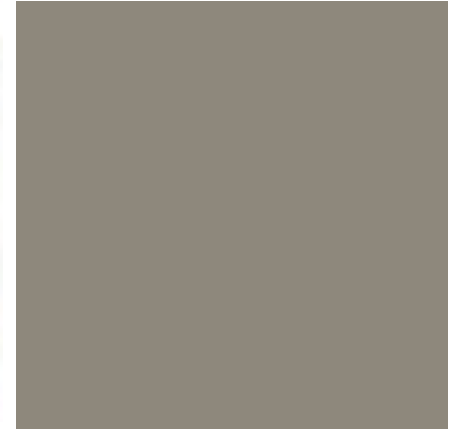




# Tourism First Impressions

October 29, 2015



2015 National Extension Tourism Conference  
Galveston, TX



# Presenters



Doug Arbogast

West Virginia University  
Extension Service

Cynthia Messer

University of Minnesota  
Tourism Center

Andy Northrop

Michigan State University  
Extension Service

Lisa Chase

University of Vermont  
Extension Service



# Purpose



The First Impressions Program aims to help communities learn about **existing strengths and weaknesses** as seen through the eyes of the first-time visitor.

The results of the First Impressions Program can form the basis for future development.

# + Program Goals & Objectives

Awareness → Dialogue → Community Action



To inform and guide public action by making the community aware of its assets and challenges

*Slide content from presentation by Laura Brown and Daniel Eades  
“An Introduction to the First Impressions Program” May 27, 2015.*



# The Secret Shopper Concept

**The New York Times**

**Restaurants Search**

**Restaurant Search Results**  
1-10 of 2515

**Sort Results** Recently Reviewed

**Refine Results**  
Neighborhoods ▶  
Price ▶  
NYT Rating ▶  
Cuisine ▶  
Meal ▶

☒ Only Critics' Picks

**Critics' Picks**  
**Fung Tu** ☺ ★★★ \$\$\$  
American, Chinese  
A two-year veteran of Per Se, Jonathan Wu's cooking relies heavily on nuance, and as Fung Tu has matured the accents have been filled in.  
22 Orchard Street  
212-219-8785  
**HanYang BunSik** ☺ \$  
Korean  
HanYang BunSik's dishes fall under the Korean category of bunsik, or snacks, including blood sausage embedded with sticky rice, kabocha porridge and a skewered hot dog with an airy crust of panko, like a corn dog from the fairy realm.  
150-51 Northern Boulevard  
718-461-8924  
[View All 520 Critics' Picks »](#)

**Map of Results** [Expand map](#)  
  
New York  
Manhattan  
Brooklyn  
Queens  
Valley Str

**Recently Reviewed**  
**Kao Soy** ☺ ★★  
Kao Soy sells some of the dishes you know from your local Thai spot, but its mission is to turn New Yorkers on to what Sirichai Sreparplam, one of the two chefs, calls "the real food from the North." The northern Thai dishes are scattered around the menu. Most obvious is the excellent kao soy, made in the style of Ms. Supachana's father back in Chiang Mai.  
[Complete Review »](#)  
**Semilla** ☺ ★★★  
Semilla's chef, José Ramírez-Ruiz, and pastry chef, Pam Yung, stack their tasting menus with dishes that weren't concocted to please the marketplace. Diners browse extensively upon stems, tubers, rhizomes, seeds and other plant parts, yet this isn't a vegetarian restaurant.  
[Complete Review »](#)

**All Results**





# The First Impressions Model

- Communities matched, based on location, size, economy, etc.
- Volunteer teams are created
- Each community conducts a “secret shopper” visit
- Reports exchanged

*Slide content from presentation by Laura Brown and Daniel Eades  
“An Introduction to the First Impressions Program” May 27, 2015.*



