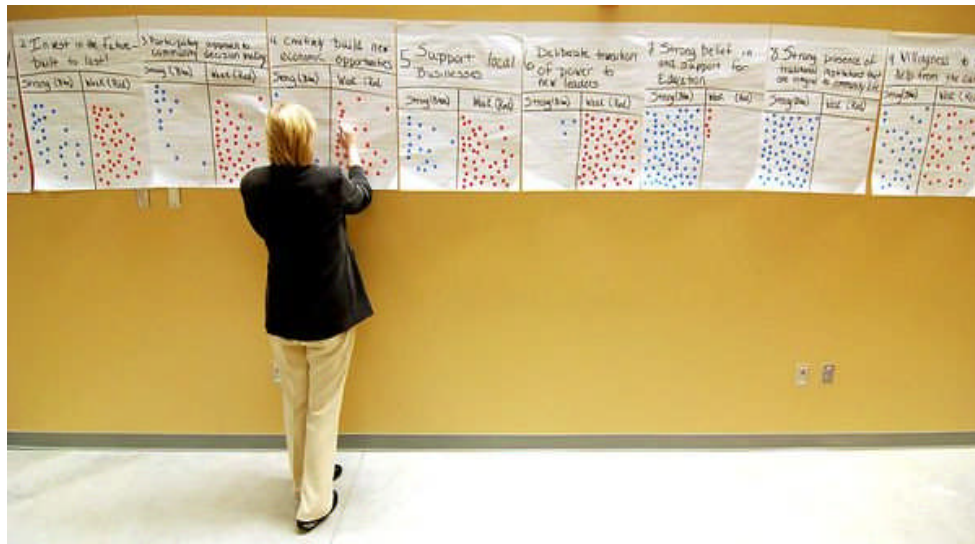




# Scenario Planning Report

## July 2010



**Maher & Maher**  
www.mahernet.com



# MID IOWA GROWTH PARTNERSHIP

## Report from Scenario Planning Workshop – Fort Dodge, Iowa 8 July 2010

### Introduction

The Mid Iowa Growth Partnership (MIGP) was designated a regional collaborative by the State of Iowa. MIGP consists of nine counties located in north-central Iowa which came together in 2005 as a nine-county regional marketing collaborative. The region has a population of 175,000 and a potential labor force of over 300,000. The nine counties of the region include: Calhoun, Hamilton, Hardin, Humboldt, Kossuth, Palo Alto, Pocahontas, Webster, and Wright counties. Over time, the Partnership has become known as the most reliable source for regional economic development information for those seeking opportunity and prosperity in the nine county region.



#### MIGP is 9 counties strong-

- Calhoun
- Hamilton
- Hardin
- Humboldt
- Kossuth
- Palo Alto
- Pocahontas
- Webster
- Wright

The Mid Iowa Growth Partnership (MIGP) region is the recipient from Iowa Workforce Development of a U.S. Department of Labor grant to support regional planning and innovation. This Regional Innovation Grant (RIG) is designed to support comprehensive planning efforts at a regional level and to further economic and workforce innovation and development. The Scenario Planning workshop reported here is part of this larger process. The initial regional leadership meeting to launch the MIGP regional innovation process was held on 8 July 2010 and facilitated by the consulting team which includes EMSI, Innovative Leadership, Iowa Innovation Gateway, and Maher & Maher.

The MIGP region is engaged in regional innovation planning process. The Scenario Planning workshop reported here is part of this larger process. The initial meeting to launch this regional project was held on 8 July 2010 with approximately 100 regional leaders in attendance. The objectives of this event were:

- to deepen an understanding of how global events and conditions shape local decision-making;
- to identify and understand the key influences, trends and dynamics that will shape the MIGP region over the next 20 years;
- to create and describe four plausible long term scenario's for the region; and,
- to develop alignment around a shared regional vision.

The scenarios developed at the event and outlined in this report are important to provide a 'vehicle' to be used in the process of building a shared vision for the future of the Mid Iowa Growth Partnership (MIGP) region. In addition, the workshop deliberations can assist in identifying key actions for the region and assist in identifying how various groups might best contribute to future developments — in part by identifying possibilities for collaboration.

# MIGP SCENARIO PLANNING

This report presents the background, results and recommendations from the MIGP Scenario Planning event. This meeting, the MIGP Leadership Meeting #1, aimed to explore the future directions and opportunities for the region, and commence work on creating a regional vision. People from across the region came to a one-day regional scenario planning event that was held July 8, 2010. The event participants discussed the region's future and developed plausible scenarios for MIGP region in 2030. Stakeholders from beyond the immediate region also participated in the scenario planning process such as those representing the Iowa Department of Education and the USDA Rural Development.

*People from across the region came to a one-day regional scenario planning event that was held July 8, 2010.*

The participants were guided through a modified scenario planning process to develop four plausible scenarios for the future of the MIGP region. This modified process has been applied successfully in regional scenario planning events in numerous regional settings across North America.

The process, which is described in detail below, involves exploration and discussion of global, regional and local trends and forces of change, identification and ranking of drivers and influences that will likely shape the future of the MIGP region, development of a scenario matrix defining four plausible scenarios for the future; and, the development of descriptive narratives of each scenario. The event concluded with discussion of the scenarios and their desirability in contributing to a regional vision of the future. This is the first phase of the ongoing regional innovation process that includes several months of critical core team group work. An important part of scenario planning process is that it aims not merely to develop plausible scenarios for the future, but to identify how they may be turned into tangible actions in the region and compiled in a regional innovation planning document.



