

BROWNFIELDS IN SMALL AND RURAL COMMUNITIES WORKSHOP EVALUATION REPORT FOLLOW UP EVALUATION MARCH 16, 2004

INTRODUCTION

Historically, brownfields funding has been awarded to urban communities, despite the fact that small and rural communities are eligible. During Summer 2003, a series of interactive workshops were offered to give small and rural communities in Kansas an opportunity to learn how to identify a brownfield; what assistance programs are available; and how properties are assessed for potential contaminants and cleaned up, if needed. In addition, the workshop discussed liability and financial issues.

Technical Assistance to Brownfields (TAB) staff from Kansas State University partnered with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE), Terracon, Inc., and several economic development organizations throughout Kansas to hold workshops for small and rural Kansas communities. Day-long workshops were held in Jewell, Hiawatha, El Dorado, and Dodge City. Additional sponsors included Butler County Economic Development, Dodge City/Ford County Development Corporation, Glacial Hills Resource Conservation & Development, North Central Kansas Rural Development Council, South Central Kansas Economic Development District, Western Kansas Rural Economic Development Alliance, and the Environmental Protection Agency Region 7.

An evaluation report on the workshop series is available at <http://www.engg.ksu.edu/HSRC/Tosc/ruralwrkshpres.pdf>.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Workshop sponsors wished to assess how the information participants gained at the workshop has been used in communities across Kansas. They also wanted to know how workshop participants thought existing brownfield programs could better serve small and rural communities.

Sponsors used a survey to collect information from workshop participants. Both paper and electronic surveys were used to collect information. Eleven surveys were sent by standard mail and 42 were conducted using an on-line survey mechanism. Results below are based on the responses of eleven workshop participants.

CONTINUED LEARNING AND CONVERSATION

Participants were asked about their activities following the workshop. The survey questions related to their acquisition of further information about brownfield redevelopment and their dissemination of workshop information to others in their communities. Details on participant's responses are below.

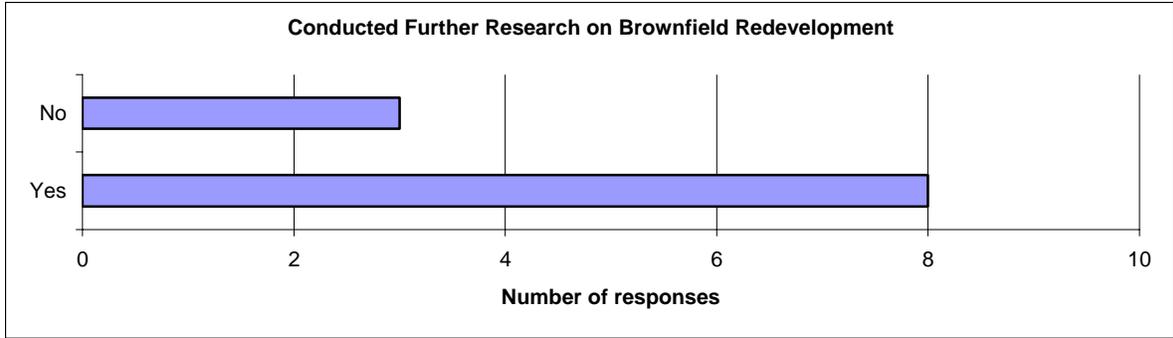


Figure 1. Following the workshop, 73% of respondents conducted additional research to learn more about brownfield redevelopment.

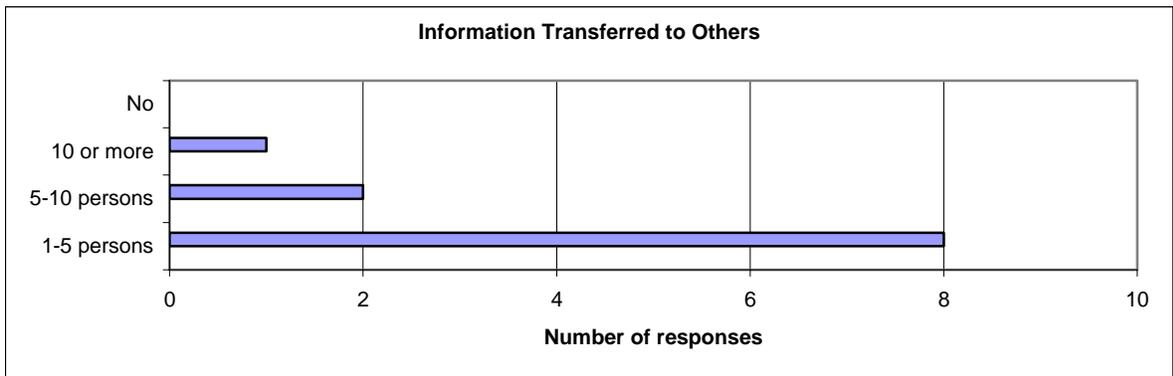


Figure 2. Following the workshop, 100% of respondents also shared information from the workshop with others in their town or region.

