Master's thesis

NTNU
Norwegian University of Science and Technology
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Rural Planning and Governance

A Case Study on the Utah Rural Coordinating Council

Master's thesis in Urban Ecological Planning
Supervisor: Peter Andreas Gotsch, Ph.D.
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Abstract

In the urban State of Utah, rural communities face a myriad of economic, social, and environmental challenges. After the multifunctional transition and localism movements of the 1960s, 70's, and 80's left rural communities lacking the professional and resource capacities of their urban counterparts, these communities faced decades of disinvestment. As part of a growing interest in rural Utah, December of 2018 saw the creation of the Rural Coordinating Council (RCC), a grassroots initiative among service providers that seek to better allocate time, resources, and strategies in rural Utah. This study aims to understand how the RCC affects rural planning and rural governance in Utah, and to critically analyze the RCC to determine its prospects and transferability.

To research this aim, the research strategy used an explorative case study approach. Data collection methods included documents, interviews, and focus groups. Documents ranging from meeting notes, briefs, and action plans were examined. 16 in-depth and focused interviews were carried out with members of the RCC and external practitioners. Three synchronous focus groups were held with RCC members. Data analysis methods included thematic analysis, analytic generalization, and SWOT analysis. By using a qualitative research and content analysis software, the analysis was systematic and reliable. The results detailed the RCC structure, highlighted its prospects and transferability, and showed that the RCC impacts both rural planning and rural governance in Utah.

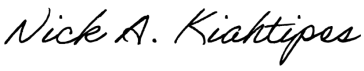
The RCC is a unique type of intergovernmental partnership that promises results for those in rural Utah. The research provided a thorough, explorative view of the RCC, resulting in several implications not only to the RCC but to external practitioners and to planning and governance theory. On the basis of the results, those internal and external to the RCC have better and more accessible data to act and make decisions on. Others are able to learn from the RCC model to implement and improve the practices of rural planning and rural governance.

Keywords: Intergovernmental Partnerships, New Governance, Rural Governance, Rural Planning, Rural Utah, Service Provider Coordination

Statement of Originality

I certify and that this is my own work and that the materials have not been published before, or presented at any other module, or programme. The materials contained in this thesis are my own work, not a “duplicate” from others. Where the knowledge, ideas and words of others have been drawn upon, whether published or unpublished, due acknowledgements have been given. I understand that the normal consequence of cheating in any element of an examination or assessment, if proven, is that the thesis may be assessed as failed.

Price, Utah
June 28, 2021



Nick A. Kiahtipes

Preface

When applying to the UEP program two years ago, I wrote about the many issues facing rural communities and my connection to these rural issues. Being born and raised within a rural, resource extracting community, I developed a strong love of place. However, the place I loved was changing and was facing an economic downturn and experiencing the opioid epidemic that swept the nation. When it came time to decide a thesis topic, I am pleased to have chosen a topic that is not only focused on rural Utah but one that pushes the conversation around rural planning and new governance forward. It is my hope that those within and outside of the RCC find value in this research.

I am grateful to all those who supported me and this research. My supervisor, Peter Andreas Gotsch, Ph.D. and co-supervisor, Yu Wang, Ph.D. were instrumental during the formulation, execution, and write-up of this research. They provided professional feedback while supporting my efforts. I would also like to express my gratitude to those with the Community Development Office. Due to your willingness to engage with me, this research was not only able to happen but was strengthened. To those who participated in the interviews and focus groups, thank you for taking the time to participate in this research and be of valuable help. Without all of your support and guidance, I would not have completed this research.

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List of Abbreviations

CDO	Community Development Office
GRPB	Governor's Rural Partnership Board
RCC	Rural Coordinating Council
SRDC	State Rural Development Council
UEP	Urban Ecological Planning
URDC	Utah Rural Development Council

Ch. 1 Introduction

1.1 Significance and Relevance of the Study

While the world is rapidly urbanizing and built environment professionals are turning their gaze at ever-growing metropolises, rural America has faced decades of disinvestment, significant outmigration, and an opioid epidemic. Today, rural Utah faces a myriad of economic, social, and environmental challenges such as varied development pressures, contrasting positions on environmental protection, and the shrinking fossil fuel industry. Some challenges are starkly different as some cities are facing crippling development while others desire to see modest investments within their communities. Within the last decade, the State of Utah, where roughly 91% of the population lives within urban areas (Utah: 2010, 2012), has turned significant amounts of attention towards rural Utah. This energy culminated a little over two years ago with the formation of the Rural Coordinating Council (RCC).

Initiated by a state-level planning office, the RCC is a grassroots initiative that seeks to better allocate time, resources, and strategies in rural Utah by increasing communication and collaboration with state and federal agencies, universities, and statewide public organizations. The RCC stands in stark contrast to many rural planning and governance efforts due to its adoption of prominent planning and new governance principles. As a coordinating entity, members of the RCC are from a wide variety of state, federal, non-profit, higher education, and additional state-wide offices. These members volunteer their time and efforts to the RCC as there is no requirement for participation, even amongst state employees.

Over two years since the inaugural meeting in December 2018, the RCC has some notable achievements. First and foremost, the RCC gathers service providers from around the state every four months. Doing simply this provides coordination and information sharing between service providers spanning sectors and working areas that has rarely been seen. Additionally, the RCC has working groups made up of members who rally behind a specific topic or project. From these groups have come several successes. A working group that focused on main streets developed a white paper that arose to the legislature and became an annually funded program.

Another group worked diligently to inventory all of the financial and technical assistance resources available to rural Utah. RCC members even present at state conferences as a means to highlight what service providers around the state offer to local communities.

While the RCC has these accomplishments under its belt, the RCC is an anomaly in many regards. With the RCC being young in age and new in structure and mission, there is a need to understand what the RCC is, how it functions, and how it is situated to face the future. This research provides an explorative view of the RCC to serve both RCC members and those who are interested in adopting the RCC model in their context.

1.2 Framing the Research Questions

This research aims to understand how the RCC affects rural planning and rural governance in Utah, and to critically analyze the RCC to determine its prospects and transferability. To meet this aim, the research uses a case study approach that focuses on the RCC and its members. The case study is based on rural planning and new governance theory. From the aim comes five objectives: 1) understand how the RCC affects rural planning, 2) understand how the RCC affects rural governance, 3) understand how the RCC is positioned with other institutions, policies, and regulations, 4) understand the ways the RCC may move forward, and 5) understand the transferability of the RCC. The aim and objectives are elaborated thoroughly in Chapter 3 and Table 2, the Consistency Table.

Within the "second half of the twentieth century, planning theory and practice have been dominated by urban challenges, with an increasingly unimaginative rural planning regime driven largely by a dominant agricultural agenda" (Scott et al., 2019, p. 1). Such planning practices have rendered rural areas in the United States as a draining bathtub that is losing people and resources for the emerging globalized post-industrial world (Lapping and Scott, 2019). In sync with these rural planning processes is the rise of the concept of governance amongst urban scholars and policymakers (Cheshire et al., 2015).

However, the last couple of decades have witnessed the emergence of rural back into popular

planning and governance discourse. Today, many view that "effective management of rural resources and land use is central to key global challenges" such as "climate mitigation, climate change adaptation, biodiversity loss, energy security, food security, and the siting of key infrastructure" (Scott et al., 2019, p. 2). Due to this awareness, a "substantial body of research has been undertaken on the topic of rural governance to show that the extent and impact of such [challenges] are equally significant for rural economies and societies" (Cheshire et al., 2015, p. 1). Recently, rural areas are experiencing a revival in the content of COVID-19 with new focuses on remote/home-work, fear of urban centers, rising investments in secondary homes, and bringing abroad production sectors back.

Rural Utah is witnessing these changing rural planning and governance paradigms. The RCC serves to better coordinate time, resources, and strategies for rural Utah. Doing so has the potential to significantly improve individual productivity, incomes, and citizens' welfare. This is both because government investments in physical and human capital support individuals' livelihoods directly (e.g., agricultural extension services train farmers to make better investments, and public healthcare reduces the overall incidence of illness and thus directly makes workers more productive) and because they raise individuals' goals and aspirations for the future—thus convincing them to make costly but rewarding investments of their own (Kosec and Khan, 2016; Kosec and Mo, 2017). In addition to service delivery, the government also has the important role of supporting economic activity through good economic governance (Kosec and Wantchekon, 2020).

In this sense, the RCC sits in the middle of both the paradigm shifts for rural planning and governance but also the effort within Utah to shape the livelihoods of rural Utahns through service delivery. Therefore, a case study on the RCC sits at the heart of the Urban Ecological Planning (UEP) graduate program at NTNU in which this thesis is based. "The term ecological refers to both the social and environmental ecologies and their interaction within human habitats. The UEP approach has its roots in the Urban Ecology approach at the Chicago School (Sliwa et al., 2018), which focuses on studies of urban social structures and their evolution based on solid empirical knowledge. This includes investigating how urban management and politics

shape the social and physical urban environments, and vice-versa. It can be said, therefore, that the "main components of the UEP paradigm are social ecology, political ecology and urban planning" (Sliwa et al., 2018, p. 1).

It is with this base in UEP that the author addresses this research on rural planning and new governance in relation to the RCC.

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis contains a total of six chapters. Chapter 1 is the introduction where the purpose of the research and the frame of the questions were discussed. Chapter 2 presents the theoretical background which served as the basis of the case study. Broken into three sections, the chapter covers rural planning, new governance, and intergovernmental partnerships. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology used when approaching and executing this research. The chapter details the research strategy, data collection methods, data analysis methods, and the limitations and challenges of this research. Chapter 4 outlines the context of this research and the RCC. Starting with the government and planning systems in Utah, the chapter then discusses what rural Utah is and what is the RCC. Chapter 5 presents the analysis and results. As the largest chapter, it details the results from each of the methods and breaks the conversation down by research question. Lastly, Chapter 6 summarizes and concludes the findings and implications of this research. Figure 1 illustrates how the theory of rural planning and governance serves as the base and interacts with each aspect of this research.

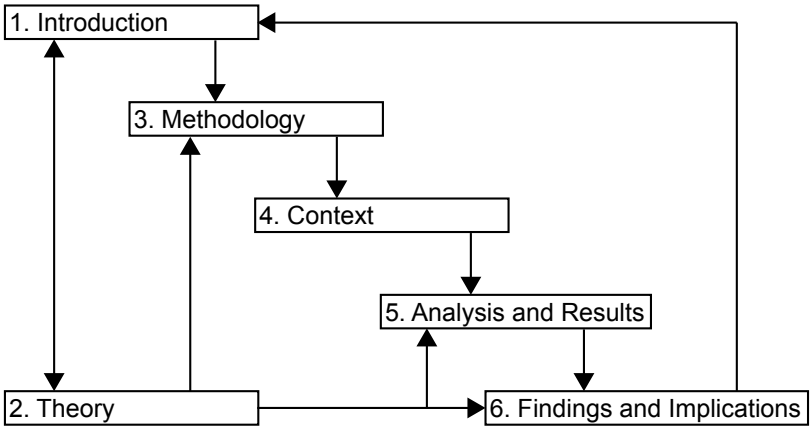

Figure 1. Structure of Thesis, Illustrated by Author, Adopted and Edited from Vrebos, 2015

Ch. 2 Theory

This chapter reviews the theory topics of rural planning, new governance, and partnerships. Since the RCC is based in Utah, these planning theories will largely be addressed in the context of the United States. This review of published planning literature and academic articles achieves three objectives.

The first objective is to review popular planning theory in the US and focuse on the theories and challenges faced today. The second objective is to create a knowledge base for which the author then formulated the methodology of this project from. Lastly, the third objective is to use the theory learned to critique and analyze the data from the case study.

2.1 Rural Planning

While traditionally, rural planning was synonymous with agricultural development, today's rural "planners face a new breed of economic, social, and environmental issues" (Marcouiller et al., 2002, p. 515). Despite these challenges, "rural planning has, over the last 50 years, been relegated to the margins of planning theory and practice" (Gallent and Scott, 2017; Lapping, 2006; as cited in Scott et al., 2019). Nevertheless, as 'urban' continued to dominate the field of planning, reasonably and logically so, a whole list of global issues have emerged which are inextricably tied to rural: climate change, future energy supply, food scarcity, biodiversity, and ecosystem services (Dandekar and Hibbard, 2016; Morrison et al., 2015).

2.1.1 Rural Planning in the US

There was a "long-held view that agriculture equated rural and that rural areas were essentially populated by farm families" (Lapping and Scott, 2019, p. 30). At that turn of the 20th Century, rural development was focused on the planning and promotion of rural settlements based on agriculture and natural resource extraction (Dandekar and Hibbard, 2016). In the process of meeting this goal, two themes of thinking developed. The first was managing primary resources such as food, energy, and minerals for the development of urban areas and the support of the national economy (Morrison et al., 2015). The second theme was concerned with providing

“permanent occupations, homes and communities in rural regions” (MacKaye, 1919 as cited in Morrison et al., 2015).

Primary resource management in the western US was a national topic during the late 19th and early 20th century. This time was as a turning point when the American frontier was vanishing and the related values of wilderness, frontiersmen, and national identity were at stake. From this sense of urgency came the notion of conservation. Large swaths of lands were being put under the government’s control. Yellowstone and Yosemite are ruminants from this era. This period is characterized by the “conversion of the continent’s environmental assets into economic commodities, and to provide government-owned environmental resources to private entrepreneurs as subsidies to promote this goal” (Andrews, 2020, p. 136). Perhaps the progressive theory of conservation was best iterated by President Theodore Roosevelt during his 1907 address to the Conference of Governors: “the conservation of our natural resources and their proper use constitute the fundamental problem which underlies almost every other problem of our national life” (United States Congressional Serial Set, 1964).

These decades saw many national projects such as the damning of Hetch Hetchy and the creation of the Tennessee Valley authority. Through these actions, rural areas were activated for a higher, national purpose. Therefore, rural areas were synonymous with agriculture/resource development and homogeneous in their purpose of managing primary resources and providing permanent homes and communities.

Following the end of World War II, this top-down, land management approach started to give way to a national development planning paradigm focused on industry and urban areas. This shift resulted in three main trends which were in full swing by the late 1970s (Dandekar and Hibbard, 2016):

- The industrialization of agriculture and natural resource management reinforced the production aspects of rural planning while turning away from settlement goals.
- The environmental movement of the 1960s and 1970s, which focused on ecosystem preservation as its exclusive goal, disregarded the socio-economic implications for rural communities.
- The industrialization of commodity production disconnected rural communities

> from the socio-economic benefits of the production of food, fiber, lumber, and other commodities.

Removing commodity production from the base of rural communities and the prioritization of the environmental movement meant that the way the nation planned rural landscapes had to change (Hibbard and Lurie, 2013). The production, consumption, and protection of rural landscapes soon defined the complex and overlapping uses of rural spaces; this dynamic has been termed the 'multifunctional transition' (Holmes, 2006; McCarthy, 2005).

In hand with the multifunctional transition, the federal government started to pull back their top-down, expert-driven approach that arose with the 20th Century due to public and political pressure (Dandekar and Hibbard, 2016, p. 227). Therefore, "responsibility for planning and implementation [was] devolved to local communities and non-state associations" (Dandekar and Hibbard, 2016, p. 227) in a process coined localism. While there were efforts in the 1970s and 1980s for federal responses to rural planning problems, there was "no national land use planning policy in the United States" and that land use was "understood as essentially local in nature" (Lapping and Scott, 2019, p. 29). What federal attention was paid to rural communities was through the US Department of Agriculture which was spending the majority of its budget on "increasing farm incomes and price stability in commodity markets" (Lapping and Scott, 2019, p. 29).

The processes of multifunctional transition and localism left rural areas outside of the larger policy conversations. Without any substantial attention from lawmakers and industry, rural places and ways of life were marginalized and rural planning came to be seen as side-show (Marsden, 2006, p. 4). The consequences for rural communities were real. Looking back at what happened to rural communities, Frank and Hibbard say that "rural areas in the US have been the bathtub that's draining, extracting people and resources for the emerging globalized post-industrial world" (2017, p. 302).

2.1.2 Current State of Rural Planning

While those decades of rural marginalization took their toll on communities, the future of

rural areas is becoming a prime topic once again. As the world increasingly urbanizes and is faced with challenges such as climate change, food scarcity, and biodiversity loss, there is a growing recognition in the role that rural communities and landscapes have (Dandekar and Hibbard, 2016; Morrison et al., 2015). In the face of these global challenges, Woods states that many scholars have noted that "the assumptions and principles that underpinned the long period of stable rural policy in the post-Second World War area have been challenged by social, economic, environmental, and political pressures" (2019, p. 622).