# FI Adaptations - Modifications



## Geographies

County Fairs

Urban Neighborhoods

Main Streets

Business Corridors

Tourism

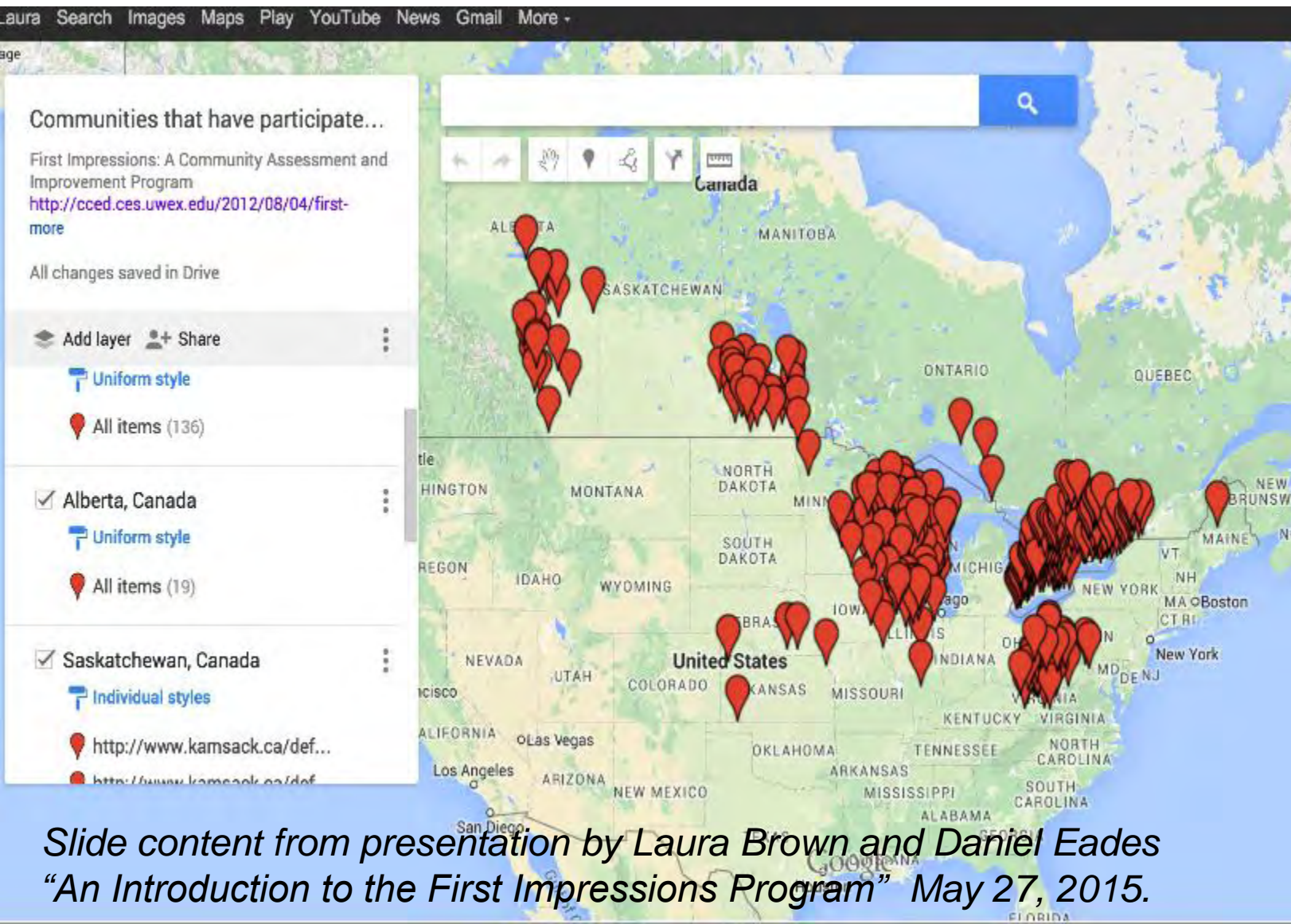
## Audiences

Youth Impressions

Emerging leaders



# + Participating communities



Online at  
<https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=zzhHqWZPOgBk.kXLLKLGpj2w>  
Email  
[laura.brown@uconn.edu](mailto:laura.brown@uconn.edu) to update your communities to the map