## Why Scenario Planning?

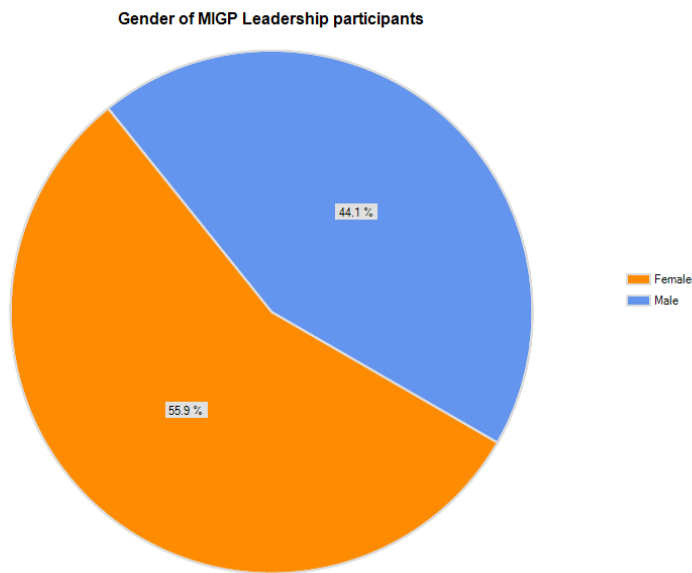
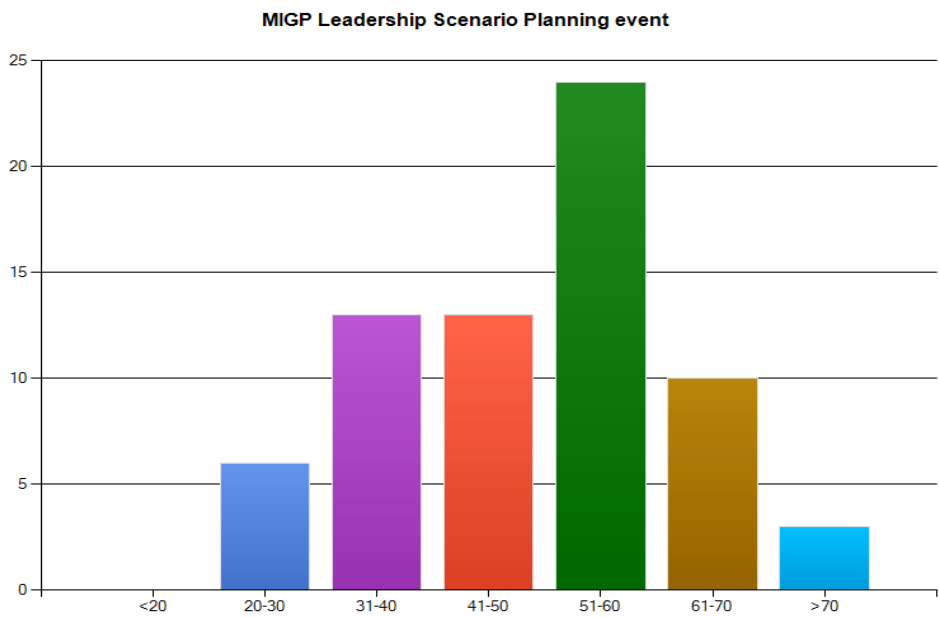
Scenario planning is a method that is used to develop plausible scenarios for the future. Scenarios are not predictions, but are a way of exploring plausible futures and of learning from them. The method differs from traditional strategic planning as it allows the exploration of many factors, or drivers of the future, concurrently. It does so by using local knowledge and expectations about the drivers to produce a framework that defines and explores a range of plausible futures. In this manner the approach enables people to explore the impacts and consequences of a range of different future pathways.

Generally, Scenario Planning processes are run over several days, weeks or even months. A condensed form of scenario planning developed by **Innovative Leadership** was used in this project so that the scenario session was completed in a one-day session. This design is intended to allow otherwise busy and committed people to contribute and participate in a future planning process in an effective and efficient manner.

This design relies on sufficient background information being presented to enable realistic and informed evaluation by the participants. It also requires participants who are broad-minded, free-thinking who collectively and individually can bring their experience to the identification of the key drivers and to the development of the scenarios.

# Event Participants

The MIGP leadership meeting and the scenario planning process involved participants from across the MIGP region representing business, education, workforce development, philanthropy, and economic development. It also included stakeholder beyond the immediate region. The event was attended by approximately 100 participants. The following tables outline the gender and age profiles of the participants.