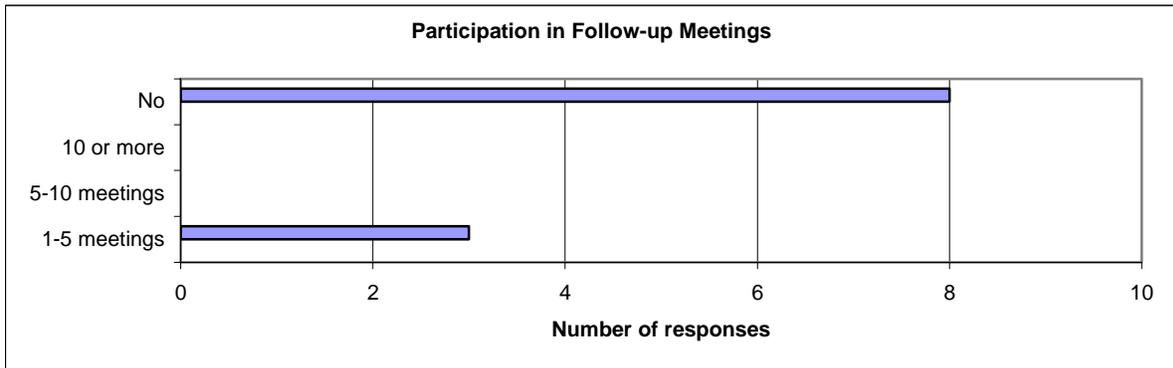


Figure 3. Following the workshop, 25% participated in one to five meetings about brownfields in their town or region following the workshop.

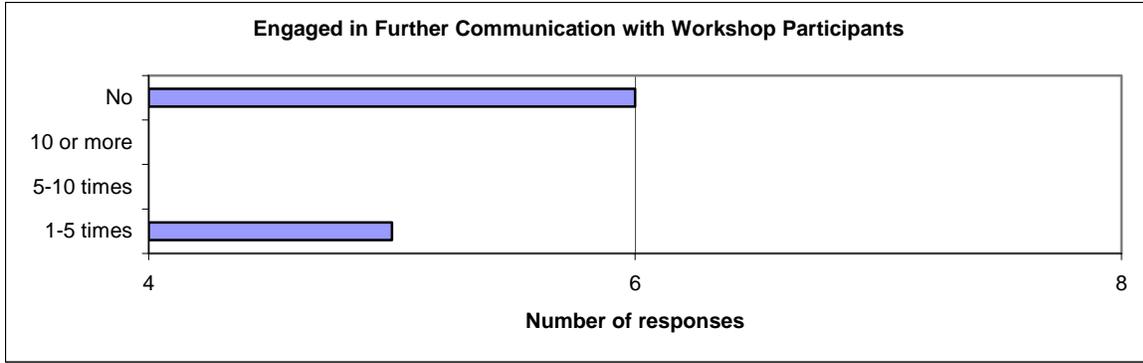


Figure 4. Following the workshop, 45% communicated one to five times with other workshop participants about brownfield redevelopment issues.

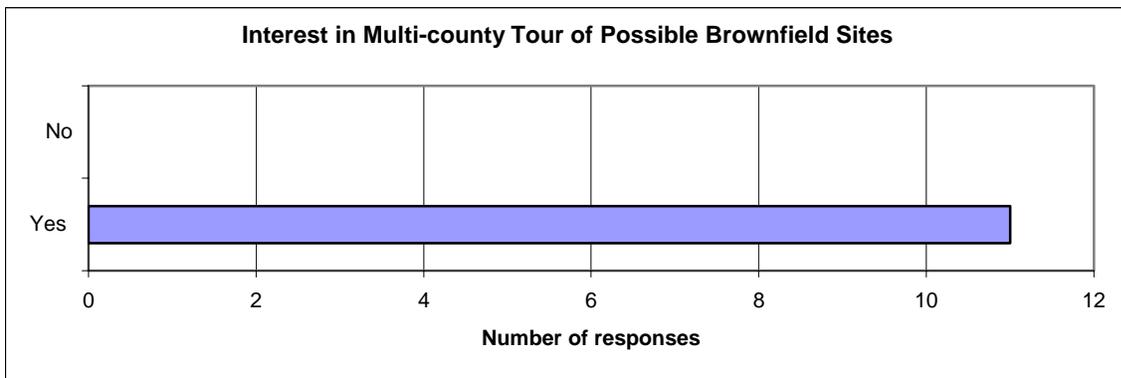


Figure 5. 100% of respondents said they would participate in a multi-county tour of possible brownfield sites.

TAKING ACTION

One purpose of the workshop series was to stimulate the participation of small and rural Kansas communities in existing programs providing support for brownfield redevelopment. A limited number of survey respondents did apply for funding from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) programs following their participation in the workshop.