*Slide content from presentation by Laura Brown and Daniel Eades  
“An Introduction to the First Impressions Program” May 27, 2015.*



# + What is First Impressions



*Video produced by the  
Ontario Canada  
Ministry of Food and  
Agriculture Accessed  
at the University of  
Wisconsin Center for  
Community &  
Economic  
Development*

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B8nFWNv\\_HWsPWGdleVJIWXIFeXc/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B8nFWNv_HWsPWGdleVJIWXIFeXc/view)

*Slide content from presentation by Laura Brown and Daniel Eades  
“An Introduction to the First Impressions Program” May 27, 2015.*

# + Tourism First Impressions

## ■ Wisconsin

- State parks (1995)
- Heritage tourism (1995)
- Resort (1997)



## ■ West Virginia

- Destination
- Facility

## ■ Minnesota

## ■ Ohio State

- Tourism byways



# Tourism First Impressions in West Virginia

Doug Arbogast

Rural Tourism Specialist

West Virginia University Extension Service





# Who is involved...Tourism Specialist

- Organize assessment
- Communicate with destination leadership
- Assemble team(s)
- Plan and coordinate visit
- Orient assessment team(s)
- Collect manuals
- Develop report
- Present report
- Follow-up



# Who is involved...Destination Leader

- Provide funding or identify funding options
- Help to plan and coordinate visit
- Help to orient assessment team(s)
- Disseminate report
- Take action!





# Who is involved...Assessors

- Get familiar with the questions / manual
- Orientation and trip logistics
- Review websites for visitor information
- Detailed notes and photos
- Contribute to report and presentations
- Have fun!



# Manual - Print vs. Qualtrics

## Visitor Demographics

1. Name:
2. Destination:
3. Where do you live?
4. What is your gender?  
☐ Male  
☐ Female
5. What is your age?  
☐ 18-32      ☐ 33-48  
☐ 49-67      ☐ 68+
6. In which season are you visiting?  
☐ Spring  
☐ Summer  
☐ Fall  
☐ Winter
7. How often do you travel for leisure?  
☐ 1-5 trips/yr.    ☐ 6-10 trips/yr.    ☐ 11-15 trips/yr.    ☐ 16-20 trips/yr.    ☐ 21+trips/yr.
8. How many miles per trip do you typically travel on leisure?  
☐ 0-49      ☐ 201-300      ☐ 501-800  
☐ 50-100      ☐ 301-400      ☐ 801-1000  
☐ 101-200      ☐ 401-500      ☐ 1000+
9. Which type of trips do you take most often?  
☐ Day      ☐ Overnight
10. When you stay overnight, typically, how many nights do you spend at a single destination?



## Visitor Demographics

Name:

Destination:

Where do you live?

What is your gender?

- ☐ Male  
☐ Female

What is your age?

- ☐ 18-32  
☐ 33-48

# Pre-visit

## Assess

- Online presence
- Trip planning materials
- Social Media
- Mobile device and tablet



# Post-Visit



- Did your online research prior to the trip help with the visit?
- Did the information accessed online match what you found when you arrived?
- Did you access the Internet to search for information during your visit? Please describe.
- Did you use social media during your visit?
  - If yes, which social media sites did you use?
  - Please describe.