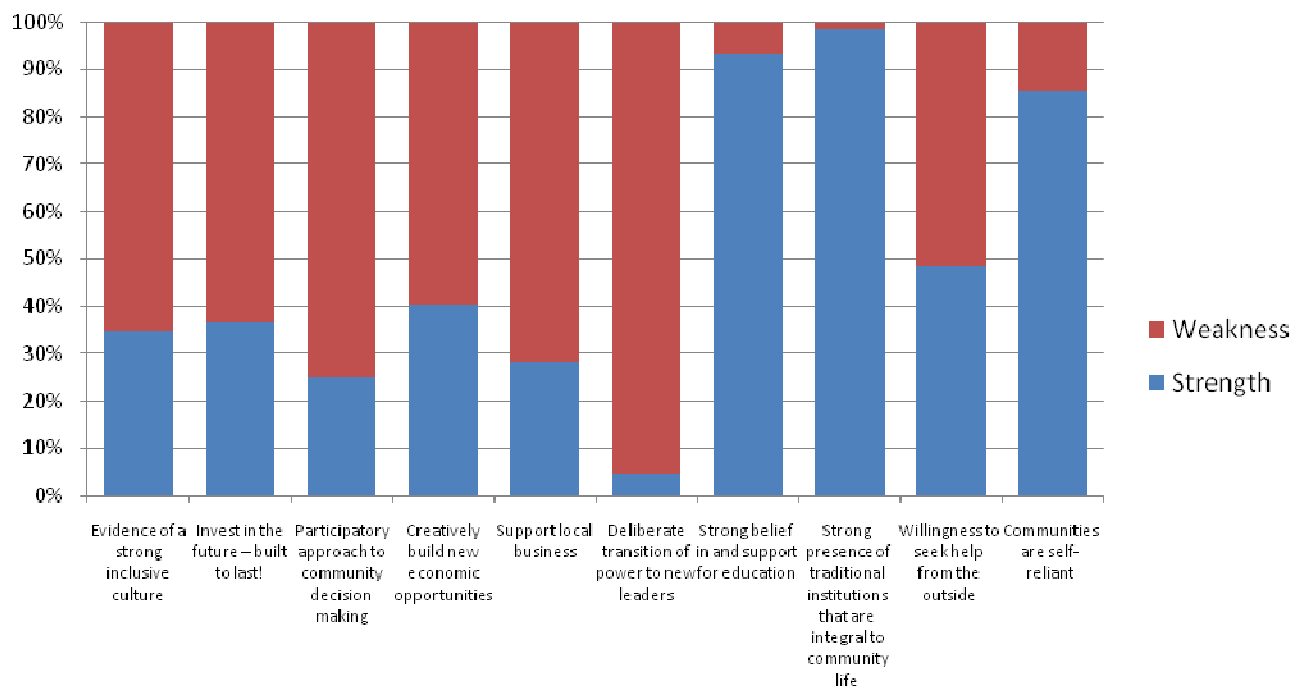
## MIGP regional community attributes

The participants examined the current context of the MIGP region utilizing research on the 'Ten Attributes of Successful Communities'. Participants considered the attributes in which they thought the MIGP region is currently strong and those in which it is currently weak. Each participant was given four blue adhesive dots (to indicate the 'strong' attributes) and four red adhesive dots (to indicate 'weak' attributes). Each person was able to allocate his/her 'votes' in any manner he/she chose, i.e. spread across four attributes, concentrated over one or a few attributes or not used at all.

### The Ten Attributes of Successful Communities

1. Evidence of a strong inclusive culture
2. Invest in the future – built to last!
3. Participatory approach to community decision making
4. Creatively build new economic opportunities
5. Support local businesses
6. Deliberate transition of power to new leaders
7. Strong belief in and support for education
8. Strong presence of traditional institutions that are integral to community life
9. Willingness to seek help from the outside
10. Communities are self-reliant

Strengths and Weaknesses of the MIGP region's ability for change



Some of the observations and implications from this exercise include:

- There was a strong orientation towards traditional values and beliefs – for example ‘Strong belief in and support for education’; ‘Strong presence of traditional institutions’ and ‘Communities are self reliant’; were all rated as strong attributes in the community. These could be considered traditional rural community strengths and values.
- There was a noticeable weakness around the attributes that are more orientated towards the future such as; ‘Invest in the future’, ‘Participatory approach to community decision making’, ‘Creatively building new economic opportunities’ and ‘Deliberate transition of power to new leaders’. These attributes are more orientated towards building a future.
- There was an assessed weakness in the attribute about ‘Evidence of a strong inclusive culture’ – this is a critical issue for the community given the need for rural communities to adapt to changing demographics and ethnic make-up.
- Of importance to the work of MIGP group and the regional innovation process, there was an identified weakness in the two major economic attributes of ‘Creatively building new economic opportunities’ and ‘Support Local Business’. In order to build a responsive community that is able to adapt to a changing world and actively shape its own future, then the MIGP region will have to consider building additional strength and capacity around these important attributes.

## Scenario Planning Process – developing four plausible scenarios for the future

MIGP regional leaders explored the future and developed plausible future scenarios, looking out as far as 2030. To set the context for their thinking, the meeting began with a discussion of global, national and regional forces that could impact the MIGP region. The facilitators presented an overview of trends in aspects such as global power and wealth, growth in Asia, energy, climate change, water, food security and technological change. Participants reviewed and discussed these trends, considering how they could impact on the future direction of the region.

### Drivers shaping the Future

With the background of the global, national and regional forces and how they relate to the MIGP region, the participants identified drivers that they considered most likely to shape the future of the MIGP region. The drivers were then discussed by all of the participants. The scope of each driver was clarified, any similar drivers were grouped and new drivers added, until a list of twenty unique, key drivers were identified.

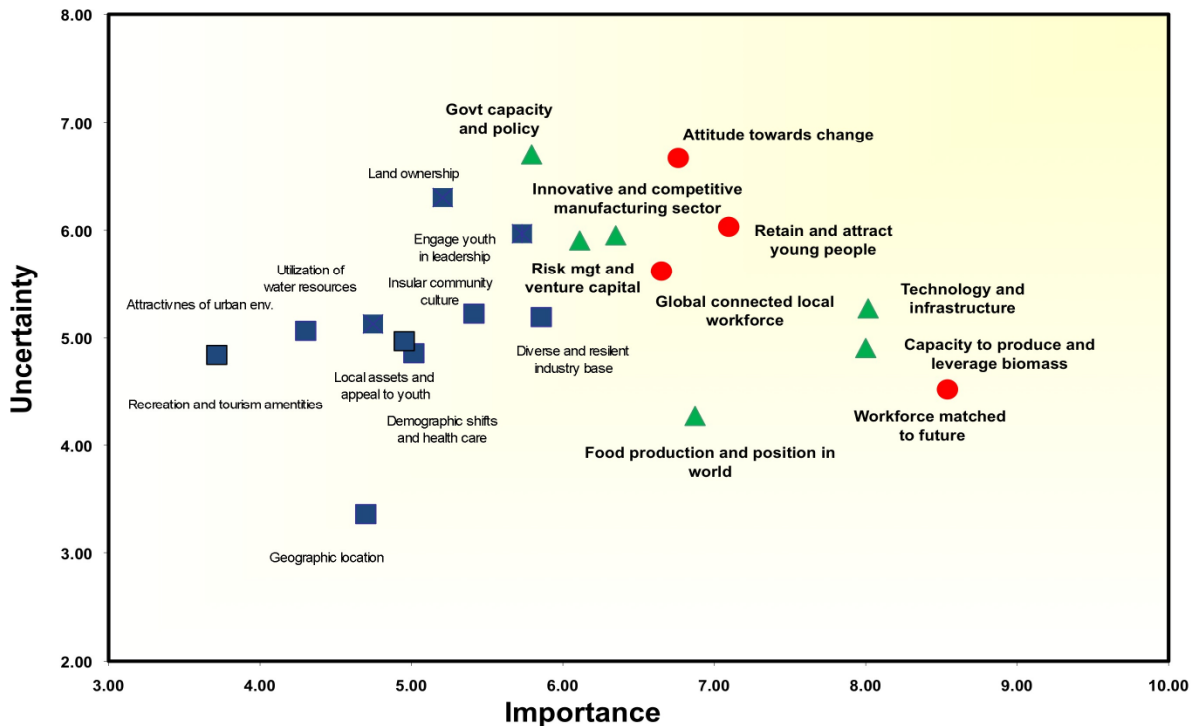
#### Key drivers shaping the future of the MIGP region as identified by participants