In an effort to define what this rural change is, Woods describes six key drivers that are leading the debates around rural planning (2019): 1) Urbanization, 2) Globalization, 3) Environmental Change, 4) Commodification of the Countryside, 5) Technological Change, and 6) Political and Ideological Pressures. These six drivers display the complexity and sometimes contradictory positions that rural planning faces. Expounding on urbanization alone there are issues of urban encroachment, increased competition for resources, and the viability of depopulating rural communities. This change in policy direction is a "fundamental shift away from sectoral support policy for agriculture and top-down policy interventions towards a spatial, territorial, and integrated approach to rural development" (Shucksmith, 2000 as cited in Scott, 2019, p. 219).

These new policy interventions stand in stark contrast to the development practices a century ago and the neglect of rural places just a couple decades ago. Today, the term planning "needs to work with and through different actors, connect in some way with the complexity of the countryside and can be a multi sectoral activity, sometimes dealing with broad structural challenges" (Gallent and Gkartzios, 2019, p. 17). The phrases 'complexity of countryside' and 'multi-sectoral activity' signal that rural planning is no longer synonymous with agriculture. Today's planning literature recognizes that rural spaces extend from the near-urban to remote wilderness, from economic prosperity to cycle of decline, and ranges of historical context.

This new spatial, territorial, and integrated approach to rural development is taking a variety of shapes via different interventions in many contexts. Despite the common goals of this approach, there is no set prescriptive agenda for rural planning. Instead, there is an increased "attention

to the range of pressures and realties that will frame planning practice in the coming century" (Scott et al., 2019, p. 642). The spatial, territorial, and integrated approaches responding to current pressures and realties are wide and varied. Here are a few examples of the most popularized approaches

There are efforts to undo commodity production and redesign the direct links between producers and urban centers which bypassed rural communities and hurt their economies which entail activities such as watershed restoration, community forestry, sustainable agriculture, and ecosystem services (Hibbard and Lurie, 2013, p. 827). There are also other economic development approaches, coined development pathways, across the nation which include rural enterprise innovations, the potential of payments for ecosystem services, and the rise of the rural creative class (Scott et al., 2019). These approaches "can help diversify rural economies while also enhancing environmental, social, and cultural assets" (Hibbard and Lurie, 2013, p. 827).

There is also increased attention towards rural governance "as a way to mitigate the limitations of the traditional government unit-based approaches to problem solving, decision making, and to foster partnerships across both jurisdictional boundaries" (Lu and Jacobs, 2013, p. 80). The resulting approaches are generally instruments for local people to exercise their agency and tackle elements of their lives while also ensuring the state does not necessarily experience a loss of power or legitimacy (Lu and Jacobs, 2013).

Many of these new approaches revolve around or include an aspect of community in their formulation. The term community has become a rather substantial topic in rural policymaking, "where it is used across a range of policy discourses" (Dinnie and Fischer, 2020, p. 243). In the majority of these discourses, the term community means a community of place and that there is an assumption that they exist as stable units that merely need to be empowered (Little, 2002). The result are approaches that ignore the "dynamic and relational processes through which community and sense of community are created and re-created by different people in the same place" (Dinnie and Fischer, 2020, p. 255).

While these examples of approaches are wide and varied, this list is not all-inclusive of every activity. Nevertheless, it is apparent that they are responsive to an extensive list of broad, high-level issues while responding the to needs of rural communities without generalizing to a damaging extent. It is apparent more than ever that rural planning will play a critical role in negotiating the diverse pressers the world is challenged with while seeking to develop and implement policies that will mediate their impact on rural areas (Woods, 2019).

2.2 New Rural Governance

The terms "government", "governance", and "new governance" are related terms but depending on which sector or setting the terms are analyzed in, they each mean something slightly different. This section looks at these three words from an international, urban, and rural perspective to fully realize the varied definitions of these terms.

2.2.1 Government and Governance

When first hearing the word governance, individuals would most likely think of the term government. It is a term that has context in nearly every nation and state on Earth. This breadth is reflected in Merriam-Webster's definition of government as the "body of persons that constitutes the governing authority of a political unit or organization." For the purposes of this project, a more narrow and applicable definition is needed.

From a social science perspective, Stoker (2018) defines government as the "the formal and institutional processes which operate at the level of the nation state to maintain public order and facilitate collective action" (p. 17). Similarly, Fluharty (2004) defines government in the context of the United States as formal institutions such as states, cities, counties, special districts, school systems, and native reservations. Stoker recognizes the formal and institutional actors that make up government while Fluharty recognizes that those actors and institutions often exist below the level of a nation down to the local level. These three definitions still provide a wide range of actors and institutions that can be defined as government.

Nevertheless, government is just a term nestled in the umbrella term of governance. For instance,

the Director for the Rural Governance Initiative, Nancy Stark, says that while "government is the most recognized form of governance, it is not the whole story" (Fluharty, 2004, p. 29). 'Governance' has become a term that is widely embraced in international development literature in which it describes "the relationships between civil society, the state and private sector with many interpretations" (Brown, 2015, p. 5). The United Nations Development Program defines governance as "the system of values, policies and institutions by which a society manages its economic, political and social affairs through interactions within and among the state, civil society and private sector" (UNDP, 2011, p. 287).

Similar to these definitions, much of the literature produced to define and explain governance is often paired with the term "urban". Avis (2016) states that urban governance "refers to how local, regional, and national government and stakeholders decide how to plan, finance and manage urban areas" (p. 5). Avis (2016) continues that urban governance involves "a continuous process of negotiation and contestation over the allocation of social and material resources and political power" (p. 5). This process of negotiating the management of urban areas involves a host of social and economic actors which includes but not limited to "labour markets, goods and services; household, kin and social relationships; and basic infrastructure, land, services and public safety" (Devas, 2012, p. 1). In an attempt to visualize these many actors and institutions of urban governance, Brown (2015) created Figure 2. Brown depicts the formal institutions of government at state and local levels, the civil society, and the private sector. Within those circles, Brown recognizes the role that informality plays in urban governance.

Brown's inclusion of informality into the concept of governance is repeated elsewhere. Eden and Hampson give informality a comparable status to formality with their definition of governance, which is "formal and informal institutional devices through which political and economic actors organize and manage their interdependencies" (1997, p. 362).

It is from these urban conceptions of governance that the notion of rural governance was shaped from. However, the defining difference is the fact that when "compared to their colleagues in urban and suburban governments, rural public decisionmakers are significantly disadvantaged" (Fluharty, 2004, p. 33). The average assessment of rural governments reveal that they have few

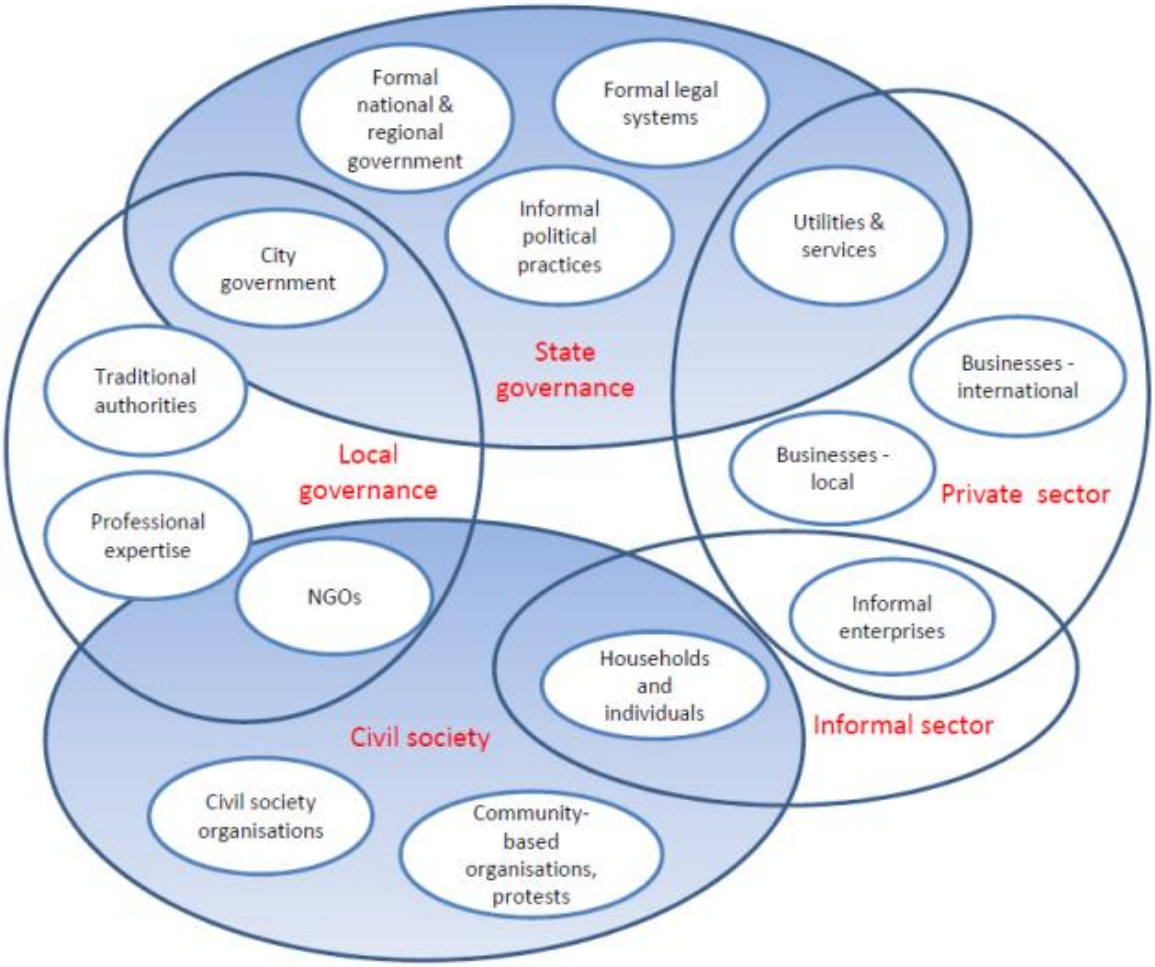

Figure 2. Actors and Institutions of Urban Governance (Brown, 2015)

or no research staff, technical experts, economic analysists, grant writers, or other professional staff; this is combined with the reality that many public servants and staff are part-time with little or no pay (Fluharty, 2004). There was also an academic blind spot in regard to rural governance when other forms of governance had already reached popular lexicon. There is a "curious neglect of governance perspectives in contemporary rural geography" and that "this neglect, continues in 'sharp contrast' to other areas of the social sciences where a focus on governance has assumed a major prominence" (Goodwin, 1998, as cited in Little, 2001). However, with the start of the 21st Century, the application of governance perspectives to the economic, social, and political topics of rural areas started to take place and that new directions emerged from that research (Little, 2001). 20 years later, today, there is a sizable body of research on rural governance. Currently, "theoretical debates and empirical studies focusing on the topics are now a regular feature in publications such as the Journal of Rural Studies" (Cheshire et al., 2015, p. 301).

2.2.2 New Governance

Those two decades of academic and practitioner debate of rural governance has led to the new governance framework being "widely recognized as a dominant new given in American public policy and administration" (Fluharty, 2004, p. 32). Even in a rural paradigm it is extensively accepted that "new governance structures are required to address the challenges of sustainable rural development, given the nature of the problems faced, and the incapacity and eroded legitimacy of existing modes of government to address these problems" (Goodwin, 1998, as cited in Connelly et al., 2015, p. 245).

These theoretical and practical advancements of new governance are particularly critical in rural America. This strategy of "governing through communities has been promoted through a rhetoric that implies the devolution of power from the central state to rural communities themselves" (Woods et al., 2015, p. 211). The federal government will continue to devolve roles and responsibilities down to states and localities, often in block-granting structures, the capacity of rural jurisdictions to compete for these funds is increasingly important" (Fluharty, 2004, p. 32).

This emphasis on community action and partnerships within the concept of new governance places "great responsibility on communities to organize themselves, mobilize local resources, and build a capacity to act to take advantage of the opportunities open to them" (Woods et al., 2015, p. 223). However, the process of rural differentiation that has been going on for decades has intensified in recent years and has resulted in rural marginalization (Bock, 2019). While there are prospering rural areas, such as those within reach of larger cities, the situation is very different for most rural areas which are experiencing depopulation and are facing continuous decline in living conditions. Therefore, while many commentators have celebrated the arrival of new governance practices to rural areas, "others have observed that developing opportunity also means developing responsibility for failure" (Woods et al., 2015, p. 211).

2.2.3 Principles of New Governance

This adoption of new governance throughout rural policy can be generalized as shift from a

"centralized, sector-focused, top-down approach to one shaped by multi-level governance and integrated policies, which recognizes the diversity of rural places" (Tomaney et al., 2019, p. 172). However, institutions around the globe have tried to define what principles the shift should embody. Table 1 contains characteristics and goals of new governance as defined by three leading sources ranging from international, urban, and rural perspectives. With an international perspective, the UN-Habitat identifies seven characteristics of good governance (UN-Habitat, 2008). Focusing on urban settings, Loven et al. define seven principles in which the "new participatory governance dynamic has been redefining relationships and responsibilities in the planning and implementation of policies and programs" (2004). Within a rural context, the Rural Governance Initiative created seven principles of effective rural governance (Fluharty, 2004).

International	
1	Sustainability: balancing social, economic and environmental needs for present/future generations
2	Subsidiarity: taking decisions at the lowest appropriate level of government
3	Equity or inclusiveness: level of participation in decision-making and access to basic services
4	Efficiency: in service delivery and promoting local economic development
5	Transparency and accountability: of decisions
6	Civic Engagement: of citizens
7	Security: of individuals and their living environment
Urban	
1	It is interactive
2	It is strategically driven
3	It cmprises of joint working
4	It is multidimensional in scope
5	It is reflective
6	It is asset-based
7	It champions authentic dialouque
Rural	
1	Cross-border collaboration
2	Analysis of competitive advantage
3	New, inlcusive leadership
4	Involvement by key intermediaries
5	Grassroots visioning
6	Public entrepreneurial development
7	Solid acheivments and celebations

Table 1. Principles of New Governance, Created by author from Fluharty, 2004; Lovan et al., 2004; and UN-Habitat, 2008

These three sources gather a total of 21 goals and characteristics of new governance that span international, urban, and rural perspectives. There are several themes that are apparent in each perspective. These are inclusion, process, and outcomes.

The concept of the inclusion of voices is a common factor. From terms such as engagement, interactive, and collaboration, there is an emphasis on getting many voices at the table in order for the negotiation process of governance to take place.

A second evident thread is defined by the process of negotiation and goal setting. From terms such as subsidiary, compromise joint-working, and grassroots visioning, there is a common understanding that new governance has a process which is close to those being governed. This is in contrast to the top-down approach that is typically characterized in governance literature and materialized in government institutions.

The third discernable thread between the three groups is that new governance is defined by its outcomes. In the case of the UN-Habitat, the characteristics of the outcomes are defined with the terms sustainability and security. The participatory perspective emphasizes authentic dialogue as an outcome in itself. Lastly, the Rural Governance Initiative says that there has to be tangible achievements for the system to truly be new governance. Each of these three groups says that for a process to truly be considered new governance, is has to have real outcomes as to measure its success.

2.3 Intergovernmental Partnerships

This section explores innovative government structures that embody the principles of new governance: intergovernmental partnerships. Such structures are a current talking point amongst policy professionals. Discussions of partnerships within political terms are viewed nearly entirely positively as partnership culture has spread considerably (Jones and Little, 2000). This section first discusses the links between partnerships and new governance. Secondly, common threads between types of partnerships are explored. Lastly, the legitimacy of partnerships is discussed.

2.3.1 Partnerships and New Governance

While partnerships are nothing new to the world, their emergence as part of new governance is notable. Jones and Little state that "partnership processes are of vital importance because of the central role they play in the emergent culture of governance which is now receiving a great deal of theoretical attention" (2000, p. 171). Therefore, even if there is no common definition of new governance, new governance is manifesting on the ground around the world in the form of partnerships.

Partnerships are also forming within the cross-section of governance and rural. Authors such as Edwards (1998), Jones and Little (2000), and Cloke et al. (2000) "have drawn attention to the growing reference to, and use of, partnerships within various aspects of rural decision-making and development" (Little, 2001, p. 98). Others have also stated that the expansion of partnership working is a key constituent of a `new rural governance' (Goodwin, 1998; Murdoch and Abram, 1998).