# Quantitative results

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>Directions (GPS, web, print, map) are accurate</b>	18.2% (2)	0.0% (0)	9.1% (1)	<b>27.3% (3)</b>	<b>27.3% (3)</b>	18.2% (2)
<b>Welcome signs are readable</b>	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	25.0% (3)	8.3% (1)	<b>33.3% (4)</b>	<b>33.3% (4)</b>
<b>There is a gateway point to enter/leave the facility (piece of art, mural, sign, etc.)</b>	0.0% (0)	9.1% (1)	0.0% (0)	27.3% (3)	18.2% (2)	<b>45.5% (5)</b>
<b>Directional signs are properly located to get you to points of interest</b>	0.0% (0)	16.7% (2)	16.7% (2)	25.0% (3)	<b>41.7% (5)</b>	0.0% (0)
<b>Hospitality towards visitors was evident upon arrival</b>	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	18.2% (2)	9.1% (1)	<b>36.4% (4)</b>	<b>36.4% (4)</b>
<b>Check-in was handled well</b>	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	<b>33.3% (3)</b>	22.2% (2)	22.2% (2)	22.2% (2)
<b>I would feel compelled to stop if I were randomly passing by</b>	16.7% (2)	<b>33.3% (4)</b>	25.0% (3)	8.3% (1)	16.7% (2)	0.0% (0)



# Qualitative results

Positives	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Brochure provides good information and has a nice look/feel</li><li>• Phone representative was friendly and informative. World-class natural resources (forests and National River)</li><li>• An outdoor recreation mecca</li><li>• Fall is beautiful!</li><li>• National River and Bridge are tremendous assets.</li><li>• Well maintained roads</li><li>• Friendly people</li><li>• Locals seem to be happily involved in and supportive of tourism</li><li>• Resorts offer great trips and excellent customer service</li><li>• A significant number of day trippers</li><li>• Downtown has potential</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Not enough quality information on website to see what you are all about.</li><li>• Stark contrast between the strip mall development on bypass and the historic downtown with local shops and restaurants</li><li>• Minimal signage directing travelers to the historic downtown and local shops and restaurants.</li><li>• Locals and employees of service providers could be more knowledgeable of the regions tourism assets.</li><li>• Would like to see more local arts and crafts displayed and available for purchase as souvenirs.</li><li>• Lack of recycling opportunities.</li><li>• Downtown could be more walkable/bikeable.</li><li>• Seems you'd almost have to know a local to find the really cool spots.</li><li>• Some of the billboards are extremely unsightly</li></ul>


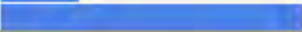
# A picture is worth 1,000 words!




*A few guests found the signage overwhelming upon entrance to the facility.*

# The Report - Qualtrics data export

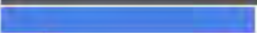



## 3. What is your gender?

Answer		Response	%
Male		4	21%
Female		15	79%
Total		19	100%




## 4. What is your age?

Answer		Response	%
18-32		0	0%
33-48		6	32%
49-67		11	58%
68+		2	11%
Total		19	100%

## 5. How often do you travel for leisure?

Answer		Response	%
1-5 trips/yr.		12	67%
6-10 trips/yr.		2	11%
11-15 trips/yr.		1	6%
16-20 trips/yr.		0	0%
21+ trips/yr.		3	17%
Total		18	100%

## 6. How many miles do you typically travel for leisure?

Answer		Response	%
0-49		6	33%
50-100		2	11%
101-200		4	22%
201-300		2	11%
301-400		2	11%

# The Report



## First Impressions Report

May 23, 2013



Can you specify any short term improvements that you were able to implement?

- Local restaurant menus in each cabin
- Have begun a recycling program
- More trail signage
- Hosted a hospitality training
- Improvements in visual impact of entrance road



