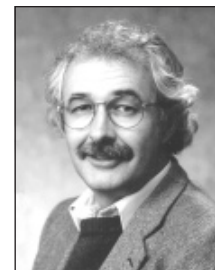


# HIGH INTENTIONS & STANDARDS TO MATCH

by Mike Lewis



We have talked a lot about “best practice” in these pages over the years. We have argued that public policy should start building on what works. And, we have been able to publish a wide variety of examples of CED best practice at work.

But there isn’t enough of it. CED practitioners seldom reflect long enough on what they do to get a real handle on their principles and practice - the kind of detailed understanding that helps others fully understand what it takes to create successful outcomes.

Readers of this issue are in for a special treat. Coastal Enterprises, Inc. (CEI) is a community development corporation that has been rebuilding rural economies in the state of Maine for over 20 years. Turn to page 13 for a detailed account of how CEI has endeavoured to practice sustainable development, that is, to advance economic, institutional, and environmental health and longevity.

It is evident from this report that CEI is an organization that reflects on its practice rigorously and takes the time to communicate what it is learning. I have a challenge to put to you. Read the CEI case study and assess CEI in terms of the following characteristics of most effective CED practice:

- a multi-functional, comprehensive strategy or development system, in contrast to any individual economic development project or other isolated attempts at community betterment.
- an integration or merging of economic and social goals to make a more powerful impact for community revitalization.
- a set of activities that empower the broad range of community residents for the governance both of their development organizations and their community as a whole.
- a process guided by strategic planning and analysis, in contrast to opportunistic and unsystematic tactics.
- a businesslike financial management approach that builds ownership of assets and a wide range of financial partners and supporters.
- an organizational format that is nonprofit, independent, and non-governmental, even though for-profit or governmental entities are linked to its work.

To my mind, Coastal Enterprises, Inc. gets a check for every one.

One of the features I like most is how CEI works with business and industry in key economic sectors. It is this kind of approach that creates the web of relationships and intelligence required for customized training - an intriguing strategy of labour market integration discussed by Sherri Torjman (p. 2). For more on this subject, check out the upcoming “Partners for Prosperity”

conference; Sherri is one of several prominent CED professionals on the speakers list. (See ad this page.)

When it comes to rigorous tracking of CED strategies, Mark Cabaj has some recommendations with regard to microenterprise program evaluation (p. 10). Mark is one of our field’s most stringent critics of well-intentioned mediocrity. Another is Greg MacLeod, who offers a warning in this issue about “Hotdog Stand Economics” (p. 24).

If you’re bowled over by the sheer scale of CEI’s operations, read Alisa Sivak’s report on the Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Centre (p. 8). That agency has discovered how to add an economic curl to its cultural interpretation services for new Canadians. You don’t have to be big to make a difference; imagination and flexibility are critical, though.

“Decrease the leakage and increase the linkage” is one of my colloquial definitions of CED. This issue of *Making Waves* testifies to the importance of both. ∞

MIKE LEWIS is the editor of *Making Waves* and the executive director of the Centre for Community Enterprise.

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