Edwards et al. (2001) perhaps perfectly describe why partnerships became the new norm in the time of new governance:

> *The attraction of partnerships results from their apparent potential to bring interested local organisations and agents of government together to pool their resources (material, human, and financial), leading to the development of consensual strategies to address issues of regeneration. Partnerships, it is claimed, can offer a blending of resources from the public, private, and voluntary sectors which adds up to more than the sum of the parts, can provide a forum in which local communities can make their voices heard, and, as agencies for delivery, can help foster a shared sense of objectives and direction at a local level. (Edwards et al., 2001, p. 289)*

2.3.2 Partnership Types

While an exhaustive list of the combination and configurations of partnerships is likely way too long for this section's scope, literature on partnerships reveals some common threads. Therefore, the most prevalent and relevant configurations on partnerships are described in this section.

Morrison (2014) proposes four indicators of rural, regional governance (1) engagement in regional networks; (2) diversity and synergies across the instrument mix; (3) robustness and

adaptability in instrument design; and (4) broader fiscal, administrative and democratic support. Partnerships embody these four aspects as they implement new governance. These partnerships are critical as there "is general agreement in the literature that regional governance is no longer a bounded singular arrangement but characterized by diverse and networked policy-making and implementation arrangements over time and scale, diverse institutional actors and policy instruments, and both self-organized and centrally-steered choreography of actors" (Morrison, 2014, p. 104).

This networked policy-making and implementation aspect of partnerships is strongly associated "with two different aspects of network governance - the management collective decision-making by regional stakeholders ('governance of networks'), and the ability to execute these decisions ('governance through networks')" (Meyer and Elbe, 2015, p. 81). This concept may be described as network governance which "refers to interfirm coordination that is characterized by organic or informal social systems, in contrast to bureaucratic structures within firms and formal contractual relationships between them" (Jones et al., 1997, p. 913). Governance of and through networks is achieved by means of horizontal and vertical integration.

Similar to networking, partnerships may include a mission for information sharing. Since "data are available with greater coverage, frequency, and reliability than ever before, and transferring and processing them has become increasingly cheaper and easier," this increased access to information "could in theory significantly improve development outcomes is in rural public service delivery and governance" (Kosec and Wantchekon, 2020, p. 1). Due to the remoteness of rural areas, service delivery and government accountability are especially difficult and fragile. Remoteness not only spatially but also economically and politically means that "public services are often delivered in an environment with both poor information among service providers about the demands of service users and poor information among service users about the mandates and capabilities of service providers" (Kosec and Wantchekon, 2020, p. 2).

2.3.3 Partnerships and Legitimacy

Due to the process of partnerships promoting new working relationships between different

state agencies and between the public, private, and voluntary sectors, partnerships have to achieve a level of legitimacy if they are to continue to exist in the modern world. “Legitimacy is clearly a necessity for any system of Democratic government” (Connelly et al., 2015, p. 246), and partnerships are no exception. Therefore, the success of these innovative partnerships rests “on their ability to generate sufficient legitimacy to sustain their capacity for effective [policymaking], raising the questions of what constitutes legitimacy for such processes and further, how this might be assessed normatively” (Connelly et al., 2015, p. 245).

Partnerships’ legitimacy may lie in the realization that while many partnerships aim to be representative and inclusive in their mission to broaden participation, specifically to marginalized groups, “the capacity of partnerships to redistribute power away from the state is illusory” (Edwards et al., 2001, p. 308). State institutions are often heavily represented on partnership committees, partnerships are commonly scaled to match the existing scalar division of the state, and states are often the instigators and funders of partnerships (Edwards et al., 2001).

Without actually redistributing power away from states, partnerships achieve legitimacy if they never leave the legitimacy of the state government. Another way to say this is as long as “partnerships have no direct accountability to the public, remain dominated by state sector representatives, funding, and resourcing, and operate within structures established by state agencies, then it is the state which continues to govern governance” (Edwards et al., 2001, p. 308). In this way, partnerships appeal for legitimization through the electoral process of the state (Connelly et al., 2015, p. 247).

Ch. 3 Methodology

This chapter details the research methods used to answer the research aim and objectives in Chapter 1. The reasoning for using these research and analytical methods, how they were used, and their benefits and limitations will be discussed in detail.

3.1 Research Strategy

The author uses a qualitative case-study research design to empirically research the RCC since it is a contemporary phenomenon in its real-world context and that the boundaries between the RCC and its context are not clearly evident (Yin, 2009, p. 18). The research strategy aims to answer four main questions in the following sections: what questions to study, what data are relevant, what data to collect, and how to analyze the results (Philliber et al., 1980).

As Yin (2009, p. 3) suggests, the author began the case study process with a thorough literature review. By critically analyzing published materials and academic journals on the topics of rural planning and rural governance, the author carefully ideated the research questions and objectives. Table 2 on the following page is a consistency table that expands on the primary research aim stated earlier. It details the objectives and questions that must be explored as part of the broader research question.

By using the case-study design, the author aims to achieve four goals (Yin, 2009, Chapter 1): The first is to explain the presumed causal links in the RCC and how it intervenes in real-life, which is too complex for the survey or experimental strategies. Secondly, is to describe the RCC and the real-life context in which it occurred. Thirdly, is to illustrate certain topics within an evaluation. Fourthly, to enlighten the non-clear or singular set of outcomes of the RCC.

The case study uses three methods of data gathering. The first method is semi-structured interviews with those individuals involved with the RCC, those who organized and currently administer the RCC, and outside experts and practitioners of rural policy and planning. Documentation, largely in the form of agendas, reports, and presentations, will be used to provide a more complete picture. The third data gathering method is a focus group activity

Aim	Objective	Question
To understand how the RCC affects rural planning and rural governance in Utah, and to critically analyze the RCC to determine its prospects and transferability.	To understand how the RCC affects rural planning	How does the RCC affect rural planning on the ground? What prominent planning principles does the RCC embody?
	To understand how the RCC affects rural governance	How does the RCC affect rural governance within the State? What prominent new governance principles does the RCC embody?
	To understand how the RCC is positioned with other institutions, policies, and regulations	What organizational factors allowed the RCC to start and operate in Utah? What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the RCC?
	To understand they ways the RCC may move forward	What has characterized the RCC evolution to this point? What are the possibilities of how the RCC may move forward?
	To understand the transferability of the RCC	What organizational factors of the RCC affect its transferability?

Table 2. Consistency Table

during the March 18, 2021 quarterly RCC meeting. Following the data collection phase, three primary methods will be used to analyze the data: SWOT analysis, thematic analysis, and analytic generalization.

3.2 Data Collection

Qualitative research methodologies and data collection are important modes of inquiry for the social sciences, including urban and rural planning (Marshall and Rossman, 2011). When approaching this project, it was important to look at the scope of methods available to collect data for a case study on an organizational scale. Yin (2009) talks about the six sources of evidence for case studies: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observation, and physical artifacts. The following three methods were chosen for their strengths and weakness in researching the RCC during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.2.1 Documentation

To gain data on how the RCC was concepted, implemented, and administrated up to the current date, documentation will be used. By definition, documentation as a method involves a wide variety of information sources including personal documents such as letters, notes, and calendars, agency documents such as agendas and progress reports, and external data such as news articles and public records (Yin, 2009). Documents used include administrator notes, agendas, meeting notes, annual plans, conference presentation, briefs, and more.

These documents allowed the author to bring stability, exactness, and broad coverage to the case study (Yin, 2009). The stability is due to the process of all documents being saved by the author and repeatedly reviewed as needed. Exactness is characterized by the precise and unchanging nature of the documents. Some sources were also compared to one another to ensure accuracy, such as meeting minutes and agendas. Lastly, the array of documents allowed the author to span the timeline from conception through current day and assess many settings in relation to who and for what purpose the document was created.

3.2.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

In this case study, just like many case studies, interviews probably served as “one of the most important sources of case study information” (Yin, 2009, p. 106). The author structured all interviews as guided conversation instead of structured survey questions. This was in effort to keep the conversation fluid with consistent inquiry between the author and the interviewee (Rubin and Rubin, 1995). In addition to fluidness, all interviews used Becker’s (1998) advice of using two levels of questions. The first level are questions weaved through the interview that are friendly and nonthreatening as to prevent the interviewee from becoming defensive and closing off questioning. The second line of questions are aimed along the author’s line of inquiry. These are best formed as “why” questions rather than “how”. This strategy was critical for this organizational case study as interviewees are often part of or close to the RCC and would hesitate to cast a harsh light on the RCC that would reveal imperfections.

Following the theory literature review and during the documentation method, it became apparent that several different interview styles were needed. The first style was an in-depth interview where the author asked key interviewees not only about the facts of the matter but about their observations and opinions of how events carried out. A second type of interview used was a focused interview, defined as an interview where the conversation is rather short, typically under 60 minutes, and there are a mix of closed and open ended questions (Merton et al., 1990). The third and final style is an edition of the in-depth that had refocused questions for the external experts and practitioners. Using an in-depth approach, the author was able to ask higher-level questions and rely on the interviewee to take the conversation where it needed to.

An interview guide was created to aid the execution and documentation of the interviews. The final draft of the interview guide consisted of many questions that spanned levels one and two and were formulated for the three styles of interviews. The interview guide proved most useful during the focused and structured interviews. Due to the informant nature of in-depth interviews, the interview guide proved of less use as the topics discussed and explored could not have been entirely predicted and weaved into the interview guide. Table 3 identifies these three groups and characteristics of the interviews.

Order	Group	Type
Group1	Implementors and Administers of the RCC	In-Depth
Group 2	Members of the RCC	Semi-Structured
Group 3	External Experts and Practitioners	In-Depth

Table 3. Interview Orders, Groups, and Types

The first group, implementors and administrators of the RCC, were individuals who were intimately knowledgeable of the RCC and the social-political context it sits within. In the early phases of the case study, these individuals provided great insights and background. A couple key individuals served to connect the author with more documents and interviewees. These interviews often spanned several conversations and totaled a couple hours of conversation.

Early and new members of the RCC created the bulk count of interviews as they came from many state level agencies at multiple levels of the career ladder. These interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes.

The final group of interviews came in the later phases of the case study. Once data was collected via documents and previous interviews with the other two groups, external experts and practitioners were interviewed about the effectiveness, outcomes, and transferability of the RCC. This group of interviews provided a critical, higher level perspective of the RCC in relation to rural planning and governance. With all three interviewees having a connection to rural Utah, their input was relevant and highlighted the dynamics of rural planning and governance within Utah.

In the end, while the author had planned to have representatives from each of the sectors, in practice this idea was unable to be carried to fruition. Concerning state organizations, the author only received one response who was willing to participate. The other organizations either did not reply or they did not want to participate in the interview. The second sector that did not achieve full participation was from the federal agencies. Similarly, the author only received one response who was willing to participate while the others were unwilling or did not reply. A complete interview table is provided in Appendix A.

One of the federal contacts did reply that they were unable to participate as they had recently

moved positions which meant two things. First, that the individual said they were too busy to participate. Secondly, and more significantly, the individual had been away from the RCC for the better part of the year, citing their new role, and did not feel competent enough to provide a quality discussion. This second reason will be brought back up when discussing the weaknesses of the RCC.

3.2.3 Focus Groups

The third data collection method took place on March 18, 2021, during the tenth quarterly RCC meeting. While it was a standard meeting where routine business would be discussed, the meeting also held opportunity to engage with the members. With only 30 minutes total in allotted time, a condensed method was needed that could gain valuable insights from a large group of people. After discussion with the RCC administrator, it was decided to break the population of the zoom meeting into three breakout rooms so that a focus group approach could be used. Focus groups achieve two purposes (Watkins et al., 2012): 1) to collect information from a small group, approximately five to twelve individuals and 2) to do so in a systematic and structured format. The catch for these focus groups was the reality of zoom rather than in person due to COVID-19 guidelines. Thankfully, online focus groups have found application in a wide range of settings, including advertising, marketing, health care, education, social science research, and computer science (Stewart and Shamdasani, 2017). In addition, "research has demonstrated that online focus groups perform as well as face-to-face focus groups with respect to the elicitation of information from group participants" (Stewart and Shamdasani, 2017, p. 50).

After a brief presentation on the purpose of the thesis project and the engagement activities, all members on the zoom call were asked to complete a short questionnaire. The purpose was to provide an icebreaker and start engaging participants as a warm-up for the focus groups. The following questions were asked:

- What sector best fits you?
- Number of quarterly meetings attended?
- Number of working group meetings attended?

- Years in your current job title?
- Description that best describes your job?

Following the poll, members were self-selected into one of three breakout rooms which corresponded to a topic question with subsequent questions. The three topic questions were:

- What is the role of the RCC?
  - What are the goals and objectives of the RCC?
  - What are your goals as members?
  - What is the relationship between the RCC and other institutions such as local governments, legislature, various state agencies, AOG's, etc.?
- How effectively does the RCC meet the needs of rural Utah?
  - What are the characteristics or definition of success for the RCC?
  - Examples of success from the RCC?
  - What holds the RCC back from being more successful?
  - How does the RCC reshape the experience of rural communities?
- How transferable is the RCC structure?
  - How could other state use the model for rural efforts?
  - Could the model be used for urban efforts?
  - Could the model be used for governing environmental features such as cross-boundary lakes?
  - What enabled the success of the RCC that other states or nations may have difficulty replicating?

The participants had 15 minutes in their chosen room to discuss the topic questions and document their comments on a Google Jamboard which everyone had access to. Each room was moderated by a pre-determined individual whose purpose was to aid the author in carrying out the engagement activity. The author decided to allow people to self-select into the room of their choice as it appeared to be the most efficient method. Since the members on the call ranged from experienced members who are going on their third year to brand new members who are attending their first meeting, it was best not to pressure individuals into a room where they were not familiar enough to provide substantial comments. By self-selecting, new members had an opportunity to choose a question they were most competent to address. Similarly, experienced members had the opportunity to select the question they were most confident in.

Aim	Objective	Question	Analysis
To understand how the RCC affects rural planning and rural governance in Utah, and to critically analyze the RCC to determine its prospects and transferability.	To understand how the RCC affects rural planning	How does the RCC affect rural planning on the ground? What prominent planning principles does the RCC embody?	Thematic Analysis Analytic Generalization
	To understand how the RCC affects rural governance	How does the RCC affect rural governance within the State? What prominent new governance principles does the RCC embody?	Thematic Analysis Analytic Generalization
	To understand how the RCC is positioned with other institutions, policies, and regulations	What organizational factors allowed the RCC to start and operate in Utah? What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the RCC?	Thematic Analysis SWOT Analysis
	To understand they ways the RCC may move forward	What has characterized the RCC evolution to this point? What are the possibilities of how the RCC may move forward?	Analytic Generalization SWOT Analysis
	To understand the transferability of the RCC	What organizational factors of the RCC affect its transferability?	Thematic Analysis Analytic Generalization

Table 4. Consistency Table with Analysis

3.3 Data Analysis

After the data collection came time to analyze the data and extrapolate meaning. As Yin (2009) suggests, the author designed the case study with the analysis phase in mind from the very beginning. The author used the prepositions of the research question to focus on what data to pay attention to, what data to ignore, and ultimately which methods are best for analysis. The four prepositions are: rural planning, rural governance, prospects, and transferability. Relying on the theoretical prepositions of the research question is one of the "first and most preferred strateg[ies]" (Yin, 2009, p. 130) for analyzing a case study.

Three data analysis methods were chosen to best address the research questions: thematic analysis, analytic generalization, and SWAT analysis. Table 4 details which analysis methods relate most to which research objectives.

3.3.1 Thematic Analysis

The intent of thematic analysis is to "move beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focus on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data" (Guest et al., 2012, p. 9). This method was ideal for this particular case study due to the breadth of data collection methods. Relying on more traditional word-count methods would not have provided an accurate picture due to the nature of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Comparing word counts between these collection methods would be comparing apples and oranges. Whereas thematic analysis allows "thorough focusing on meaning across a data set… and allows the researcher to see and make sense of collective or shared meanings and experiences" (Braun and Clarke, 2012, p. 57).

To carry out the analysis, the author utilized the data processing software, NVivo. By first becoming familiar with the data, the author was then able to create initial codes for all the data collected. After assigning codes for each of the sources, the author searched and reviewed potential themes. Ultimately the themes were named and defined. These themes informed the case study in nearly every objective area.

3.3.2 Analytic Generalization

The purpose of analytic generalization is to transfer the knowledge formed by a case study through the processes of generalization (Johansson, 2004). To operationalize this generalization and create middle-range theory, the author used aspects of a methodology commonly called grounded theory (Charmaz and Belgrave, 2015; Glaser and Strauss, 2017). This "analytic process consists of coding data; developing, checking, and integrating theoretical categories; and writing analytic narratives throughout inquiry" (Charmaz and Belgrave, 2015, p. 27).