- Capacity to produce and leverage biomass
- Trained and educated workforce matched to future opportunities
- Insular community culture that lacks a sense of urgency
- Desirable geographic location
- Opportunities for retaining and attracting young people
- Development of risk management and venture capital
- Staying on the cutting edge of technology and infrastructure
- Attitude towards change
- Diversity and resilience in the industry base
- Impact and opportunity of legislation - diminished capacity of government to support local initiatives
- Conservation and utilization of the water resources
- Engagement of the youth to assume leadership roles
- Creating and sustaining population for future workforce connected to a global environment
- Social influence and attractiveness of activity to an urban environment
- Local land ownership and transfer of wealth
- Focus on local assets and promotion of those to young
- Demographic shifts and changing needs for health care
- Food production positioning for world
- Ability to be innovative and competitive on manufacturing sector
- Maximize local recreation amenities for tourism

### Identifying scenario shaping clusters of drivers

Each of the twenty key drivers was rated by the participants for its 'Importance' and 'Uncertainty'. 'Importance' refers to how important the participant considers the driver will be in shaping the future of the MIGP region. 'Uncertainty' refers to the degree of uncertainty associated with the driver in terms of its future level of uncertainty, impact, or both. A scatter diagram of the drivers, based on importance and uncertainty, was developed. The scatter diagram illustrates the clusters of the drivers that were seen as critical in shaping the future – these clusters were termed 'Scenario shaping clusters of drivers'.

## Scenario Shaping Clusters of Drivers



### Creating scenario spaces – four plausible scenarios for the future

The clusters of drivers were identified by grouping similar drivers under two categories, then adding a name that represented a general theme linking the drivers in the clusters. These themes became the basis for two axis on the scenario matrix, that define four scenario 'spaces', with quadrants either towards or away for each driver cluster. These quadrants were used to formulate four plausible scenarios.

#### Cluster Themes

##### Future workforce orientation

- Attitude towards change
- Opportunities for retaining and attracting young people
- Creating and sustaining population for future workforce connected to a global environment
- Trained and educated workforce matched to future opportunities

##### Capacity to leverage local assets

- Ability to be innovative and competitive on manufacturing sector
- Staying on the cutting edge of technology and infrastructure
- Capacity to produce and leverage biomass
- Food production positioning for world
- Development of risk management and venture capital
- Impact and opportunity of legislation - diminished capacity of government to support local initiatives

The four quadrants (scenario spaces), based on increase and decrease directions of the two cluster themes, were reviewed and discussed with the participants. This discussion explored the drivers included in each scenario-shaping cluster, the scope of each cluster and how they formed the axes that defined the four scenario spaces. The participants were asked to consider the main attributes of each of the quadrants and to begin to speculate about how the MIGP region would look in a future based on each of the quadrants.



Creating detailed narratives for each scenario quadrant

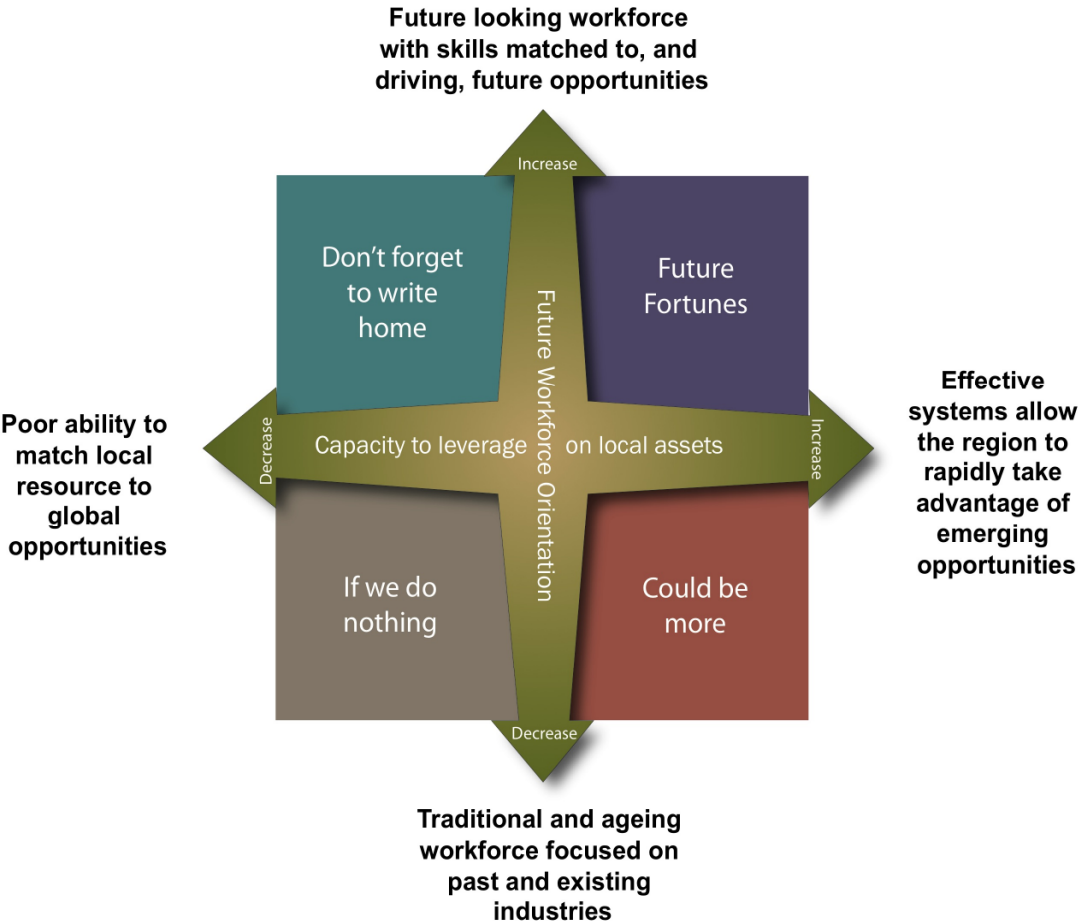
Event participants were randomly allocated to one of four groups and asked to formulate a scenario for their respective quadrant. Each group was directed to describe the MIGP region in 2030 under the conditions of the scenario quadrant that they had been given in terms of the triple-bottom line of social, economic and environmental characteristics.