# Can you specify any long term improvements that you plan to implement?

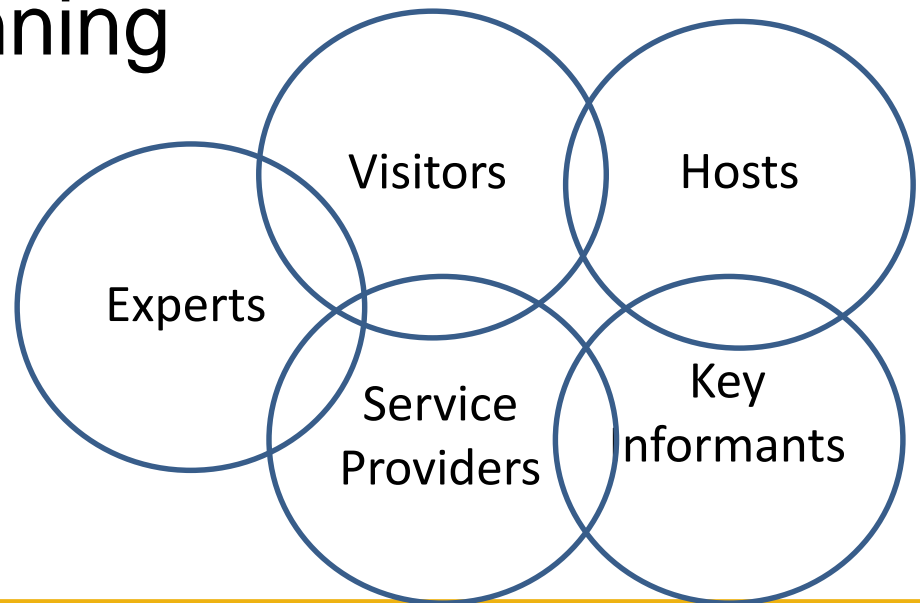
- More & diversified lodging options
- Continued website improvements. Mobile app
- Film sessions on restaurants, shopping, trails etc. for businesses to use during orientation programs
- Striving to make other areas “cool”
- Signage, signage, signage

# Additional comments

- Schedule a possible follow up or at least figure out a way to see if the changes we did make an impact.
- Great program. I believe it gave me insight as to where I needed to try and make improvements.
- Has led us to cooperative improvements projects with Community Resources and Economic Development.

# Follow-up after report presentation

- Further engagement with Leadership
- Focus Groups
- Resident and Visitor Surveys
- Tourism Action Planning
- Hospitality Training



# WVU Tourism FI Challenges

- Cost and funding
- Time to conduct thorough assessment
- The right assessors/tourists (experts, peers, multi-generational, niche markets)
- Developing a brief but thorough manual
- Proper and effective utilization of technology



# Tourism First Impressions in Minnesota

**CYNTHIA MESSER**

**EXTENSION PROFESSOR**

**UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA TOURISM CENTER**

**[cmesser@umn.edu](mailto:cmesser@umn.edu)**



- Piloted with 5 communities in a statewide project
- Integrated into the Tourism Assessment Program
  - “mystery shopper” approach vs community swap
- Modeled after WV and WI programs
- Initially print booklets, now moving to electronic too



# ELECTRONIC DATA COLLECTION

- Testing **Evernote** app for photo and information collection via mobile devices. Mapping capability. Map is given to community for continued updating.

- <https://evernote.com/>



# Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development

[Community Capacity Building](#)

[Regional Economic Development](#)

[Local and Regional Food Systems](#)

[Entrepreneurship](#)

[Balanced Use of Natural Resources](#)

[News](#)

[Training and Conferences](#)

[Center Resources](#)

[Publications](#)

[Presentations](#)

## Sharing Scholarship and Innovations in the First Impressions Program

Share     

Have you ever wondered what people think about your community? How individuals present themselves has a powerful effect on future opinions. As the old saying goes, “you never get a second chance to make a first impression.” For first-time visitors, the way a community presents itself is of equal importance. The look and feel of the community experienced by a visitor will most likely influence how long they stay, if they will return, and whether or not they will speak about the community positively or negatively.

The West Virginia University (WVU) Extension Service views the Community First Impressions Program as an important tool in the community development process. In 2015, the Northeast Center provided funding to their team, which includes several partner institutions, to expand this programming into other states. Resources generated from this effort will be compiled here, in reverse chronological order.