While the process of coding the data for theoretical categories is similar to thematic analysis, the difference lies in that codes were largely pre-determined by the theory texts rather than induced from the data itself. The author also used NVivo for this process by creating a separate project file with all the same data as to keep the analysis methods separate.

3.3.3 SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis was chosen for its applicability for analyzing the RCC itself at an organization scale but also the external factors that influence the RCC's prospects. Simply the SWOT analysis "is an analysis method used to evaluate the 'strengths', 'weaknesses', 'opportunities' and 'threats' involved in an organization" (Gürel, 2017, p. 994). These four subject titles take the form of a 2 x 2 matrix on paper. This matrix is regarded to be an "organizing framework for deconstructing and reconstructing problems, a means for the visualization of complexsituations, and safe grounds within which to conduct if-then experiments" (Beam, 2005 as cited in Leigh, 2010).

To complete the matrix in support of the research questions, the author used data from all three collection methods. Each of the collection methods provided insights into the internal and external factors of the RCC. Therefore, the SWOT analysis was conducted as the final analysis after the author synthesized all the data through the prior two analysis methods.

3.4 Limitations and Challenges

As the case study took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, adhering to distancing and additional guidelines was the most significant challenge faced. Rather than going into the field and engaging in participatory planning exercises, as is the UEP approach (Sliwa et al., 2018), the author was largely restricted to desk activities. In general, the reality of conducting the interviews and focus groups digitally over Zoom saw several challenges regarding flow of conversation and the level of engagement. More specifically, here are some of the limitations and challenges by method.

Interviews: Some of the common weaknesses with interviews are bias within responses, inaccuracies due to researcher interpretation, and reflexivity of the interviewee providing answers solely to please the interviewer or a third party (Yin, 2009, p. 102). The author also recognizes the inherent selection bias by inviting members by cold-emailing even though they were randomly selected from the member contact list within their respective sectors. Those who are more involved with the RCC are likely to be responding to an interview request concerning the RCC.

Focus Group: There are several weaknesses with focus groups, including unequal participation, risk of groupthink, time constraint to cover all relevant topics, and the intimidation of sharing sensitive information or views in a group setting (Watkins et al., 2012). A particular weakness for the focus group activity in this cases study is that the researcher was unable to simultaneously be in all three rooms at the same time. By utilizing staff members from CDO, the focus groups may have witnessed increased response bias and differences in facilitation.

Documentation: Retrievability, biased selectivity, and reporting bias are some of the common weaknesses for documentation (Yin, 2009, p. 102). The author gained access to a Google Drive file where the administrator of the RCC keeps a wide variety of documentation. This helped overcome some of the selectivity and reporting bias. However, having access to all those documents created an issue with an abundance of information. The author still had to prioritize some documents over others.

Thematic Analysis: Common weaknesses with thematic analysis are little or no analysis of the data where simple paraphrasing and summarizing is prominent and the error of using data collection as themes rather than using the content of data (Braun and Clarke, 2012). The author found that this analysis also took a lot of time and bandwidth. Themes often had to be revaluated as they were not coherent and lacked a consistent pattern.

Analytic Generalization: Due to the process of coding similarities with thematic analysis, analytical generalization suffered from similar weaknesses. This method also relies heavily on the author interpreting not only the data but also the theory. This interpretation leaves room for bias with both the selection and processing of data.

SWOT Analysis: Due to the simplicity of a SWAT analysis, they do not "allow practitioners a means for determining the degree to which a given SWOT factor serves as an enhancer or inhibitor" (Leigh, 2010, p. 1092). Therefore, the 2 x 2 matrix provides no measure as to which factors are more important than others. Therefore, this method also heavily relies on the authors interpretation of the data and matrix result. This opens up critique for biases.

An additional limitation to the broader case study research is that there was limited access to individuals who do not participate with the RCC or who do not favorably view the RCC. By using the RCC member list to reach individuals for the majority of interviews, conducting the focus groups with the RCC meeting, and the lack of external documentation, nearly all the data was collected from people who engage with the RCC. Conducting interviews with practitioners and experts did allow for some critical viewpoints to arise.

Ch. 4 Context

Chapters two and three provided a substantial background to the case study and the author's approach to the case study. Before the analysis and findings of the case study can be presented, three topics need to be covered to provide context. This chapter provides context to the case study by covering the government and planning systems in Utah, discussing what exactly rural Utah is and isn't, and describing what is known about the RCC before the analysis.

4.1 Government and Planning Systems in Utah

Utah is the 45th state in the United States of America. Identical to the federal government, the government of Utah is defined by a constitution. The Utah government consists of three branches: executive, legislative, and judicial.

The executive branch is headed by an elected governor. This office is currently occupied by Governor Spencer Cox. Within the executive branch, there are 23 total departments or department equivalents. These entities range from administrative services to environmental quality and public safety. There are an additional seven offices underneath the governor. Among these offices are several commissions and the Governor's Rural Partnership Board. At the beginning of Gov. Cox's term, a Senior Advisor for Rural Affairs position was created within the Office of the Governor. The advisor position is not over any particular agency but rather serves the interest of rural Utah holistically.

The legislative branch consists of the Utah Senate and the Utah House of Representatives. Both assemblies consist of elected representatives who hold the legislative powers along with the people of the state. Between the two assemblies are numerous committees broken into five categories: standing, interim, legislative management, executive appropriations, and confirmation.

Public administration in Utah is divided into primarily three levels. These levels are the state, county, and city. At the state level, "Utahns are served by a host of state officials, departments, boards, commissions, committees, and judges not to mention various local government units

and subunits" ("OLRGC," 2008, p. ii). The prior mentioned departments, commissions, and committees are among the various state organizations that serve Utah. Local government units consist of county and city governments whose broad powers are defined by the Utah Constitution. The term "subunits" refers to government organizations that are created by local governments. The Constitution also allows for counties and cities to separate some of their powers into special service districts (SSD). As separate, general-purpose government units, SSD's have substantial administrative and fiscal independence apart from the county or city government.

Among these government structures in Utah, as with the federal government, there is no single organization or body of law that regulates or governs urban or rural planning development. In the U.S., planning and land use have traditionally been viewed as intrinsically local issues (Scott et al., 2019). County and city governments have the responsibility for carrying out the majority of planning duties. In Utah, local governments are responsible for creating a general or master plan for their jurisdiction that, at a minimum, includes land use, housing, and transportation.

Some financial support for planning and development is offered to local governments from the state and federal governments. The federal government often distributes funds in the form of block grants. A prime example of such a program is the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). Created in 1974, CDBG took several programs and consolidated them down to one program, and distributes funds based on population size ("Basically CDBG," 2007). For small populations, states receive the funds and determine how to administratively disperse them. In Utah, this is done through the associations of local governments.

In Utah, there are government and private organizations which assist local governments with their general responsibilities, and in particular with planning and development responsibilities. The Interlocal Cooperation Act of 1965 along with a 1970 executive order from Gov. Rampton gave Utah's support and encouragement to create seven associations of local governments. These associations of governments have multiple purposes and designations which include but are not limited to "aging, community action agency, economic development district, regional planning agency, metropolitan planning organization, rural transportation planning

organization, regional housing authority and others" ("Utah's Associations of Governments," 2016, p. 3). Private non-profits such as the Utah Association of Counties and Utah League of Cities and Towns also assist in connecting local officials with state and national levels while providing information, training, and oftentimes technical assistance.

4.2 Rural Utah

While the terms 'rural' and 'rurality' are well used, defining them is rather difficult as there is no universally accepted definition. Consequentially, identifying and defining what then is rural is just as difficult. The definitions of rurality have shifted considerably due to "statistical measures focused on the structure of rural economies and land use [giving] way to experimental and cultural accounts of what makes a place rural" (Gallent and Gkartzios, 2019, p. 17). This experience definition of rural is doubly ambiguous as experiences are subjective. Rural places may be a "context in which people enjoy wealth and advantage but also endure poverty and inequality" (Gallent and Gkartzios, 2019, p. 17).

Despite no ubiquitous definition of rural, researchers and policymakers use a dizzying array of descriptions. Definitions of rural may be based on "administrative, land use, or economic concepts, exhibiting considerable variation in socioeconomic characteristics and well-being of the measured population" (Cromartie and Bucholtz, 2008, p. 28). Within the federal government alone, there are 15 different official definitions or measurements for rural; 11 of these are from the Department of Agriculture ("The federal definition of 'rural' - times 15," 2013).

Perhaps the most used data source for determining a location's rural/urban status is the U.S. Census Bureau. While the U.S. Census Bureau uses traditional factors such as population thresholds, other factors are considered as well. Figure 3 is a graphic depiction of how the U.S. Census Bureau classifies urban and rural. In essence, once what is urban is determined, everything outside of that is considered rural.

Despite the rather simple logic of what isn't urban is therefore rural, these various definitions of what urban is, have a real-life impact on rural areas. A prime example of how these different

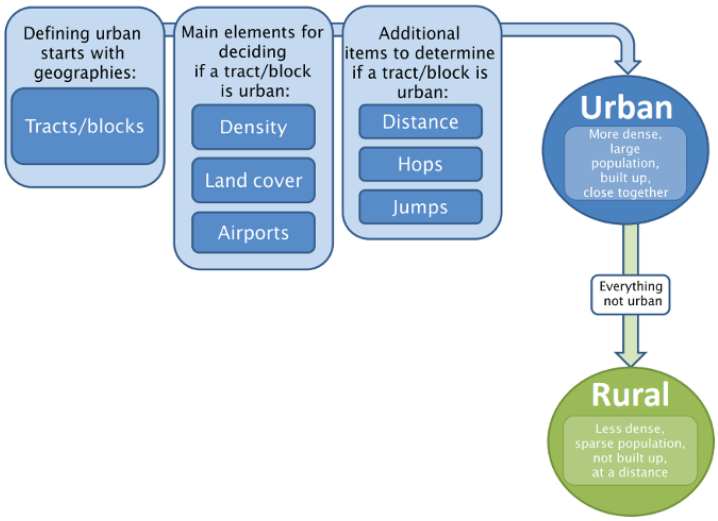

Figure 3. Graphic Depiction of Urban/Rural Classification (Ratcliffe et al., 2016)

definitions can have a drastic effect on research and projects is from the US Census Bureau. Using the U.S. Census Bureau's 2000 decennial census data "21percent of the U.S. population was designated rural using the Census Bureau's land-use definition (outside urban areas of 2,500 or more people), compared with 17 percent for economically based nonmetro areas (outside metro areas of 50,000 or more)" (Cromartie and Bucholtz, 2008, p. 31). A simple shift from a land base focus to an economically-based focus yielded significantly different proportions of the US population considered rural.

The distinction may not be any clearer when only looking at Utah and how local agencies define rural and urban areas. Not only do federal agencies have their own definitions, but many Utah agencies also have their own. A 2012 legislative report identified fourteen different definitions of rural and non-urban within state statute or administrative rule ("OLRGC," 2012).

Many departments or agencies have multiple working definitions of rural which apply to different programs or working areas. For instance, the then Governor's Office of Economic Development (GOED) used two working definitions for two separate programs. The first program was focused on assisting industries targeted for economic development. GOED's administrative rule definition did not state any specific measurement or metric. Rather, GOED defined economically disadvantaged rural areas by whatever the Board of Business and Economic Development designates. Conversely, for a program aimed at rural broadband support, GOED used a quantitative metric of an area of 10,000 population or less. In addition,

they added that broadband service is not available. In some cases, rural was not defined by what it is but rather by what it is not. The Department of Workforce Services (DWS) stated that rural means any county in the state other than Utah, Salt Lake, Davis, and Weber counties.

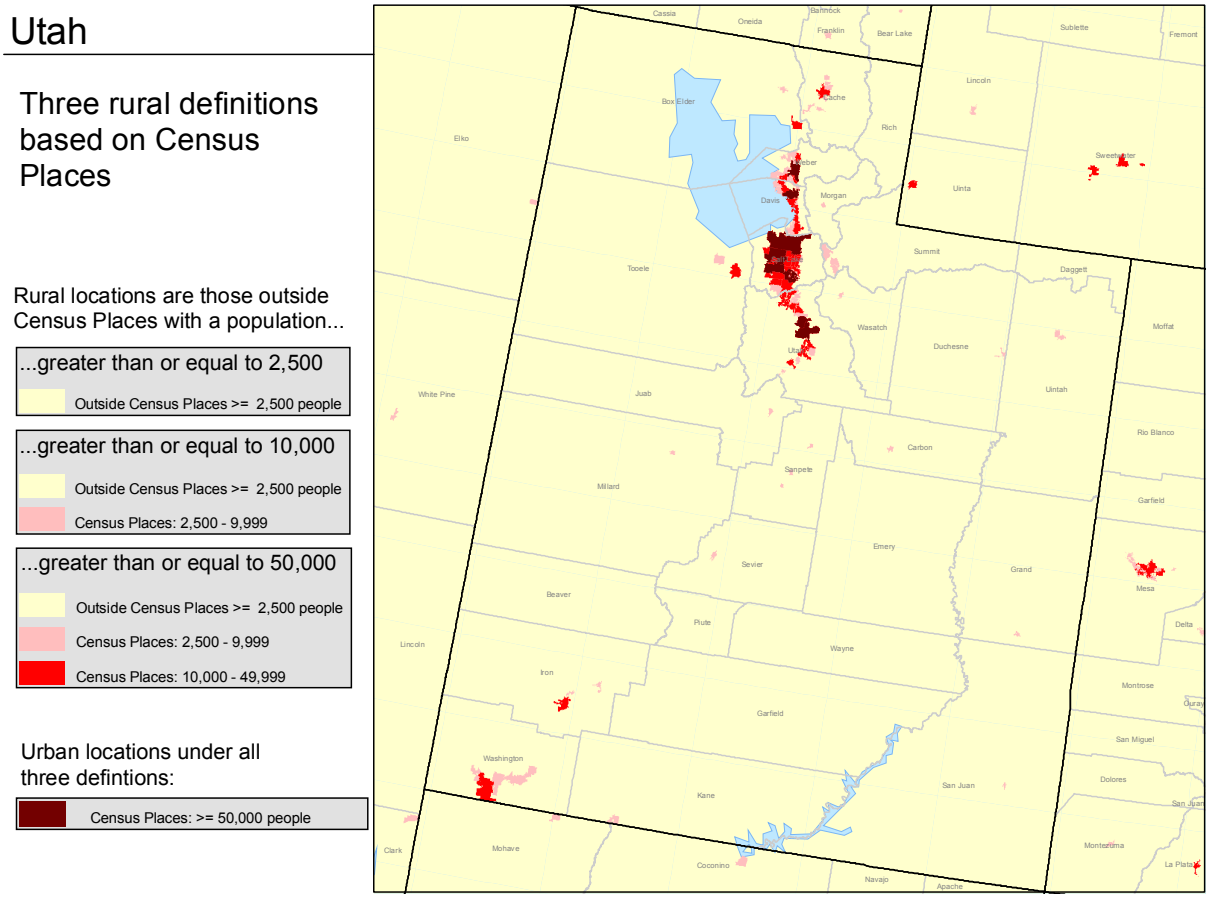

Figure 4. Map of Utah Depicting Three Definitions of Rural (Utah - Rural Definitions, 2007)

DWS may not be too far off from how many individuals characterize rural Utah. While the state has vast areas of rural landscapes, the vast majority of individuals live within urban areas with roughly 91% of Utah's population clustering in urban areas (Utah: 2010, 2012). This population is largely found within Utah, Salt Lake, Davis, and Weber counties. Figure 4 shows a map of Utah depicting three definitions of rural, based on census places. The map shows that while the majority of the population lives in urban areas, the vast majority of land within Utah borders can be considered rural. Similarly, the Community Development Office, with the mission of improving planning in rural areas, uses a definition of rural that "assigns counties one of three classifications, each with unique pressures and opportunities" (State of Rural Utah, 2019). Figure 5 maps these areas as of 2019. The three designations are:

- Rural: Counties with no city over 50,000 and that are not significantly affected by urban growth.
- Transitional: Counties adjacent to urban counties with a main interstate connection to Urban counties, or remote counties with city populations over 50,000.
- Urban: Counties with populations over 150,000.