Each group was directed to describe the MIGP region in 2030 under the conditions of the scenario quadrant...

In addition, they were asked to devise a timeline of how the scenario occurred using the years 2012, 2020 and 2030 and gave their scenario a descriptive name. Once the scenarios had been developed, each group reported back, describing their scenario to the remainder of the participants.

This allowed for clarification, questions, and an assessment of the plausibility of each scenario. Each group’s notes for their scenario and the description of it when it was presented to the other participants were used to produce the detailed narrative for each scenario that is presented in the next section of this report.

The scenario quadrants defined by the cluster themes showing the names of each scenario names created by the participants at the MIGP Leadership Meeting #1.

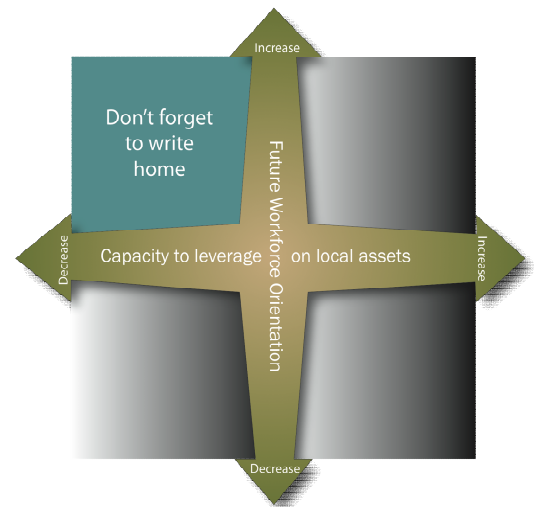


## Don't Forget to Write Home – Scenario A

The scenario space for 'Don't Forget to Write Home' envisages a problematic future for the region. A well skilled and forward looking workforce finds it difficult to get suitable work in a local economy that characterized by hit and miss successes and a weak capacity to leverage on local assets.

Because the region has lost its capacity to leverage fully on local assets, it has regressed to being a primary commodity producing area, which has always been a regional strength, but it has seen value-adding capacity and innovation dwindle. Much of this activity now takes place in other regions, which are taking advantage of the bio-energy, bio-products and food innovation revolution which is reshaping parts of rural America. As a result, much of the historic employment strength and diversity in value adding jobs has gone. There are some major processing plants in the region, but these are all owned and operated by outside entities which are attracted to the region by the highly skilled and relatively cheap workforce.

However, the 'Don't Forget to Write Home' scenario sees a real strength in the region in the education and workforce development arena. In fact, it is so good at creating a good workforce that it has become a Mecca for people seeking secondary and tertiary skill training. This sector is vibrant and strong, but community leaders are increasingly concerned by the seemingly never ending farewell parties for bright young people as they leave the region to seek their fortunes elsewhere. This leads to stagnation in the small business sectors and an aging population. The aging community leaders look around in bewilderment wondering who will replace them when they go to the nursing home.



### Social and Cultural Characteristics:

- Lower standard of living
- Declining population
- Youth leaving
- Technology driven
- Local glut of trained workers in specialized sector skills
- Aging population, large retiree population, virtual workers, telecommuters, more immigration

### Economic Characteristics:

- Educational Mecca – drawing students and their income.
- Loss of manufacturing sector
- Jobs are specific for local products
- Locally owned businesses and strong presence of entrepreneurial activity
- Strong partnerships with workforce and education
- Tax base declining

### Environmental Characteristics:

- Landfills over capacity
- Flooding events and issues with contaminated water and soil erosion
- Loss of resources overall and crops have been concentrated in row crops with little diversity
- Decrease in air quality and an increase in carbon output
- Manure excess and overall degradation in the land

## Timeline with triple bottom line possibilities

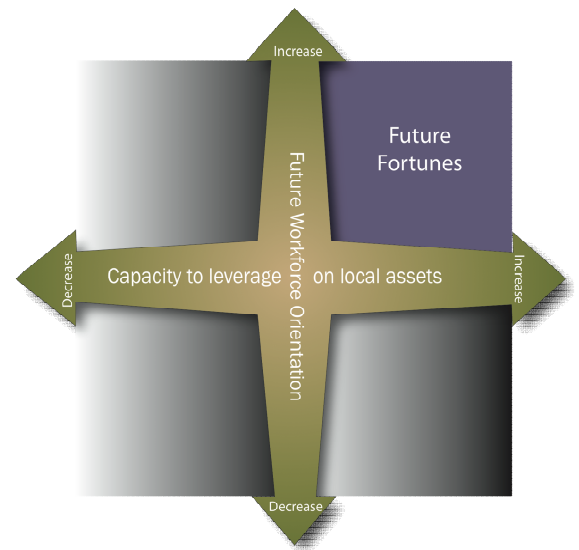
Social	Economic	Environmental
<p><b>2012</b></p> <p>There is now a steady outflow of the young to larger metropolitan communities. Taxes have been increased by 10% to cover the increasing costs of government services and loss of tax base overall.</p>	<p><b>2012</b></p> <p>New concentration of job skills needed and retraining programs are readily available. Manufacturing that is not based in local resources have been closing. Stimulus money has decreased to the region.</p>	<p><b>2012</b></p> <p>Landfills continue to follow traditional processes and ignoring new technology and allow negative people to dictate. Water and soil quality is affected by government decisions not to implement regulations promoting investment in the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation of biofuels. Local government ignores the need for a sustainable storm water management plan.</p>
<p><b>2020</b></p> <p>A new trend of virtual offices has emerged with many entrepreneurs. The community is considers highly technologically dependent. Inflation as at it's highest local level and only wealthy can afford to live in the region. Little or no government funding or assistance Larger 'urban' areas. Assisted childcare and school lunch programs are scaled back. Increase in renters with decreasing home ownership.</p>	<p><b>2020</b></p> <p>Taxes are up again and consolidation of government agencies has taken the full focus of local governments. P-16 educational collaboration with business and industry is the norm. Increased entrepreneurship and expansion of educational access.</p>	<p><b>2020</b></p> <p>Fail to draw renewable energy companies to area, implement new processes or to obtain financing to fund new processes. Flood forces the release of sewage from treatment plan and creates major fish kill.</p>
<p><b>2030</b></p> <p>Educational institutions have created very specialized facilitates to serves the entrepreneurial community. More evidence of loosing population because of less services and an 'unsafe' feel. Law enforcement and emergency services have been forced to decrease services. Increase in disease reporting.</p>	<p><b>2030</b></p> <p>Continued governmental consolidation has discontinued many local specialized services. A new Technology Center Area has been created and has transferred several leading technologies to the market. Region is considered an Educational Mecca. Taxes are at an all time high.</p>	<p><b>2030</b></p> <p>Marginal land places into row crop production. Increased use of pesticides and related health issues.</p>