## Project Team

- Doug Arbogast (West Virginia University)
- Daniel Eades (West Virginia University)
- Robin Frost (West Virginia University)
- Laura Brown (University of Connecticut)
- Lisa Chase (University of Vermont)
- Geoffrey Sewake (University of New Hampshire)
- C. Andrew Northrop (Michigan State University)
- Cynthia Messer (University of Minnesota)





# + Brattleboro trip





# + Brattleboro Visit





## First Impressions

A Program for Community Development

# Brattleboro, VT

## First Impressions Summary Report October 21, 2015



Compiled by Lisa Chase and Dana Ruppert

For more information on the First Impressions program, contact Lisa Chase and Dana Ruppert at (802) 257-7967 or [lisa.chase@uvm.edu](mailto:lisa.chase@uvm.edu) or [dana.ruppert@uvm.edu](mailto:dana.ruppert@uvm.edu).

*Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture. University of Vermont Extension, Burlington, Vermont. University of Vermont Extension, and U.S. Department of Agriculture, cooperating, offer education and employment to everyone without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or familial status.*



# Using *First Impressions* in Michigan

## MI Communities:

Live

Work

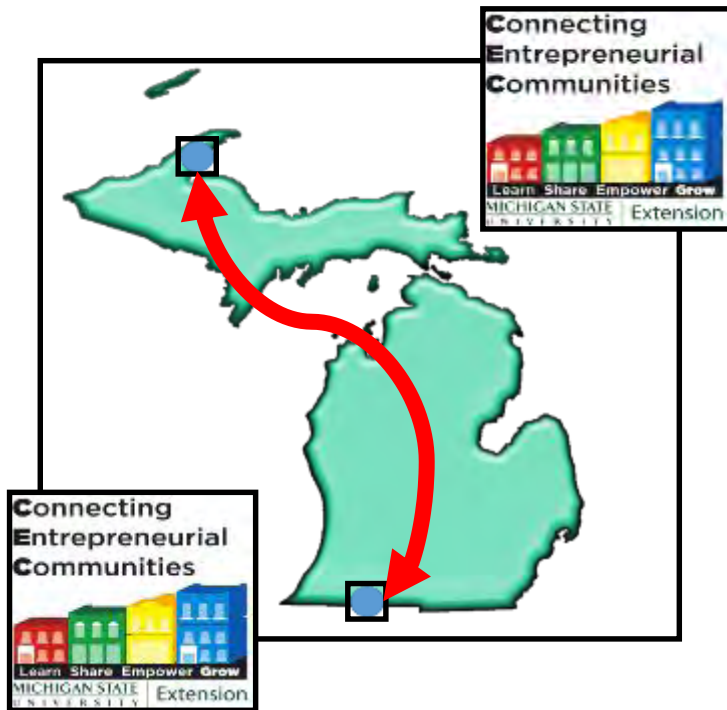
Play

**Play = Tourism, Recreation, etc.**

- Struggling with developing places to PLAY
  - Identify assets
  - Leverage assets
  - Amplify digital presence
- Seeing challenges & opportunities

# Using *First Impressions* in Michigan

-partnership with tourism and entrepreneur work teams-



- Annual event(s), Application based
- Focus on creating entrepreneurship culture
- One or two communities each year -
  - Extension Assessments
  - Community swap assessments (2017)
- Opportunity to showcase their place(s) for tourism too!
- Provide *First Impressions* as way to build in **Play**

MI Communities:



**University of New Hampshire**  
Cooperative Extension

## First Impressions Adaptations: Community Profiles & Economic Development

- UNH adaption of 1<sup>st</sup> Impressions to UNH's Community Profiles Program, a program with over 15 years of success.
- Format will allow for both expert and community swap engagements.