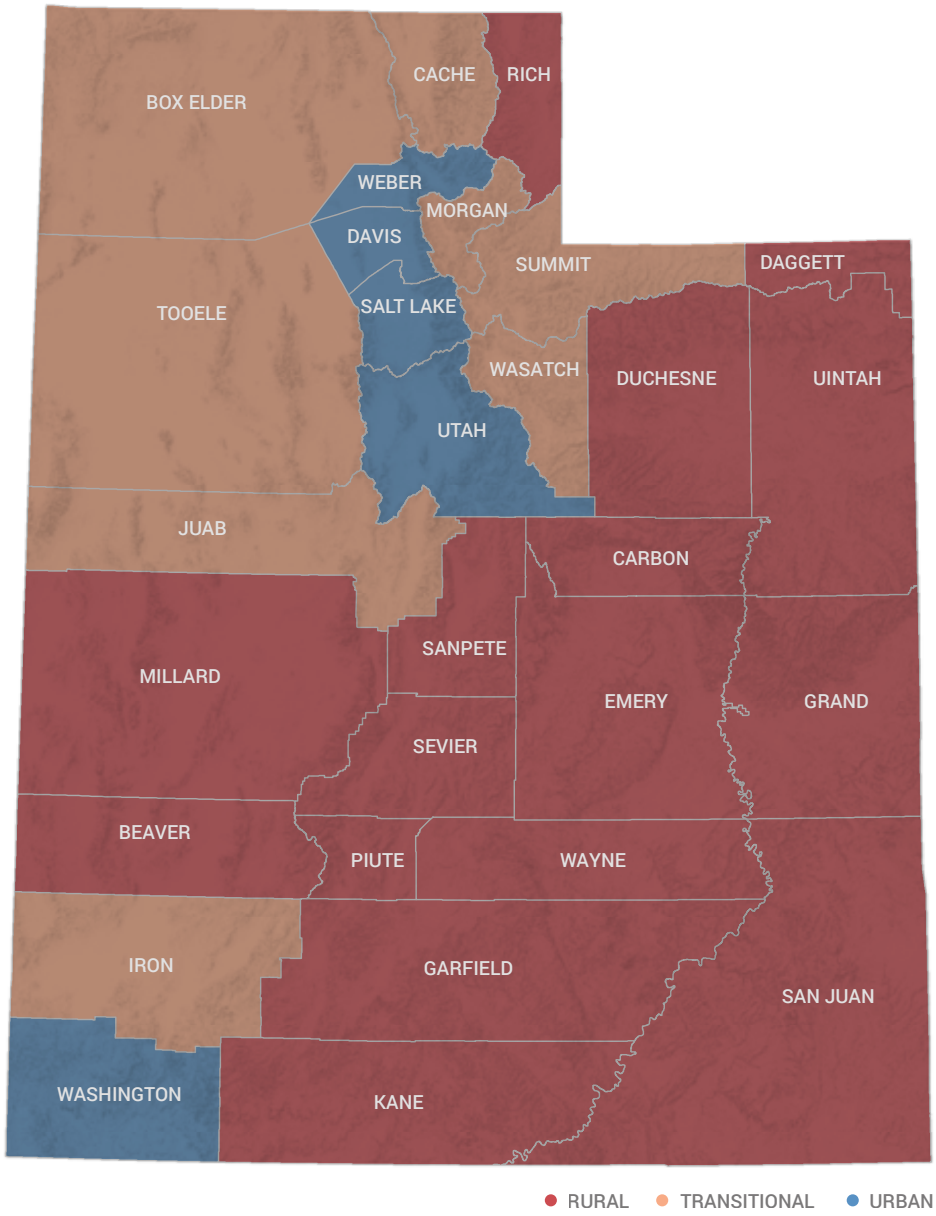

Figure 5. Community Development Office Rural Map (State of Rural Utah, 2019)

The many definitions of rural and urban may leave many scholars and practitioners scratching their heads as to what exactly is rural Utah. While there may not be a single, universally defined line or border around rural Utah, that may be okay. When researching or conducting a program pertaining to rural areas and livelihoods, "the choice of a rural definition should be based on the purpose of the activity" (Cromartie and Bucholtz, 2008, p. 32).

When practitioners or policymakers aim to create eligibility rules for programs, there may be considerable flexibility in "tailoring definitions to suit a given application, and the appropriate choice may vary depending on program goals" (Cromartie and Bucholtz, 2008, p. 34). This considerable variability is seen in the working definition within Utah agencies. The two discussed GOED definitions are arguably both correct and accurate as the purpose of those definitions is required to achieve the program goals. Therefore, creating one, universally accepted outline or definition of what rural Utah is will not be successful, neither for research nor for practice.

As researchers and practitioners search for an appropriate definition of rural for a particular application, there are some key factors that should be considered. Cromartie and Bucholtz (2008) say that three questions should be asked when making that decision. 1) Who is included in that definition and who is left out? 2) What information is being masked by using large geographical building blocks? 3) How does this rural geography vary by state? The consideration for who and what data is either included or hidden away is seen in Isserman's words on what a definition of rural should include:

> *"Our mental map of rural America should include the rural metropolitan counties, where 9 percent of all rural people live, and the mixed rural metropolitan counties, where another 27 percent live. The first is rural in character, the second is mixed, and both are integrated with urbanized areas. Paying attention to the two dimensions changes our understanding of rural conditions and recovers people and places often left out. Making nonmetropolitan synonymous with rural ignores too much of rural America" - (Isserman, 2005, p. 28).*

Cromartie, Bucholtz, and Isserman make it clear that the questions of who is included and what data is hidden are particularly important for determining what rural Utah is. Therefore, when the phrase "rural Utah" is used in this report, it does not refer to a single area, a single context, nor a single situation. At a minimum, the phrase identifies the areas of the state which are not traditionally viewed as urban. At most, the phrase identifies that rural Utah is a range of contexts and situations which occur across the state.

That range of contexts and situations results in a wide variety of realities. Today, rural Utah faces a myriad of economic, social, and environmental challenges such as varied development pressures, contrasting positions on environmental protection, and the shrinking fossil fuel industry. Figure 6 displays some local news headlines from rural communities, attempting to

illustrate the breadth and range of issues faced. Some challenges are starkly different as some cities are facing crippling development while others desire to see modest investments within their communities. For instance, "Utah's statewide growth between 2018 and 2019 was the fourth fastest in the nation, with a 1.7% increase" and "most of Utah's fastest-growing cities had populations of 50,000 or less" (U.S. Census Bureau Estimates, 2020, p. 1).

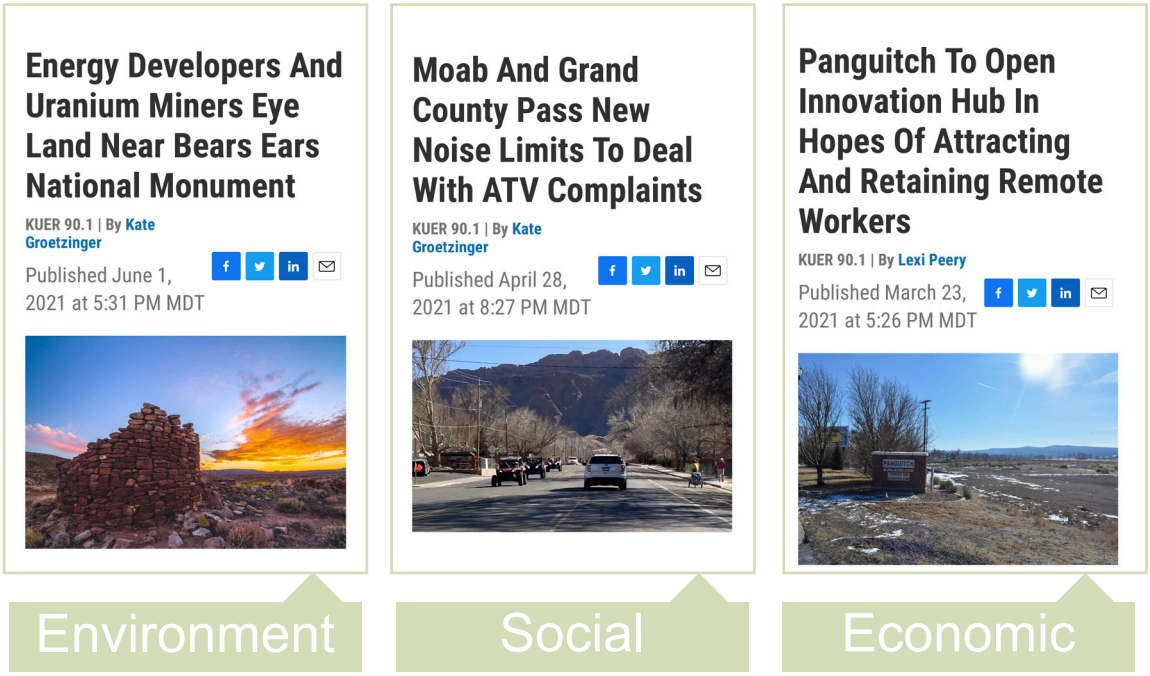

Figure 6. News Headlines in Rural Utah

More recently, due to a variety of considerations tied to the COVID-19 pandemic such as remote work and fear of urban centers, rural areas are facing a revival of sorts. "Housing supply in rural areas drop[ed] a record 44%... and prices are up 16%" (Redfin, 2021). Such a dramatic change in housing markets comes with pros and cons. While cities may see an influx of residents and a growing tax base, others are priced out and experience a diminished quality of life. The Wall Street Journal states that "buyers far from big cities lose out to investors and deep-pocket rivals in places where properties until a year ago offered affordable entry to the middle class" (Taylor, 2021).

4.3 What is the Rural Coordinating Council?

The Rural Coordinating Council (RCC) is a "grassroots initiative that seeks to better allocate time, resources, and strategies in rural Utah by increasing communication and collaboration

with multiple service providers" (RCC Year Two Highlights, 2020). The structure consists of federal and state agencies, non-profits, universities, and statewide organizations that provide resources throughout rural Utah (RCC Year Two Highlights, 2020).

Inception: In December of 2018, the RCC held its first quarterly meeting. Leading up to that point, the Community Development Office (CDO) within the Utah Department of Workforce Services spearheaded the effort. CDO planners recognized that multiple state agencies are working in the same communities, oftentimes without knowing of the other's efforts. This results in a lack of awareness amongst state agencies, as well as confusion for communities that are interacting with several agencies at once. Therefore, the CDO proposed the RCC as a way "to simplify the process for communities to receive state agency resources, and to avoid duplicating efforts" ("Overview," 2018, p. 1).

Structure: The RCC can best be described as a horizontal structure. The CDO plays a central role as one of their planners administers and coordinates efforts such as creating monthly emails and organizing quarterly meetings. All other members, including the administrator, hold equal positions to each other, and decisions are made through consensus. While the administrator plays a central role, the administrator does not hold a higher position than the other members. RCC members are able to form working committees underneath the RCC name but with little to no supervision from the administrator. Each working committee is autonomous in its goals and activities.

Membership: Participation in the RCC is voluntary for all of its members. Membership is an open invitation to nearly any service provider. Whether an individual is from a government agency, non-profit, or statewide organization, the key characteristic to their membership is based on them being a service provider. Services, particularly rural services, can "include agricultural services (including those related to extension and water access), infrastructure (including roads, clinics, and schools), and social services (such as healthcare, education, and social protection), among others" (Kosec and Wantchekon, 2020, p. 1).

Purpose and Goals: The 2018 proposal from the CDO outlines three projected outcomes

("Overview," 2018):

- State agencies serving rural Utah will provide a comprehensive approach to community development by collaborating with one another on resources, trainings, and programs to fulfill community needs.
- State agencies serving rural Utah will have a better understanding of what initiatives/ services are taking place in rural Utah, and will share information on those resources with rural communities.
- State agencies serving rural Utah will work together on community development projects to get things done.

Demonstration Project 1, Main Street Program: One of the first working committees to be formed was the Main Street working group. Due to efforts that pre-dated the official creation of the RCC, the Main Street working group was a top priority for some of the RCC members. The purpose of the group was largely to weigh the option of bringing Main Street America back to Utah. To date, the working group created a white paper that turned into a legislative-funded main street program. The program is in its first year with two trial cities.

Demonstration Project 2: Resource and Assistance Inventory: As part of the second objective of the RCC as proposed by the CDO, a working group was formed to create a resource inventory. The inventory was one of the first projects that the RCC focused on. Essentially, the inventory is to outline all the resources available to rural Utah in the form of financial and technical assistance. The working group members carried out the process of collecting resources and formatting how the inventory will be delivered and updated. The broader group of RCC members were involved to add their respective resources to the inventory. The first iteration of the inventory was a PDF that was to be revised on a periodic basis. The second iteration is a google spreadsheet which is able to be revised on a more frequent basis.

2021 Action Plan: The RCC's 2021 Action Plan lists five short-term and two long-term focuses ("Action Plan 2021," 2021). Within the calendar year, there is a focus to 1) continue to gather together, 2) collaboratively share their resources at rural events, 3) continue to build working relationships and understand what other members have to offer throughout rural Utah, 4) identify where RCC members are serving across the state and address service gaps, and 5) continually enhance the initiative and the work the RCC does. Within the next five years, their

focus is to 1) collaborate on a project with members of the RCC from start to finish and 2) elevate the initiative.

In the simplest sense, the RCC is only a program administered by the CDO. In a complex sense, the RCC is a structure of its own that includes horizontal integration across sectors and which takes on a life of its own.

Ch. 5 Analysis and Results

The purpose of this chapter is to present the case study analysis and results. Section 5.1 provides a high-level overview of each of the data analysis results. The remaining five sections present the analysis and results in relation to each of the objectives and questions within the consistency table. Presenting the data by objective allows for a more in-depth and narrative conversation which ties in results from multiple analysis methods.

5.1 Data Analysis and Results by Method

5.1.1 Thematic Analysis

In total, there were 48 files analyzed in NVivo. Documents, as a data collection method, constituted 24 of these files, which contained a wide variety of document types. The majority of the files were composed of quarterly meeting notes and conference presentations. Other files included early briefs and visioning documents for the RCC, action plans, and RCC resources. Eight files came from the focus group exercise which consisted of the questionnaire results and pdfs of the Jamboards used during the focus groups. The remaining 16 files were the author's notes from each of the interviews.

Of note, the author discovered that this method was most helpful when analyzing the interviews and focus group data and understanding the content and information. Many of the documents, such as meeting notes and conference presentations, did not contain significant themes of the RCC and its workings but rather these documents discussed members' programs and information.

At the conclusion of the analysis, 65 codes were generated. Some of the most used codes can be seen in Table 5. For a complete codebook with title, the number of references, and the number of files, please see Appendix B.

The most used codes were not only identified across many files but also multiple times within the same file. As can be expected, the themes of coordination and information sharing are at

Title	Files	References
Coordination	11	21
Information Sharing	14	20
Possible Future	12	17
Networking	10	15
Scope of Rural	13	15
Community Resource	8	11
Member Participation	8	11
Horizontal Organization Chart	9	10
Service Provision	8	10
Collaboration	9	9
Communication	8	9
Dependent on Administrator	8	9
Holistic Focus	6	8
CDO is Unique	5	7
Outcomes	3	7
CDO Role	5	6

Table 5. Thematic Analysis Most Frequent Codes

the top with over 20 references. The next set of references, those with ten or more references include similar themes, such as networking, but also themes that vary in their definitions. For instance, the codes 'possible future' and 'scope of rural' identify the places where the data gave a situation or definition which related to that theme.

5.1.2 Theoretical Generalization

Once the thematic analysis concluded, it was time to start the theoretical generalization analysis. As was consistent with the methodology, the author created codes from theory topics rather than from the data itself. In formulating the codes for the analysis, the author used the theory identified in Chapter 2.

In Section 2.1, it was identified that the new spatial, territorial, and integrated approaches to rural development are taking two main shapes: new development pathways and new governance. Development pathways constitute the first code created. Due to the breadth of how new governance is defined and its relevance to this case study, the author used the three threads of new governance principles, identified in Section 2.2, as codes. To include the contrast of these processes and to reflect the systems that predated new development pathways and new

governance, the author included two more codes: “Central, Expert-Driven Planning” and “Top-Down Government”.

To capture the theory in Section 2.3, the author included the umbrella code “Intergovernmental Partnerships.” The code “Network Governance” was also created to represent the more informal coordination that sits outside of the official bureaucratic structure of partnerships. Two final codes were identified as both intergovernmental partnership structures and network governance take place in two, or combined, ways: horizontal and vertical integration. Section 2.3 also identified information sharing as an important theoretical concept within partnerships. Therefore, the code ‘Information Sharing’ was created.

The end of Section 2.3 discusses the topic of legitimacy in terms of partnerships. While the theory identified that partnerships likely do not take away power from the state, the author created two codes, ‘Legitimacy In-Line With State’ and ‘Legitimacy Away From State’ to capture the aspects of the RCC that derived its legitimacy from the state and the aspects that seek to gain its own legitimacy.