## Future Fortunes – Scenario B

The scenario 'space' for 'Future Fortunes' envisages the MIGP region as a cutting-edge and vibrant region that has mastered the art of creating its own future. It has the ability to leverage its own local assets and has created a local workforce that drives innovation.

Under these scenario conditions, the region has built the systems and approaches that allow innovation and investment to maximize the value of the local assets. It is renowned in its ability to be first to market with new high value food and bio-products that are at the cutting edge of design and technology. The region is at the forefront of the rural renaissance as it plugs its valuable agriculture raw material into the global value stream. The manufacturing sector creates high value jobs and career paths as it leads the way in bio-plastics and renewable energy.

The 'Future Fortunes' scenario sees a region that is reaping the benefits of decades of investment in a sophisticated and specialized education and workforce development system. The region is globally connected and draws educational expertise from around the world to its centers of excellence, which in turn drive the talent development in the region. These scenario conditions have also seen a mini-revolution in the regional community, with stronger community engagement, especially in the younger generations. The environment is regarded as a precious resource; both for its recreation and aesthetic values, as well as its important productive potential.



### Social and Cultural Characteristics:

- Increase in youth population and an increase in youth leadership programs
- Arts, culture and entertainment has a strong presence, and draws tourism from outside the region
- Leadership choices are intentional and there is a strong culture of adaptability – new ideas are valued.
- The community is diverse with various ethnic influences
- The workplace has gotten creative with options for telecommuting, flexible schedules, job sharing and better amenities
- Healthcare options are located where the population needs them and support an aging population
- Education is offering options online and there is a good variety of career pathway

### Economic Characteristics:

- There is a highly skilled population with a focus on education, and high wage jobs dominate the region
- The variety of career pathways are designed to match workforce needs and education is better aligned with jobs
- There is a tax base increase and quality of life is seen as asset of the region
- Increase in wireless infrastructure and use across the region – it is globally connected
- There is a higher average disposable income and two income family are the norm
- There is an increase in outsources and a strong venture capital operates in the region

### Environmental Characteristics:

- Agriculture and resources are a driving factor in the economy
- Increase in mandatory EPA requirements to protect resources and conservation is a norm
- Wind farms and wind-mills are placed in areas where there is the best / least visual impact
- Genetic engineering has increased the yields
- There is increased quality of outdoor recreation with attention and funding to sidewalks, river access and bike paths
- Community and civic infrastructure encourages high quality interaction for all age groups

## Timeline with triple bottom line possibilities

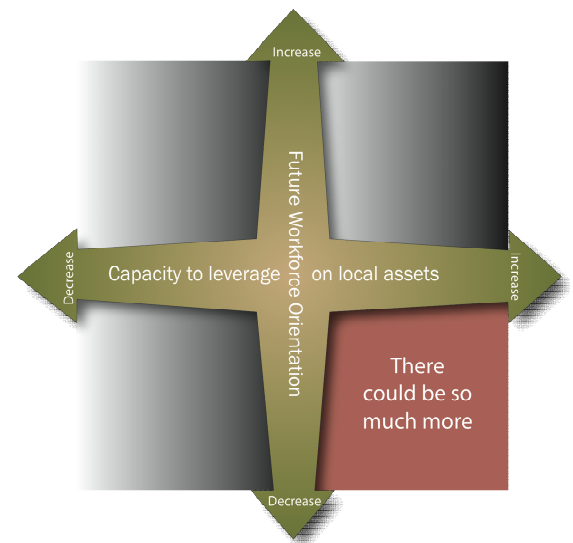
Social	Economic	Environmental
<p><b>2012</b></p> <p>New systems are created for continuous planning and resource acquisition. Region has gone completely wireless with strong broadband options and low prices.</p>	<p><b>2012</b></p> <p>Rate of startups has broken all previous records. Tax legislation has sunset and there has been an increase in taxes. EPA system goes to a permit system.</p>	<p><b>2012</b></p> <p>Bike paths completed. Genetic engineering expands corn and livestock production. An aquatic center has been created in Fort Dodge.</p>
<p><b>2020</b></p> <p>Seamless curriculum for K-16 that is focused on skills, entrepreneurship and career pathways – Each student graduates with a business plan that meets the needs of the region</p>	<p><b>2020</b></p> <p>EPA Mandates are easily adopted as the community is ready for quick adoption. Infrastructures meet the current needs and are well adaptable for growth. A new bio-tech cluster has been created with a concentration in seed generation. Community colleges have made critical partnerships with business and increase offerings in the region. Agriculture has record yields and crops are in high demand.</p>	<p><b>2020</b></p> <p>30% of the job force in the region is considered to be 'Green'. Funding has been acquired to increase the efficiency of energy usage in households and industries.</p>
<p><b>2030</b></p> <p>Nationally recognized program for youth leadership with the largest percentage under 20 year olds in elected positions.</p>	<p><b>2030</b></p> <p>Region is recognized by cutting carbon emissions by 50%. Education is skill oriented with many offerings on-site and virtually. Retail market is strong and diverse. Infrastructure is evaluated plan revised for future needs.</p>	<p><b>2030</b></p> <p>Ethanol and biomass industries are planning together and thriving. EPA restrictions have been created and adopted in the region. Recreational offerings pull tourists from outside the region and make the region 'One of the most livable areas in the Midwest'.</p>

## There Could Be So Much More – Scenario C

The scenario space for 'There Could Be So Much More' envisages a frustrating and socially declining future for the region. The region has created the systems and capacity to leverage on local assets but the workforce has remained rooted in traditional skills and industries. This has resulted in little local innovation and the region missing out on many high-value opportunities.