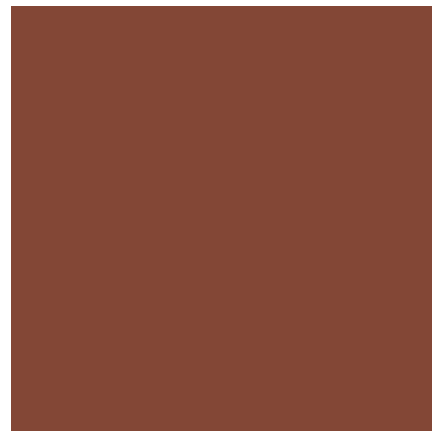
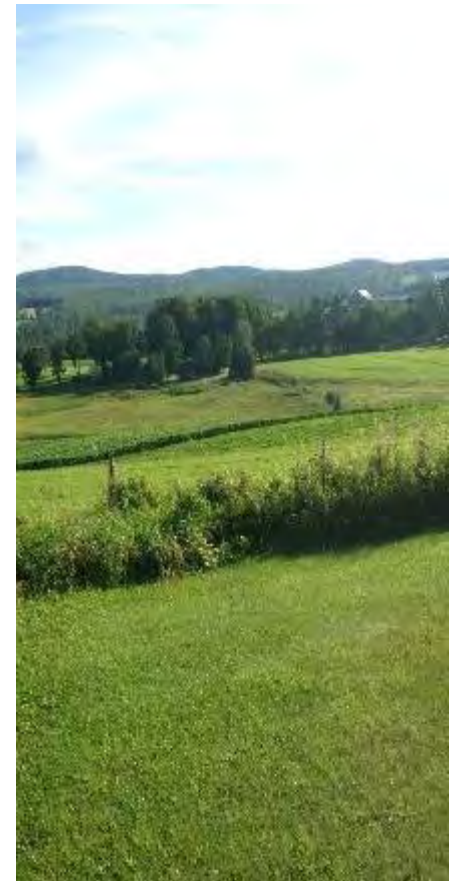
*For more information about the Community Profiles Program, see:*

*<http://extension.unh.edu/Civic-Engagement-and-Community-Decision-Making/Community-Profiles>*

*\*Images by Geoffrey Sewake.*

Casey Hancock, State Community  
Development Program Coordinator

Geoffrey Sewake, County Field Specialist -  
Community & Economic Development







## UNH First Impressions Adaptations: Community Profiles & Economic Development

- Adaptation will use **Esri Collector** & **Qualtrics Surveys**.
  - **Esri Collector** is a mobile app available on iOS and Android for ArcGIS that can be used to geotag, identify, describe, rate and photograph assets and locations on the fly both on- and offline.
  - **Qualtrics** is an online service that allows the user to develop dynamic and adaptable surveys with powerful data analysis tools.
- Adaptation will narrow scope of information collected in the field, allowing user to focus on outstanding (both + & -) assets and experiences.
- All other assets and experiences will be captured in a post-visit Qualtrics Survey.
- As with other 1<sup>st</sup> Impressions Programs, the UNH program will include a pre-visit Qualtrics Survey, pre/post workshop and report.



**University of New Hampshire**  
Cooperative Extension



# + NERCRD Grant Outcomes



- Multi-State Collaboration
- Adoption of Program by Other States
- Program Enhancement and Utilization of New Technology
- Better Understanding of Program Outcomes and How to Define and Report Them
- A Collective Effort for Program Evaluation, Publication, and Dissemination
- Scholarship on the Theoretical Framework for First Impressions

# + Next Steps



- Expand multi-state collaboration (apply for NCRCRD grant, other funding sources)
- Test and implement new technologies for assessment tools
- Work on publication about FI history and theoretical framework
- Develop shared evaluation tool
- Invite others to join the party!



**Tourism is like a fire...**  
**It can cook your food, or**  
**It can burn your house down**





# Resources



- Webinar resources
  - [http://cred.ext.wvu.edu/community-design/first\\_impressions/webinar-series](http://cred.ext.wvu.edu/community-design/first_impressions/webinar-series)
- WVU CRED Tourism website
  - <http://cred.ext.wvu.edu/tourism>
- Wisconsin First Impressions website
  - <http://cced.ces.uwex.edu/2012/08/04/first-impressions-program-2/>
- Minnesota Tourism Assessment Program
  - <http://www.extension.umn.edu/community/tourism-development/>



+

Thank you!