In the end, the process of coding theory topics and identifying them in the data using NVivo proved useful. The theoretical generalization coding was also more applicable when analyzing the interviews and focus group data. Many of the documents, such as meeting notes and conference presentations, did not provide useful information. However, some documents such as briefs and action plans were very useful.

In total, 13 codes were created from the theory in Chapter 2. Table 6 shows all 13 codes along with the number of files and the number of references. The most referenced code, Grassroots and Joint Working, comes as no shock considering the term grassroots is in the mission statement of the RCC. The next six codes were also frequently identified across files. The remaining six codes were identified significantly less. Three of the codes were not significantly recognized in any of the data.

Title	Files	References
Grassroots and Joint Working	22	31
Information Sharing	22	27
Vertical Integration	17	19
Definable Outcomes	12	18
Horizontal Integration	16	18
Inclusion of Voices	14	17
Network Governance	12	13
Intergovernmental Partnerships	5	5
Legitimacy In-Line With State	4	4
Legitimacy Away From State	2	2
Central, Expert-Driven Planning	0	0
Development Pathways	0	0
Top-Down Government	0	0

Table 6. Theoretical Generalization Codes

5.1.3 SWOT Analysis

While coding the data with the first two data analysis methods, the author pulled paraphrased statements from interviews and text from documents that were relevant to one of the four quadrants on the SWOT diagram. During this process, the author also added personal notes and observations to the SWOT matrix as they became apparent. By doing so, the author captured a visualization of a complex situation to deconstruct and reconstruct problems. The SWOT analysis also provides insights not only to the specific questions of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, but it also informs about how the RCC has gotten to this point, possible futures, and transferability. Figure 7 is the complete diagram. Later in this chapter, the author discusses each of the quadrants in detail.

5.2 Position of the RCC

5.2.1 What organizational factors allowed the RCC to start and operate in Utah?

There are three organizational factors that allowed the RCC to get started and continue to operate. The first is its inception through the CDO. Secondly, the RCC has an organization chart that can be described as horizontal, informal, and consisting of line workers. Lastly, the State of Utah has experienced a growing interest in rural landscapes and communities.

Strengths	Weaknesses
• "Flat organization chart; knights at the round table" • "Consensus decision making" • "Cross-sector and collaborative approach" • "It is not super formal and that's good" • "Primarily composed of line workers who know programs and communities intimately" • "It is a clear link for communities to access resources; community to service provider" • "It also functions as service provider to service provider" • Obtains legitimacy by staying in-line with the state	• "They only have so much power to shape policy, mandates, etc" • "Relationship based, not position based" • "There is a tension between updates and getting to work, especially during meetings" • "Heavily relies on administrator" • "One missed quarterly meeting could significantly set back the RCC"
Opportunities	**Threats**
• "The RCC may meet its goal, but the need will never be fully met" • "With the foundation of the RCC built, they can start focusing on external work" • "RCC is fluid and flexible to meet the future" • "RCC could get involved in brick-and-mortar projects" • Rural is now a substantial topic in state policy and among state legislators • Increased recognition may lead to increased participation or expanded membership	• "Burnout and turnover; what is the fuel that will keep it going" • "Nothing happens in rural Utah without a good local leader; any success, you can point to the leader" • "The mission is clearly defined, there needs to be a distinction between the GRPB and the RCC" • "CDO no longer supporting the RCC" • "RCC becoming too large to be effective"

Figure 7. SWOT Analysis

The Community Development Office (CDO) is responsible for starting and administering the RCC. Along with other programs, such as the Mapping and Technical Assistance Program and the Colorado Plateau Dark Sky Cooperative, the RCC stands as just one of five official initiatives of the CDO. The interviews revealed the unique role that the CDO plays within the RCC but also the qualities of the CDO that assisted in the RCC's existence and successes.

In terms of the CDO's involvement in the RCC, they lobbied for its creation and currently 'host' the program. Back in 2018, planners within the CDO discussed the need for an organization that brought different service providers together. The original concept was equated to the Avengers

movies. Just as each avenger has their personal strengths, backgrounds, and approaches to situations, so do public and private service providers in rural Utah. Continuing the analogy, the Avengers assemble in order to coordinate their resources and meet a challenge that is better addressed together than separately. Similarly, the RCC meets with the goal of coordinating resources and funding to meet the challenges faced in rural Utah.

The thematic analysis also revealed that the CDO has a unique structure and function which allowed the RCC to be established and operate during the previous three years. Seven interviewees referenced the CDO, its role in the RCC, or its unique structure. See Figure 8 for the comparison diagram from NVivo between the two codes that reference CDO.

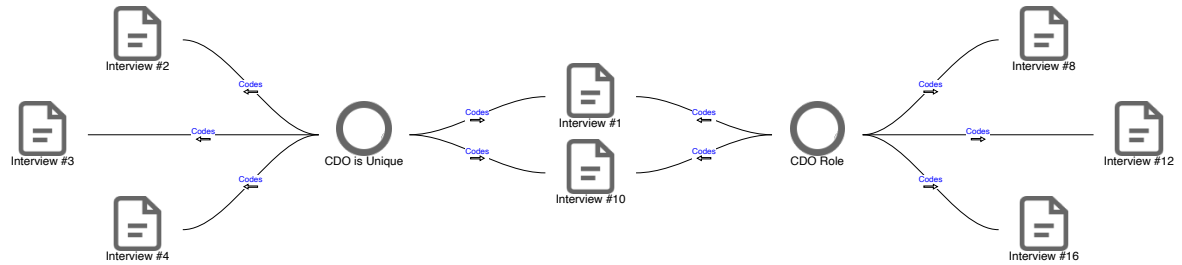

Figure 8. CDO Related Thematic Codes Comparison Diagram

As part of the Housing and Community Development Division of the Department of Workforce Services, the CDO "helps Utah's rural communities build knowledge, skills, and abilities to achieve their goals" (*FY2020 Annual Accounting*, 2020, p. 14). To do so, "the CDO has been adapting its structure to best support regional planners across the state and produce relevant, timely tools, guides, and resources" (ibid.). One interviewee stated that the RCC was a natural offshoot of this work.

During an in-depth interview, an interviewee stated that when the concept of the RCC was in discussion during the early days, the CDO had the capacity and the latitude to start such a program. This theme of latitude was repeated throughout the interviews. One interviewee even stated that the CDO structure is formed for "innovation and flexibility" while other state agencies are driven by statute and funded for specific items. This flexibility and latitude of the

CDO's work allowed the CDO to create the RCC as a pilot project for the first year and keep running the project as long as it continues taking reasonable resources to administer.

The second factor identified is the RCC's organization chart. While a defined and tightly managed organization chart for the RCC does not exist, the data describes an organization chart to be a rather horizontal and informal structure, which consists of line workers.

Many interviewees commented on the structure of the RCC. As seen in Figure 9, nine interviewees mentioned that the RCC has some configuration of a horizontal organization chart.

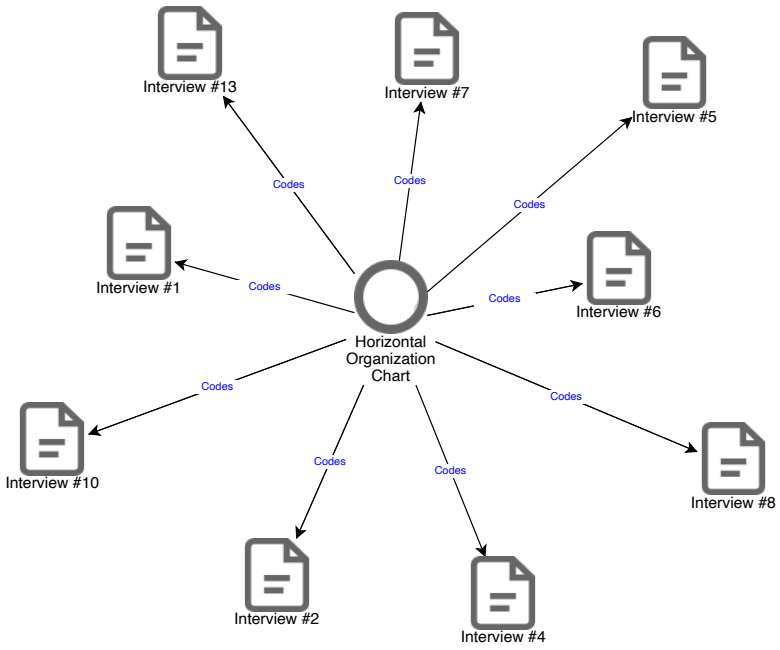

Figure 9. Horizontal Organization Chart Comparison Diagram

Interviewees described the structure as "hub and spoke", "knights of the round table", and "drawn out very flat". Most centered the CDO or the facilitator in the center of the structure, or slightly above the rest. Interviewee #6 mentioned that while the facilitator is slightly above members, that it is only for organizational purposes. Interviewee #4 compliments this sentiment by saying that the facilitator is not seen as a captain and that members are encouraged to take on a similar level of involvement. It should be noted that not one document or interviewee mentioned an organizational structure significantly different than horizontal.

An aspect of informality in the organization structure was identified in the data. Figure 10 shows that three interviews discussed informality in relation to the RCC. Interviewees #8 and #9 explicitly state the RCC has an informal and relaxed structure. Both liked this aspect, citing that it allows for members to fully show up and participate in the meetings. Since the meetings are with other service providers who are simply trying to communicate with each other, there is not a significant worry about abiding by formal processes or procedures. Therefore, if an individual has questions or would like to comment, there are multiple opportunities throughout the quarterly meeting to do so.

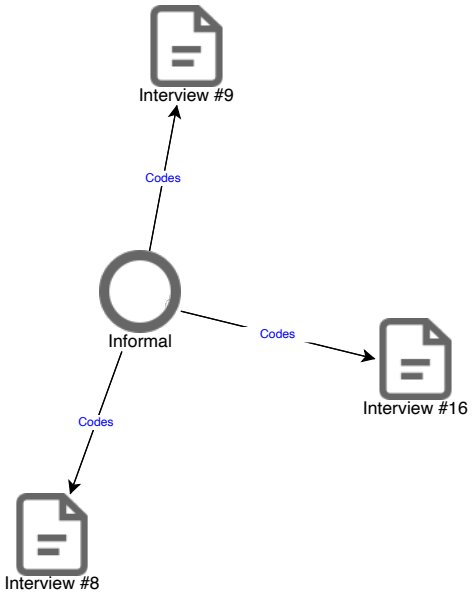

Figure 10. Informal Code Comparison Diagram

Interviewee #16 did not explicitly bring in the word 'informal' into the conversation. Rather, the interviewee stated that the "RCC, as its name implies, is a coordinating body… I don't think of it as an entity… it brings together resources and takes a bigger perspective". The author assigned the code Informal to this statement since the RCC is not a formal entity. By staying outside of a formal structure, the RCC has managed to keep a statewide and multi-stakeholder perspective.

There is some planning and development theory that discusses a definition of informality

that addresses communication and coordination. Communication that happens "behind the scenes before arriving at political decisions or at contractual arrangements" serves as a "complementary function, stabilizing the system by filling the gaps that always exists in the arrangement of formal institutions" (Altrock, 2016, p. 173). With this definition, it appears that the RCC captures an aspect of this complementary informality without entirely bringing it into a formal sphere.

While much of the data described the RCC as grassroots, many of the interviewees discussed that the organization chart is composed of line workers. Figure 11 shows that three interviewees mentioned the importance of line workers in the organization chart.

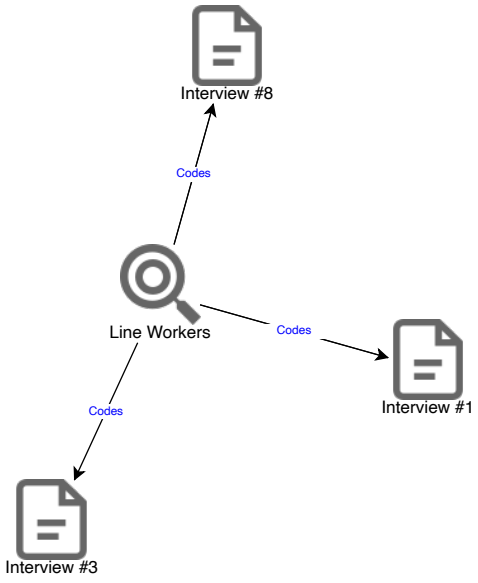

Figure 11. Lineworkers Code Comparison Diagram

Interviewee #3 discussed that RCC members are largely line staff who administer programs and interact with clients and communities. Since these individuals know the ins and outs of agency programs and are often on the ground with communities, it allows for quality coordination between service providers. Being composed of line workers allows the RCC to truly meet its objective of better allocating resources and energy.

5.2.2 What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the RCC?

To answer the above questions, this section covers each of the SWOT quadrants in detail. The statements within these quadrants are not exclusive to the SWOT analysis but rather will be identified throughout this chapter. Nevertheless, the statements will be discussed in how they relate especially to the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the RCC.

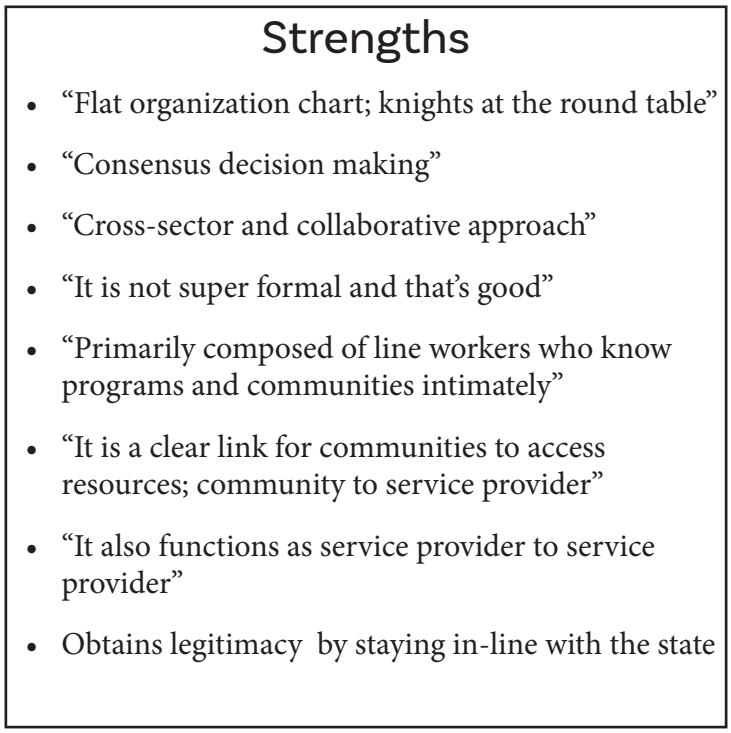

Figure 12. Strengths SWOT Quadrant

The strengths of the RCC (Figure 12) are varied but specific. The first statement, "flat organization chart; knights of the round table" was identified throughout interviews and documents. Interviewees discussed that such an internal structure was beneficial to the RCC as they saw it as an efficient means to share information and coordinate between members. While the administrator of the RCC was often described as slightly elevated or at the center of the organization chart, the administrator did not regulate others nor put themselves above the rest. Without any strict restrictions on what members can talk with who and during what time, the opportunity for communication and networking is vast. In addition, such an organizational

chart allows for all members to have a say in how the RCC is administered and what the goals are.

Similarly, "consensus decision making" describes the dynamic that all RCC members' input is valued. The administrator nor the CDO is making unilateral decisions. Rather it is through group-wide discussions that opportunities or problems are talked through. As an example, the very first official RCC meeting in December of 2018 was held at the Utah State Capitol Building to ensure neutral ground and signify legitimacy. During the meeting, members decided how and when the RCC would meet, what goals should the RCC envelope, and the command structure. It was then that it was decided that they would not have a central steering committee that held special duties but rather have an administrator that would facilitate rather than dictate.

The third statement, "cross-sector and collaborative approach" is essentially what the RCC is. One could not duplicate the RCC structure, remove the cross-sector and collaborative approach and still be able to call it a similar structure, let alone a duplicate. As the first statement discussed the sharing of information and coordination between members, this statement gets at the notion that information and coordination amongst the same sector are not as powerful as a cross-sector approach. Pre-RCC, the responsibility to coordinate within sectors was already taking place, with wide variability. State agencies are supposed to be coordinated under the state government. Similarly, federal agencies are under the federal government. Even the higher education institutions coordinate to some extent. But the RCC took a state-wide, cross-sector approach and that is where the magic happens.