The regional economy is driven by first-stage value adding of agricultural industries. These large value-adding operations are moving the valuable farm products from commodity to the next stage in the value chain, but then the products leave the region for further value adding. The net value of the regional economy has increased, but much of the additional workforce needs are for low to mid wage hourly workers who run low-tech equipment and processing facilities. In many cases these value-adding operations are owned and operated by corporate or absentee entities and therefore the profits and benefits leave the region.

In 'There Could Be So Much More' the community has failed to build its educational and workforce development systems. This has resulted in a gradual slide of the region on key indicators of quality of life, career potential and household income. The local workforce is traditional in nature and values, and is increasingly seen as an unskilled low cost resource for the companies which increasingly control the value adding facilities and the region's farm lands. Corporate agriculture has surpassed family farms as the dominate land holder – which has resulted in decline in the small communities and consolidation around the larger regional centers.



### Social and Cultural Characteristics:

- Aging population and outflow of youth
- Shrinking Communities that are consolidating services
- Educational format is geared towards local needs online and onsite
- Larger farms are predominant
- Increase in social service needs
- Decreased recreational opportunities
- Telecommuting is prevalent
- Consumption is decreased

### Economic Characteristics:

- Workforce is mostly blue- collar and management is not onsite
- Significant loss in research and design industries
- Depressed tax revenues
- Many service industry jobs with a dependence on migrant workers
- Increase in discount stores
- Opportunities are created for jobs for aging and disabled workers

### Environmental Characteristics:

- Fewer small family farms with heavy corporate investment
- Deterioration in housing, stock, roads, bridges, water systems
- More use of chemicals on farmland
- Larger cemeteries

## Timeline with triple bottom line possibilities

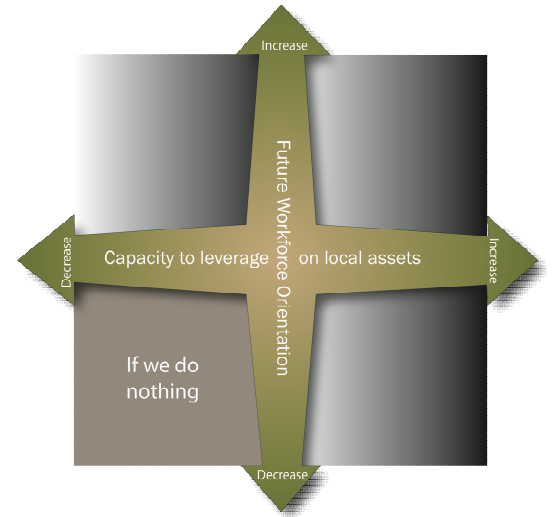
Social	Economic	Environmental
<p><b>2012</b></p> <p>Services have had to consolidate in various ways such as; schools, health services and government. Aging population is growing and resources are planning for youth outmigration.</p>	<p><b>2012</b></p> <p>Increase in automation in manufacturing sector has created a significant unemployment issue. Good jobs are those that are based on natural resources and the biofuels and wind energy sector are thriving.</p>	<p><b>2012</b></p> <p>Deferred maintenance for buildings and infrastructure. Slow decaying.</p>
<p><b>2020</b></p> <p>There is a growing concern about homelessness and drug use in the region. More schools have consolidated.</p>	<p><b>2020</b></p> <p>There is a critical mass of retiring population and an increased use of technical training programs. Need to import labor for many industries due to loss of economic driving population.</p>	<p><b>2020</b></p> <p>More bridge repair and many paved roads become gravel – while gravel and level B road are abandoned. Large corporate farms are the majority in region. Chemical usage is at an all time high. Recreation areas take a hit in budget and are not funded for improvements.</p>
<p><b>2030</b></p> <p>Increased immigration. Increased fuel costs.</p>	<p><b>2030</b></p> <p>Crops have seen a transition in focus that is pharmaceutical based. Comprehensive planning for resources has been ongoing and there is successful deliberate transition of land use based on needs.</p>	<p><b>2030</b></p> <p>Many roads are closed due to lack of funding. Many of the communities are no longer viable and population has moved to urban areas. Sewer system has failed and cleanup is predicted to take several years. Wildlife has dwindled and pollution has gone unchecked.</p>

## If We Do Nothing... - Scenario D

The scenario space for 'If We Do Nothing...' envisages a regional future that is defined by a poor ability to match local resources and assets with global opportunities; and a workforce that is increasingly typified by a traditional skills and an alignment towards traditional industries. This has resulted in a decline in regional competitiveness and prosperity.

Under this scenario, the regional economy begins to decline as opportunities are missed and the traditional business remaining try to eke a living in a declining commercial sector. The important agricultural framing sector, while still very productive, has increasingly transitioned from a family farm locally-owned basis to being predominately owned by out of region interests including corporate farms and overseas investors. This has eroded the local economy as the farming sector becomes increasingly disconnected from the local small town and regional economy. Most value-adding activities occur in large facilities – of the style of 'factory farm' and much of the rural charm has been lost out.

