



Title	Extending our network of influence through a new Rural Experience programme
Meeting	12 th meeting of the Commission for Rural Communities
Date of the meeting	Thursday 10 July 2008
Paper type	Corporate
Paper No	08 CRC 33
Purpose	This paper considers the potential to introduce both senior executives and key non-executives from the public sector to rural good practice and thereby help to build our network of influence.
Meeting location	John Dower House, Cheltenham
Status	Decision
Director	Graham Russell

Author

Recommendations

1. Commissioners to consider at July meeting.
2. PMG then to shape a detailed implementation plan.
3. Target first event for October 2008.

Relevance to current strategy and Corporate Plan

A new mechanism to help build CRC's network of influence.

Additional resource implications

Paper envisages organising this series of events from existing people resources: Graham Russell as lead director, working with Programme Managers initially to shape the programme and identify participants; communications team to brand and communicate the events; and the central administration team to provide support.

Annexes

None

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Introduction

1. CRC has previously piloted a small number of 'Seeing is Believing' visits to introduce senior civil and public servants to key rural issues in a highly participative and engaging way. The results were very positive but despite that, the events have not been continued and developed.
2. This paper considers the potential to develop a new series of such events with the aim of introducing both senior executives and key non-executives from the public sector to rural good practice and thereby help to build our network of influence.

The model

3. The model for the previous 'Seeing is Believing' events was to some part borrowed from the format developed by Business in the Community (BITC) which has run such a programme over the past 15 years. In the BITC model there were a number of distinct elements for the events –
 - Careful targeting of senior participants.
 - Well-choreographed visits by groups of <15 participants to see challenging issues on the ground and meet inspiring local actors and organisations which were generating solutions. Each visit led by a high profile business person.
 - Effective feedback and debriefing as a group on the day; by email a few days following the event; 1:1 meetings within a few weeks of the event; and an annual event bringing together all participants to develop the shared perspectives and forward actions.
 - Publication of an annual report highlighting participants, issues, and actions generated.
 - Continued management and engagement of the network of participants.
4. Whilst BITC focused upon engaging the private sector the CRC would be in a good position to develop the key elements of the approach as an attractive offer to senior public sector players.
5. BITC also developed 'Seeing is Believing' as a resource generator and would charge participants in the order of £750+VAT in addition to raising additional sponsorship monies from, for example, Regional Development Agencies (RDAs). The resources generated covered the associated direct costs and returned a surplus.

Proposition

6. A proposition forward for the CRC could comprise the following:
 - i) A new series of events during the current financial year starting with a pilot event. Each event to be themed on an issue pertinent to the Corporate Plan.
 - ii) To name the events as 'Rural Experience to enable a differentiation from BITC events.
 - iii) Each event to target 15 senior participants. Target market of senior civil servants; senior regional executives and non-executives; senior executives and non-executives from other public bodies.

iv) Each event to be contained within one day, albeit participants may need to assemble on the previous evening subject to location/accessibility.

v) Each event to be led by a high profile person with a strong rural credibility and supported by a CRC Director.

Staff resources

8. Lead director to be Graham Russell working with Programme Managers to shape the Rural Experience programme and identify participants; communications team to brand and communicate the events; and with the central administration team to provide support.

Recommendations

9. Commissioners are requested to consider the above proposal and, if approved, to suggest possible names for high profile leaders for the Rural Experience event programme.