It was recognized that the RCC "is not super formal and that's good". The interviewees and focus group participants who brought this strength up in conversation discussed that having the quarterly meetings somewhat rather informal allows the whole thing to operate more efficiently. Members are more open to casual conversation which leads to tangible networking and information sharing. Additionally, since members participate on their own accord and agencies/organizations are not taking formal custody of responsibilities or program areas, there are no turf wars. Members do not prepare for a quarterly RCC meeting thinking that their program budget is on the line. They are showing up to simply achieve the goals of the RCC.

The fifth statement, "primarily composed of line workers who know programs and communities intimately" recognizes that members are often working with rural communities. While the majority of members are not directors with decision-making power, the power of RCC members comes from their first-hand knowledge of rural Utah and their personal connections. Lineworkers are close with communities and intimately know their own programs. This dynamic enabled the RCC to create the resource inventory and start building the GIS services map. It is perhaps this statement that sets the RCC most apart from the Governor's Rural Partnership Board and the Utah Rural Development Council. It is essential to the RCC's grassroots foundations.

The sixth statement, "it is a clear link for communities to access resources; community to service provider," is an internal strength since it allows the RCC to meet its goals. While to date, the RCC has not served as a direct resource for communities, it is a goal to become that. The previous statements are strongly related to a service provider to service provider dynamic focusing on what information they can share and what projects they can do amongst themselves. However, the RCC is also structured to be the link between communities and service providers. As the RCC keeps gaining recognition and legitimacy, this link will only grow stronger. The strength lies in the reality that local officials often face a steep learning curve to face local issues. While trainings do exist for these officials, such as through the Utah League of Cities and Towns, the RCC will allow new and experienced officials a direct link to the individuals who are administering and operating a wide variety of programs.

The final statement, "obtains legitimacy by staying in-line with the state" recognizes that the RCC is moving in a direction that state leadership, such as the governor and legislators, find acceptable. One of the early members of the RCC is a State Planning Coordinator from the Governor's Office of Management and Budget. While the individual saw a benefit to participating for themselves, there was interest to make sure the RCC was not going to become a rogue entity. Within the first year of the RCC's creation, the administrator and CDO Director were invited to discuss the RCC with then Lieutenant Governor Cox. From then on, the RCC continues to function with the blessing of the state government.

The weaknesses of the RCC (Figure 13) are also varied but specific. Many of the statements

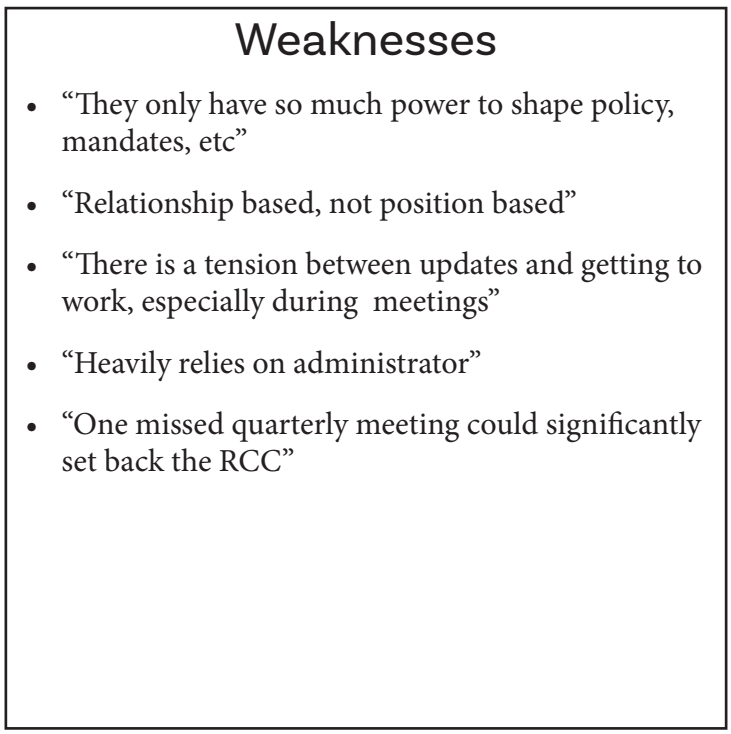

Figure 13. Weakness SWOT Quadrant

illuminate the other side of the coin. For instance, the first statement, "they only have so much power to shape policy, mandates, etc." was recognized as a weakness by interviewees. As stated earlier in the section, members of the RCC are majority line workers and therefore lack significant decision-making power. While the composition of line workers brings strength to the RCC in its own right, some still recognized the lack of decision-making power as a weakness. There might be fear in this statement as other organizations such as the Governors Rural Partnership Board and the Utah Rural Development Council were largely composed of decision-makers. Relatedly, there is concern that without decision-makers within the ranks of the RCC, the sustainability and continuity of the RCC are threatened.

The second statement, "relationship-based, not position-based" touches on a similar notion. Members participate through their own free will, though many ask permission from their superiors, especially in the public sector. While this leads to many of the strengths cited prior, there is weakness in the realization that there is not a mandate bringing people together. The RCC organization chart is based on personal relationships with one another, not solely on the position they hold. For instance, many of the interviewees discussed that their initial

participation stemmed from a one-off conversation. Many of the individuals were invited due to their personal relationship with other service providers. While the CDO has an intern currently identifying gaps in the RCC's membership and formulating asks to specific people, the invitee's participation is entirely voluntary. A secondary aspect to this statement is in relation to turnover. If an active member of the RCC receives a new job that takes them away from the RCC, there is no guarantee, or even good chance, that the new incumbent would take on the same role with the RCC as their predecessor.

When it comes to the work the RCC does quarter to quarter, there is a consistent "tension between updates and getting to work". The majority of the quarterly meeting is catching up with each other and sharing updates. This leaves little room to actively work together on projects. While working groups are designed to ease some of this tension for members who want something more tangible to work on, there are objectives of the RCC that likely cannot fit within the working group model. For instance, as the RCC tries to meet its goal of being a resource for communities, this must be done with the whole group rather than a subsect of the group as that subsect will not know all the resources available as the whole group. Conversely, for those who focus on the importance of information sharing, the monthly newsletter may relieve some of their tension. The newsletters are filled with updates about programs and in-depth spotlights on other members. Nevertheless, the content of the quarterly meetings is still somewhat debated and that threatens the involvement of those who feel like their objectives are not being met during the quarterly meetings.

There was near-unanimous concern amongst interviewees that a weakness of the RCC is its "reliance on an administrator". The administrator themselves identified this as a weakness. Due to the RCC's consensus decision to not form a steering committee and to rely on a single administrator, nearly all the facilitation of the RCC falls on the administrator. From calendar invites, producing agendas, facilitating meetings, and spearheading monthly newsletters, the administrator is the position that makes it all work. The result of this reliance is the realization that if the administrator were ever not able to fulfill these duties, a significant hole would be left in the RCC. While the CDO could assign another one of their individuals to take on the

administrator position, there is a risk that their commitment and vision for the RCC will not be on par. This reliance on a single administrator also flows upstream to a reliance on one office. If the CDO, for any reason, decides they are not able to allocate these resources, the RCC does not have other organizations lined up to meet this challenge.

Statement five, "one missed quarterly meeting could significantly setback the RCC" was echoed by several interviewees. The RCC only meets four times a year. If one of these were not to happen, it will be half a year since the group has gotten together. This would hinder the effectiveness of the resulting meeting as there is much to get everyone up to speed on. There would be less time for the RCC to achieve all of its goals within that meeting. Interviewees not only noted the effect it would have on the administration of the RCC and meetings, but they also elaborated on what they think it would do to members. Picking up conversations and attention to topics from half a year ago would be incredibly difficult for members. While the working groups and newsletters would help to fill the gap, there is still a concern for this weakness.

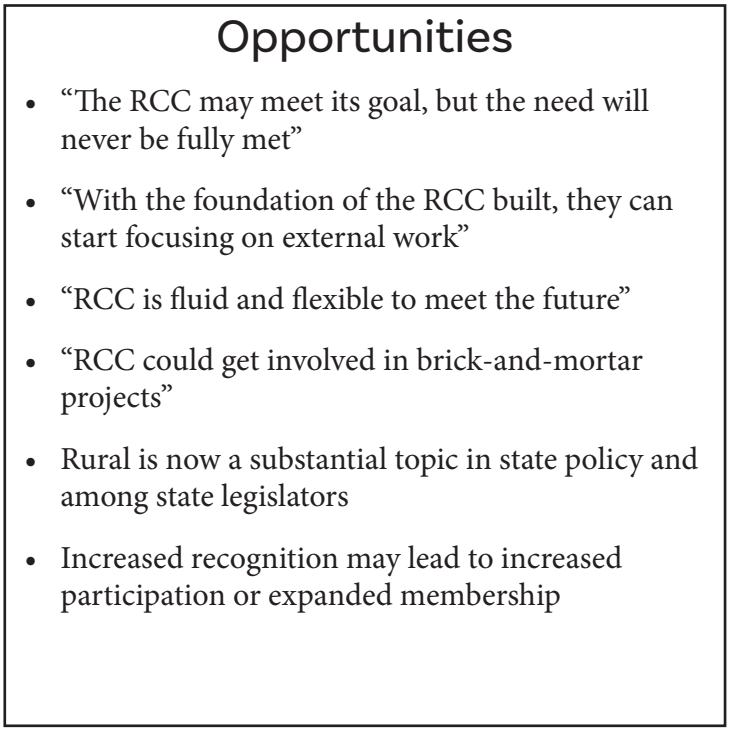

Figure 14. Opportunities SWOT Quadrant

The opportunities of the RCC (Figure 14) are similar to strengths but they are related to external factors rather than internal. Statement one, "the RCC may meet its goal, but the need will never be fully met" is a direct quote from an interviewee and was echoed throughout the data. The interviewee was referring to the RCC's coordinating, information sharing, and networking goals. As discussed during the strengths section, the RCC is well suited to meet these goals. However, the opportunity lies in the knowledge that those goals will never be satisfied. No matter how much information is shared and relationships are made during quarterly meetings and in between meetings, time still marches on. That march brings changes to programs, turnover in staffing, and new political and planning paradigms. From the moment a quarterly meeting closes out, the need to share information and coordinate is already growing. The external world will likely always have a need for what the RCC does. Therefore, even as time brings change, there is a high likelihood that the RCC will face opportunity.

The second statement, "with the foundation of the RCC built, they can start focusing on external work" signals a new opportunity for the RCC. One interviewee mentioned that the first two years were largely focused on getting people to sit at the table. Going onto the third year with many members at the table, the RCC is able to take on a new opportunity in meeting their goals related to external community work. Due to the internal strength that the previous two years created, the RCC is able to meet the external opportunity of better serving rural communities. These communities have a need for access to the collective knowledge of the RCC. Thus creating an opportunity that is likely not to dissipate within the near future.

The third statement, the "RCC is fluid and flexible to meet the future" is based on the RCC's design. By being grassroots, somewhat informal, and consensus decision-making, the RCC is able to pivot to meet the needs of both service providers and communities. Having an open invitation to service providers to join when and as they see fit allows those who may see a new benefit for their working area to join the RCC. That enables non-members to join and bring a new perspective to the RCC. Likewise, existing members within the RCC are poised to bring changes and start new working groups as the structure is rather informal and decisions are made by the group. If the RCC were to have top-down dictation of what topics they are able to

address, that would dramatically reduce the RCC's ability to meet new issues and concerns that arise from communities and service providers.

In a similar vein, the "RCC could get involved in brick-and-mortar projects". Throughout much of the data, there was a prominent idea that the RCC should take on brick-and-mortar projects within communities. It is already the goal of the RCC to become a resource and link between communities and service providers. This statement pushes that goal forward a little bit as to meet more opportunities in communities. It is an opportunity for the RCC to establish more favorable recognition from communities if there is that additional opportunity.

The fifth opportunity for the RCC is that "rural is now a suitable topic in state policy and among state legislators." Interviewees stated that for decades, the Utah government did not prioritize rural communities in legislation. With around 90% of Utahns living within an urban area (*Utah: 2010*, 2012), one could see that rural areas were not well represented at the state level. However, interviewees said this trend started to change a few years ago and that currently, rural is a hot topic. One interviewee said that at the conclusion of Utah's 2020-2021 legislative session, a legislator told them that they were inundated with rural bills. Utah also recently elected a highly vocal advocate of rural Utah as governor. The prominence that rural has at the state level creates a massive opportunity for rural communities and therefore the RCC. As new programs and grants are created to meet the needs of rural Utah, the need for RCC will only expand.

With all of these statements, it remains to be said that "increased recognition may lead to increased participation or expanded membership." As the RCC faces these new opportunities, it will bring the RCC more recognition, legitimacy, and likely resources. As a result of this increased recognition, two things will follow. The first is that current members will increase their involvement and become more active. Secondly, those outside the RCC will be persuaded to join the RCC and receive the benefits of coordination.

The threats of the RCC (Figure 15) are similar to weaknesses but they are related to external factors rather than internal. The first statement, "burnout and turnover; what is the fuel that

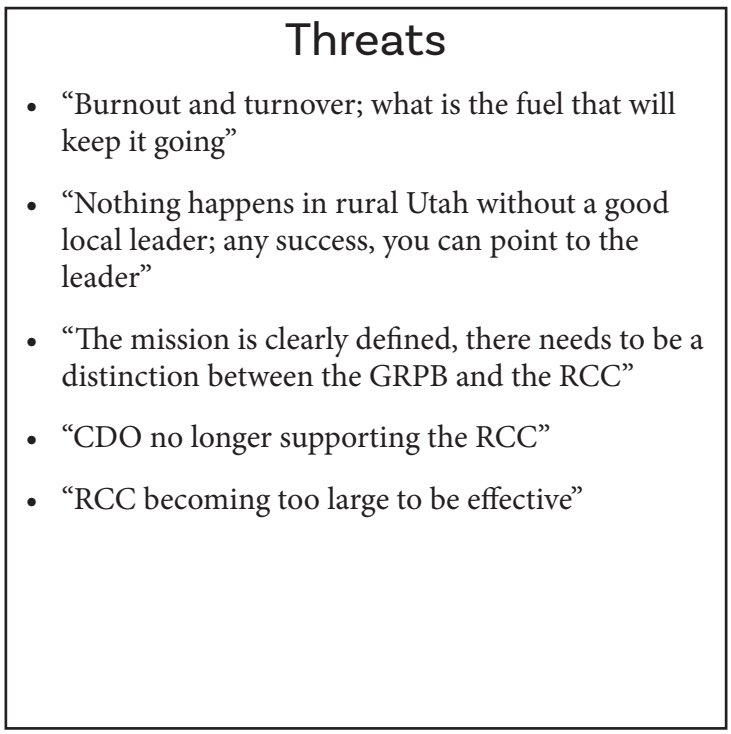

Figure 15. Threats SWOT Quadrant

will keep it going" is very similar to a couple of statements under weaknesses. However, this statement recognizes the external reality of burnout and turnover. Due to the relationship-based nature of the RCC, members are likely able to experience burnout and turnover. Since members are voluntarily participating in the RCC in addition to all of their other duties, members are likely to burn out if the RCC doesn't stay a personal priority. The author experienced the effects of this while extending interview invites to members. One of the members from a federal agency received an internal job promotion. Due to these increased responsibilities and uncertainty in day-to-day expectations, the member had missed three quarterly meetings and felt too detached from the RCC to do an interview. Burnout and turnover pose a very real threat to the RCC that it may not be able to solve internally.

One of the expert and practitioner interviewees gave the next statement, "nothing happens in rural Utah without a good local leader; any success, you can point to the local leader." No matter how well prepared the RCC is to serve as a resource to local officials, it takes a willing local official to complete the link. There is a threat that despite all of the RCC's efforts, local leaders will not step up to the plate and engage in conversation. While the RCC may attempt to

create resources that are valuable to local leaders, it may take years before the right mayor or staff get into office who will take advantage of the resources.

The third statement, while "the mission is clearly defined, there needs to be a distinction between the Governor's Rural Partnership Board (GRPB) and the RCC" reveals that there could be some perceived overlap with the RCC's existence. As the GRPB was created years before the RCC and has a similar mission, some may think that the RCC is redundant and therefore not needed. While the interviews with members did not seem to outwardly express this threat, the interviews with experts and practitioners revealed that this distinction is not clearly defined to outsiders. Is there room for the RCC to be an on-the-ground resource while the GRPB continues to be a higher-level advisory board? Many of the member interviewees responded positively to such a question. From within the RCC, there is a rather clear distinction as members do not feel any other agency or entity is achieving goals similar to the RCC. However, from the outside, not having a defined difference may lead to the undervaluing of the RCC by both communities and legislators.