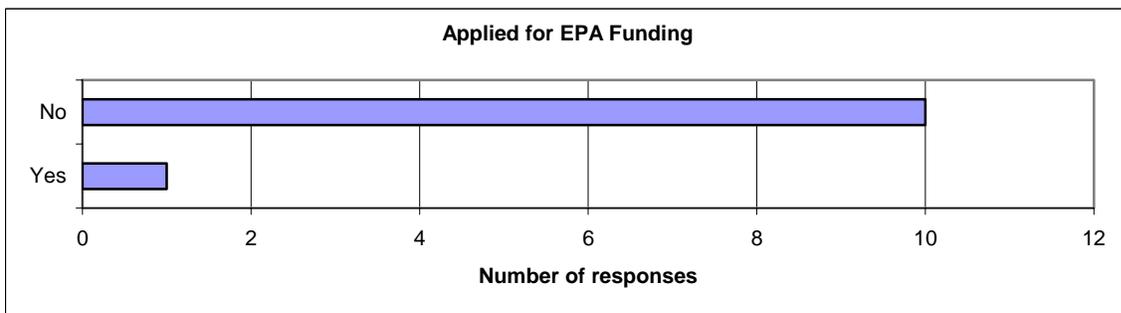


Figure 6. 9% of respondents applied for an Environmental Protection Agency brownfield grant in 2003.

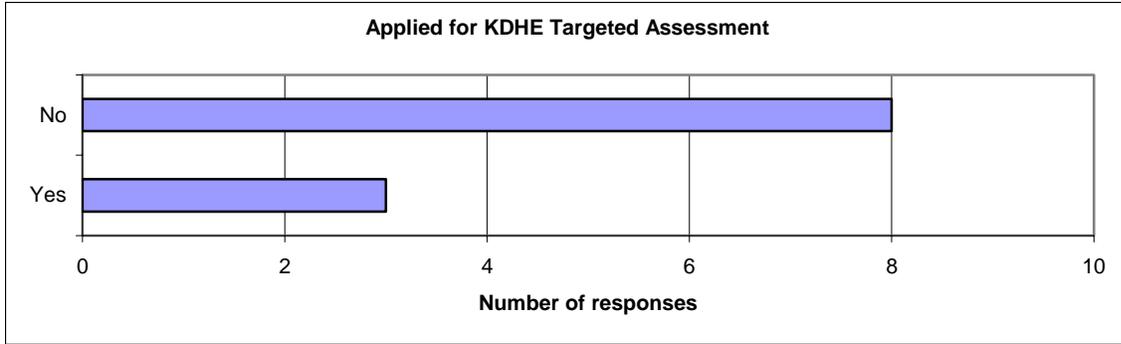


Figure 7. 27% applied for a Kansas Department of Health and Environment targeted assessment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Participants were asked how EPA’s brownfield program could work better for small and rural communities. Participants were provided the list below and asked to select as many items as they wished. The list was generated from evaluation activities conducted during the workshop series. The top five recommendations from survey respondents were

- 1) provide developers with incentives to redevelop in small and rural communities,
- 2) target funding and programs specifically for small and rural communities,
- 3) provide funding for the redevelopment portion of the process, not just the assessment portion,
- 4) conduct training on step-by-step process of how to redevelop brownfield sites,
- 5) address the public’s negative perception of EPA.

Item	Number of responses
provide education on brownfield redevelopment to stakeholders	5
target funding and programs specifically for small and rural communities	8
address the public’s negative perception of EPA	7
provide case studies of brownfield redevelopment success stories in similar communities	6
establish a mentor program with peer communities with histories of successful brownfield redevelopment	4
provide grant writing assistance	7
conduct or sponsor tours of redeveloped brownfield sites	5
hold statewide brownfield conference	2
provide support to develop regional alliances/networks	2
conduct training on how to involve community members and reach consensus on a redevelopment vision	5
conduct training on step-by-step process of how to redevelop brownfield sites	7
provide greater incentive to redevelop rather than develop greenspace	3
provide funding for the redevelopment portion of the process, not just the assessment portion	7

Item	Number of responses
provide developers with incentives to redevelop in small and rural communities	8
Other	0

Participants were also asked if they had anything else they wanted to share with the workshop sponsors. Below are those comments.

- The City of Hutchinson has been very interested in pursuing brownfield possibilities. So far; however, it seems that projects we have in mind don't quite meet the criteria. Activities involving successful redevelopments, peer-mentoring, etc., might help us to "think outside the box" regarding what is or isn't possible.
- This will take time as the problems did not happen overnight. The problem with many of the rural communities is land is cheap and the incentive is to go to a new location and leave the old site alone.

NEXT STEPS

Due to lack of funding, TAB efforts to support the involvement of small and rural communities in brownfield redevelopment will be limited in 2004. TAB staff will continue to electronically circulate notices of possible funding sources and other pertinent information to workshop participants. TAB staff will also give a presentation on the workshop series at the National Association of Local Government Environmental Professionals Rural and Small Communities Program in Kansas City, Missouri, in April and at EPA's 2004 Community Involvement Conference in Denver, Colorado, in June.