The manufacturing sector has declined as the workforce has begun to fall behind in the important skill sets to operate and run high technology food processing and production facilities. The community spirit has waned, and there is increasing tension about the immigration of low skilled workers, who out compete the local workforce for the farm labor jobs. The region is seen as increasingly irrelevant to the energy and technology boom that is fueling much of the mid-west economic growth. In many ways the region has been by-passed and is largely regarded as a large 'farm' with a backward workforce and poor social infrastructure. The declining 'quality of life' reputation sees businesses locate to adjoining regions and regional centers.



### Social and Cultural Characteristics:

- Schools have consolidated and the community college cannot continue to offer career training
- Needs for home health care have increased with an aging population and social services such as 'meals on wheels'
- Decrease in industry has created a smaller tax base and decreased
- More immigrants has created a need for bilingual services
- Churches increase social activities as there is less entertainment and social option from the community centers
- Trails and lakes are busy as they are free recreation
- Family ties are strong but crime and drug use and increased.
- School and courthouse consolidate as smaller communities suffer declining population

### Economic Characteristics:

- There is a limited population for a local workforce and immigration has had to fill vacant workforce positions
- Low paying jobs are the majority with many better jobs moving out of region
- Lack of business investment especially in new technologies leading to multiple plant closings
- No local support for retail businesses and therefore many have closed; but the bars are thriving
- Home healthcare, handy man and nursing homes are thriving
- Cheap housing has led to bedroom communities servicing jobs in other regions
- The region becomes eligible for federal funding due to regional hardship
- Farms are consolidating; with ever larger farms continuing to buy up the small family-farm operations

### Environmental Characteristics:

- Decrease in land preservation and increase in use of chemicals as corporate agriculture operations expands
- Wildlife preservation at minimal levels and lakes and streams are polluted by increased chemical use
- Change in county government to a regional approach affects local services such as roads
- Community buildings and infrastructure are not being cared for; and begin to become tired and neglected
- Less local funding for recreation facilities and sporting complexes – these fall into disrepair



## Timeline with triple bottom line possibilities

Social	Economic	Environmental
<p><b>2012</b></p> <p>Non-traditional student population increases and graduates are having trouble finding local jobs or support for starting new businesses. Outmigration of local youth and increase and immigrant populations are filling jobs. School consolidation begins. Regional social service offices decrease.</p>	<p><b>2012</b></p> <p>Plant closing creates 200 lost jobs. School board meets to discuss consolidation. City council approves rate increases for utilities. Local grocery store closes. Housing prices go down.</p>	<p><b>2012</b></p> <p>Proposed rules on land ownership are ignored. Increase taxes throughout the region. Government services are consolidated. Needed planning for local resources is ignored.</p>
<p><b>2020</b></p> <p>Continued outward migration and school consolidation trends continue. Several industries are forced to leave region due to lack of workforce and poor quality of life. Shrinking tax base, local retail struggling and services for elderly and poor are in high demand.</p>	<p><b>2020</b></p> <p>Humboldt County school is established. Assisted living expansion underway. State mandated courthouse consolidations. Census shows massive population decline. Plant moves to Mexico due to lack of workers. Increase in federal grants due to lower incomes. Highway 20 construction stalled due to lack of funding.</p>	<p><b>2020</b></p> <p>Lack of local action has created the need for the EPA to step in and regulate nitrate levels on farm land. Funding for parks cut by 50% and funding for maintenance is move to cover government services. Census results show 10% decline.</p>
<p><b>2030</b></p> <p>Increased need in healthcare for elderly. Regional healthcare and assisted living care increases. Recreation and entertainment is concentrated in larger communities. Limited K-12 school options and long bus routes. Limited offering at community college with distance learning increase.</p>	<p><b>2030</b></p> <p>Tri-county school established. ICCC closes due to declining enrollment. Community colleges consolidate. China buys half the farmland in region. Average age of farmer hits 70</p>	<p><b>2030</b></p> <p>Regulations give into pressure and allow foreign ownership of land. County assess secondary roads back to land owners for maintenance. Nitrate levels increase to unsafe levels and affect all waterways.</p>

## THE SCENARIOS FOR THE MIGP REGION

The new complexities in changing rural landscapes have recently emphasized the importance in the abilities of rural regions to flourish in the light of vast global and regional change. In considering the future of such a region, most observers tend to focus on the ability of a community to be sustainable during great change. These scenarios for the MIGP Region are no exception. The four scenarios, which were developed by the participants, were based on the 'global/local' axis and focused on the ability of the region to harness human and local resources in the light of change at both these levels. Part of the power of scenario planning is the ability to account for both the major 'axes' concurrently and uses them to position key drivers.

*..the actual future  
will develop from a  
combination of  
action and inaction  
by the 'players'  
involved as well as  
external forces....*

Tracking key drivers to try to identify how the future may be unfolding in reality is a critical part of using scenarios in this way. There is a natural tendency for people to choose their preferred scenario (usually the most positive one) or to attribute a greater likelihood to one scenario or another, or aspects of it/them, but it is neither appropriate nor accurate to do so. What may be considered to be unlikely outcomes could easily come to fruition. Scenarios may help to prepare us for such eventualities.

It must be remembered that scenarios are non-judgmental regarding the appropriateness or validity of decisions and approaches. Just like the scenarios, the actual future will develop from a combination of action and inaction by the 'players' involved as well as external forces and 'players'. There is no attempt to apportion fault or blame in the case of undesirable outcomes, but merely to have some preparedness or contingencies for them.

This scenario planning report is a first step in providing a resource to help extend the conversation about the MIGP region's future beyond the participants at the leadership meeting. It also serves as a tool to create a shared vision for the future.. This resource will be used to prompt discussions amongst the wider region as to possible implications of various future events and regional strategies needed to ensure innovation and prosperity for the region in light of these various future events.

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## Report and scenario planning workshop prepared by:



**Juliet Fox** and **David Beurle**, Innovative Leadership; July 2010

Innovative Leadership is a global consultancy company that specializes in assisting communities, regions and organizations to plan and prepare for their future. With staff in Australia and USA, the company aims to develop the tools and approaches to allow regional communities to think about their future in a new way and to respond to a rapidly changing world. Innovative Leadership is a market leader in the field of regional scenario planning and has undertaken projects across Australia, USA, Canada and Ireland.

### About The Authors:

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