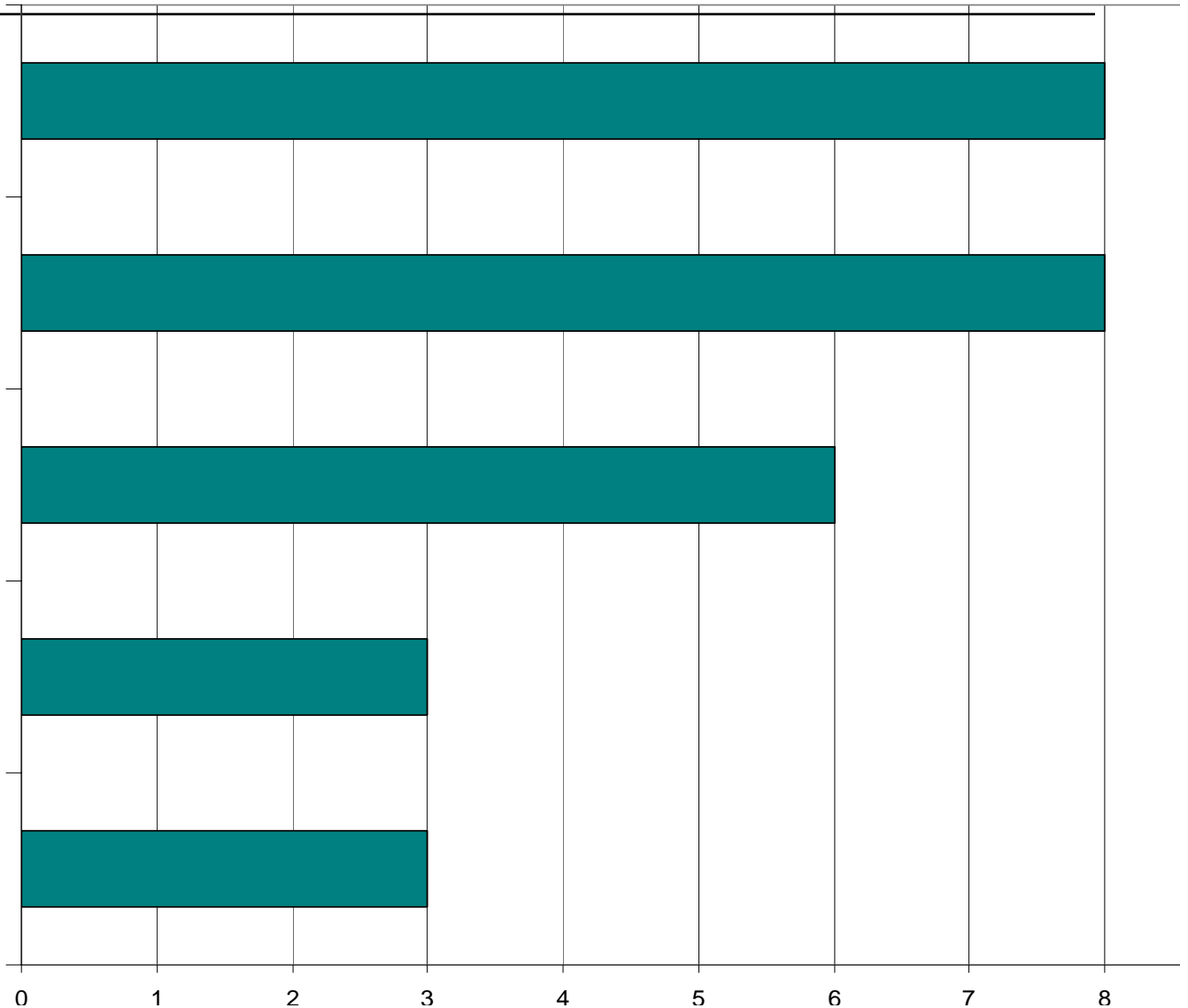
1. Collaboration  
(8)

1. Devolution (8)

2. Engagement  
(6)

3. Urban-Rural  
Collaboration (3)

3. Attitude (3)





# *Thank You!*

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Comments?

Questions?

Ideas?

Copy of Report: [www.crrf.ca](http://www.crrf.ca)

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