The Regional Cuisines Model as a Basis for Regional Collaboration

Shelley Bush Rowe
Letitia “Tish” Johnson
Geographical indications (labels of origin)

- “...where a given quality, reputation or other characteristic of the good is essentially attributable to its geographical origin.”
- Similar to a trademark
- Connect people, production and place in the context of rural development
A convergence of trends

- “New” emphasis on entrepreneurship in economic development
- Increased public concern about food-related health issues
- Food safety concerns
- Increased consumer awareness about the impacts of their food choices
- “Buy Local” movement
Working towards a more resilient rural economy by....

- Expanding markets for regionally produced, grown, and crafted products
- Increasing tourism
- Creating a region-wide, cross-sector network
- Provide coaching, programs and tools to increase capacity
Missouri’s regional wine clusters

- Old Trails Region
- Manitou-Osage Bluffs
- Missouri Rhine Valley
- Mississippi River Hills
Mississippi River Hills Association

- Pilot for Regional Cuisines Project
- First project: agritourism map of six-county region
- MRHA incorp. 2007
- Standards of quality for use of name & label
MRHA activities

- Educating consumers about the value of local products: farm dinners, bus tours, exhibits
- Start-up and marketing assistance
- Working with smaller groups
- Moving more towards marketing
Smithsonian Folklife Festival
Missouri Rhine Valley Association

Adaptation of the original pilot
Steering committee formed &
meetings held
Passport Event
Meet the
Missouri Rhine
Valley Fare
Mission

The Missouri Rhine Valley Association works to market, preserve and enhance heritage, culture and tourism through agricultural products, foods, wines, arts, crafts and historic sites.
Welcome to the Missouri Rhine Valley

What and where is the Missouri Rhine Valley? It's at the heart of Missouri Wine Country, the area along the Missouri River between St. Charles and Hermann. It includes the two most historic wine towns in the state - Augusta and Hermann - and the first American Viticultural Area (AVA) in the entire country. Yes, back in 1980, tiny Augusta beat out Napa Valley for the title of the first AVA in the United States.

The area is blessed with dozens of wineries, beautiful vineyards, scenic vistas, charming towns, and friendly people. The early German settlers chose this valley along the Missouri River because it reminded them of the Rhine River valley in Germany. That German heritage is still strong today and is reflected in many festivals and events throughout the area.

If you're a local, chances are you haven't played “found an awhile and don't realize how much there is to do and see right here in your own backyard. If you're a visitor, welcome, and we hope you enjoy discovering the many wonders of the Missouri Rhine Valley.

http://MissouriRhineValley.com
Lessons learned

- No matter how intellectually rigorous your model, how great your idea, communities are organic, dynamic entities and they will tailor the model to meet their own needs.
- There is value in a public conversation that creates and refines a local identity that becomes a brand.
- Having paid staff is a mixed blessing.
- It’s not too shabby a gig to work with local food, wine, art and culture.
Pilot region (MRHA) should have used a more thoughtful process to actually define the region, not just focus on the ecological region. Corrected in additional regions.
Key strategies

- A communications plan is critical when dealing with a large area.
- Understanding the “what’s in it for me” motivation.
- Creative ideas emerge when we cross boundaries, break up the usual groups, and mix suits and overalls together.
- Early and concrete success = enthusiasm.
Secondary data indicators include sales tax revenues in selected sectors, visitor records from tourism sites, and sector surveys.

Primary data collection includes short monthly email survey to gather contacts and participation data.

Tracking database for use by project coordinator to capture anecdotal information.

Working on adapting the Community Capitals framework for assessing impact.
Conclusion

- Geographical indications is a viable model for rural development IF it is consistent with local interests, such as when it is driven by a desire to protect a local food/wine asset.
What the future holds

- Associations moving towards marketing
- Food entrepreneurship
- Show Me Healthy Rural Stores
  - Based on Healthy Corner Store project in St. Louis
- Food Expo
- Expanding further into community arts
Live. And Learn.