A rather large threat to the RCC is if the "CDO no longer supported the RCC." While this possibility was raised as a weakness, it is also a threat in the sense that the RCC doesn't have complete control over that decision. Many outside factors play into whether initiatives of the CDO, such as the RCC, are kept or terminated. While many of the interviewees stated their comfort and joy that the RCC initiative was based in the CDO, there was also recognition that the CDO will only continue allocating resources if they continue seeing a greater benefit than expense. While the RCC can do its best to ensure there is a benefit, the expense side of the equation may change and become more restrictive. If the CDO budget is trimmed or more initiatives are taken on, the administrator's time and other expenses will be in greater competition with other initiatives. Therefore, making the expense for the CDO relatively larger.

The last statement, the "RCC becoming too large to be effective" does not fit neatly under the threats category. However, the question was repeatedly asked through the data, is there a point where membership becomes too varied and numerous that the RCC is unable to meet its goals? There are internal factors that may play into this question, such as the format of meetings

and the structure of the organization chart. External factors such as interest in the RCC and expectations of the RCC could also change. With the threat of external factors changing, the RCC may be able to deal with the shift without altering internal business, or the RCC may need to change how it operates. Therefore, the questions about being too large to function come down first to why is the RCC growing. Is it simply gaining more members, or is the RCC receiving an influx of pressure to change its goals and operations?

5.3 RCC and Moving Forward

5.3.1 What has characterized the RCC evolution to this point?

When looking at the history of the RCC, there are certain events and frameworks that shaped the RCC. Internally, the CDO adopted the Community Development Framework early on. This formed the basis of the RCC. Secondly, an exploratory meeting concerning main street programs became the catalyst. Lastly, the following two years saw the RCC efforts focused on making sure everyone was at the table.

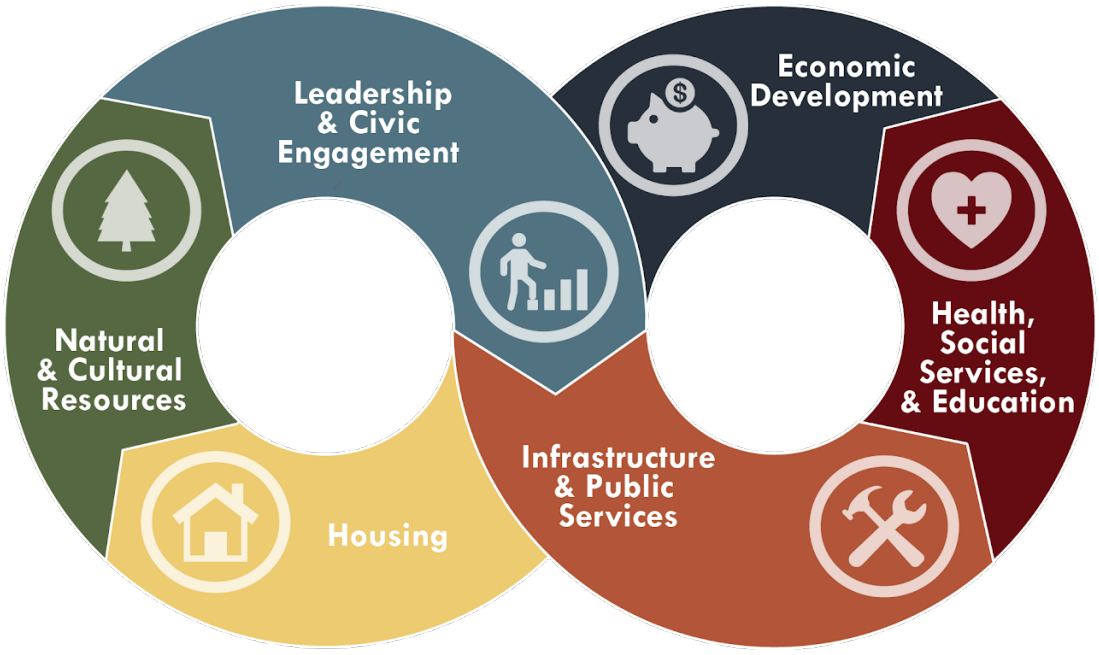

Figure 16. Comprehensive Community Development Framework (Utah Community Development Office, n.d.)

Before the RCC concept came about within the CDO, the CDO had created a Comprehensive Community Development Framework (Figure 16). The Framework illustrates the connections between working areas when it comes to community development. Interviewees stated that it was this framework that was the glue that brought everyone together during the first RCC meeting. The Framework serves as the basis for the RCC's cross-sector goals. In practice, these working areas affect and are affected by one another continuously, emphasizing the importance of increased cross-sector communication and collaboration. There is a clear line from the Comprehensive Community Development Framework to the goals of the RCC.

Beyond the connections that the Framework illustrates, interviewees stated that the Framework was created from a service provision perspective. For the interviewees, service provision is about providing the tools for communities. Many interviewees felt that government is best closer to the people and that a state organization is still far away from rural communities. Therefore, the framework is about providing tools for communities to meet the challenges of their locale with their own expert knowledge of place.

A second characterizer of the RCC is how it went from an internal idea of the CDO to implementation. An exploratory meeting about the potential of bringing Main Street America back to Utah served as the catalyst for starting the RCC. While the idea for the RCC was incepted at the CDO for many months before then, the exploratory meeting provided a small glimpse as to what the RCC could be. At that meeting, nearly fifty service providers gathered around one central topic, main street. CDO staff took note and corresponded with those in attendance about the idea of the RCC. Just a couple of months later, the RCC held its first meeting in December of 2018.

The main street launching pad became the RCC's first working group. The group worked for two solid years that resulted in SB 194. The bill passed through the Utah Legislature and was signed into law. Effectively, the bill establishes and funds a new main street program through the Governor's Office of Economic Development (being renamed the Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity). The program selected two pilot cities to receive funding within the first year, Brigham City and Price City. With the bill providing permanent funding, more cities

will participate in the program as it gets running to full capacity.

SB 194 was a significant win for the RCC. Getting permanent funding for a cross-collaborative program proved the concept of the RCC. Some interviewees noted that there is pre-built momentum for a main street program as the initial exploratory meeting was held before the RCC was formed. However, the RCC was the vehicle that held the momentum for two years and delivered a white paper to the Legislature. Regardless of whether an initiative or program is conceived internally or externally of the RCC, the main street program proves that the RCC can still facilitate the coordination and collaboration which moves interest into conversation and conversation into action.

A second working group also characterized the RCC within the first two years, the Utah Technical Planning Assistance Inventory. The Inventory started out by asking 'what does everyone offer to rural Utah?' That simple question led to the creation of a working group that focused on cataloging the resources that state, federal, academic, non-profit, and other state-wide organizations offer to rural areas. Due to the varied nature of initiatives, such as grants, loans, technical assistance, trainings, etc. it proved a difficult task to assemble all the information into a digestible format. The format not only had to be easily readable by service providers but also local officials.

Once the first draft of the rural inventory was complete, it became another proof of concept for the RCC model. As the RCC's first major project, it achieved many of the coordination and information sharing goals while starting to build the link between service providers and communities. After several labor-intensive revises of the Inventory, the RCC paired its rural resources inventory with an effort to create a state-wide inventory. Today, the Inventory has over 200 grant and loan services, training opportunities, technical assistance programs, informational guides, etc. Containing information about the type of assistance, a brief summary, focus area, and contact information, the inventory continues to be utilized by both service providers and local officials.

The Comprehensive Community Development Framework, the Main Street Program Working

Group, and the Utah Technical Planning Assistance Inventory each characterized the RCC through its formation and the first two years. With a couple of projects accomplished, the RCC is set to not only continue this work but move forward in new ways.

5.3.2 What are the possibilities of how the RCC may move forward?

The question of how the RCC may move forward cannot be answered simply. Due to the collaborative and informal nature of the RCC, there are many ways in which the RCC may change. This section covers the more significant routes which were revealed through the data analysis. Both the analytic generalization analysis and the SWOT analysis will be used to identify the ways in which the RCC may change. This section is not an exhaustive list of possible futures, rather it highlights the prominent scenarios that were brought through interviews, focus groups, and documents. Additionally, it is not the scope of this paper to evaluate the pros, cons, and probability for each of the scenarios. The objective is simply to identify the way the RCC may move forward as identified through the documents, interviews, and focus groups.

The first scenario is to stay the course that the RCC is already on. As described in the previous section, this course would continue the information sharing and collaborative working groups that the previous two years witnesses. Those years also saw attention on networking and making sure everyone is at the table. To capture a more detailed description of the previous two years, the projected outcomes that were established during the December 2018 meeting were compared with the 2021 Action Plan.

The meeting minutes from 2018 outlined three projected outcomes:

- A comprehensive approach to community development will occur by collaborating with one another on resources, trainings, and programs to fulfill community needs.
- A better understanding of what initiatives/services are taking place in rural Utah by all participants, and we'll share information on those resources within rural Utah.
- We'll work together on community development projects to get things done.

The 2021 Action Plan outlined five short-term and two long-term focuses:

- *Gather Together: Continue gathering on a quarterly basis*
- *Share Resources: Collaboratively share our resources at rural events*
- *Build Relationships: Continue to build working relationships and understand what other members have to offer throughout rural Utah*
- *Address Gaps: Identify where RCC members are serving across the state and address service gaps*
- *Continue Momentum: Continually enhance this initiative and the work that we do*
- *Comprehensive Service Provision Framework (Long-Term): Collaborate on a project together from start to finish*
- *Become a Known Resource (Long -Term): Elevate this initiative*

While the action plan has more bullet points than the meeting minutes by quantity, this is due to finer detail, not expanded focus. The focuses of the action plan all fit within the outcomes of a comprehensive approach to community development through collaboration and information

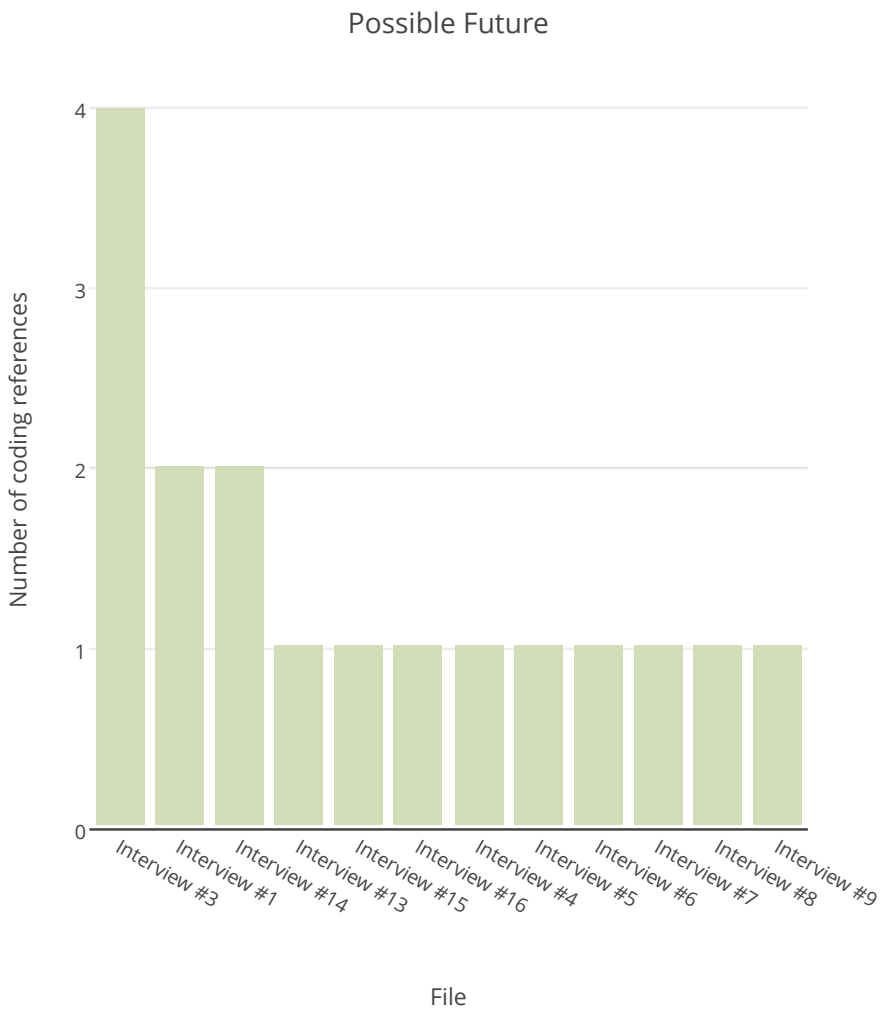

Figure 17. Possible Future Chart

sharing. Paying attention to the two demonstrated projects, the main street program and the resources inventory, the RCC has taken action across these focus areas and is continuing the work through efforts such as the GIS service map. In short, the business-as-usual course will contain a little of everything, moving and adjusting to the thoughts and motivation of members to meet needs.

Now that the business-as-usual course has been detailed, the other scenarios are now able to be discussed. From the interviews, there were 17 individual references for the code 'Possible Future'. Figure 17 shows the distribution of the references throughout the interviews. From these codes, five primary scenarios were identified: on the ground, funding mechanisms, research and needs assessment, rural affairs advising, and permanent funding. The majority of these are taking the RCC from an internal focus to an external focus. The first three scenarios steered the work of the RCC but ultimately did not reshape what the RCC is or its overall goals. The latter two, rural affairs advising and seeking permanent funding, would shift the structure and goals of the RCC.

The desire to move the RCC towards handling projects and issues "on the ground" was brought up during the interviews and focus groups. Figure 18 shows that ten documents and interviewees

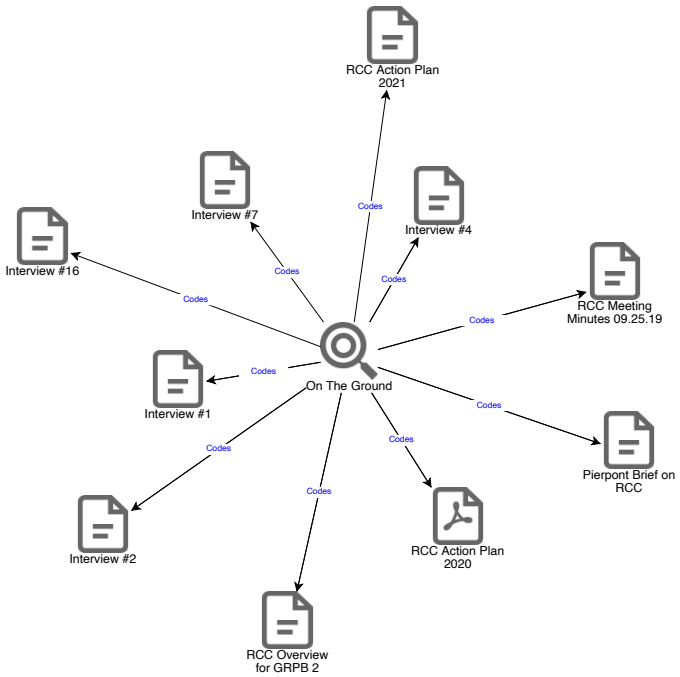

Figure 18. On The Ground Explore Diagram

described an aspect of working on the ground. When discussing this desire, many did not see this aim as outside the purview of what the RCC is designed to do and what it has already been doing. They simply want to strengthen the connection that service workers already have with communities and work on specific community problems.

To operationalize such an aim, one of the interviewees elaborated on a possible working plan. The interviewee proposed that local officials should be able to approach the RCC, perhaps during the quarterly meetings, present their issues or challenges, and receive technical assistance and support from the RCC. In a simple sense, this is simply an activated version of the resource list. Where instead of the duty being on the local official to read over 200 resources from a list, the duty is shared between local officials and RCC members. Local officials would be responsible for presenting their community's situation in a digestible format in front of the RCC. The RCC members would be responsible for offering their input and technical assistance as needed.

Shifting the RCC's attention towards specific, on the ground community concerns will increase the time allocation tension which is present at the quarterly meetings. In addition, the flux of individual members from meeting to meeting presents a concern for the consistency and effectiveness of providing technical assistance. Nevertheless, there is a stated desire to incorporate some aspect of on-the-ground work.

The second possible scenario is to start coordinating funding mechanisms. Currently, the RCC focuses primarily on sharing program information between service providers and communities. The inventory is an example where information was gathered and distributed. The quarterly meetings also have time dedicated to updates about current events and program details. Through the interviews, some members expressed that there would be benefits from coordinating funding sources. For instance, a few of the State Rural Development Councils's took on a similar task in the '90s and were able to make all state grants available through one primary application form so that cities did not have to fill out multiple applications with differing timelines and formats (Radin et al., 1996).

Taking on such a task could fit well within the RCC structure as the working groups have

demonstrated their ability to sustain projects over years. However, similar to SB 194, action would have to be taken external to the RCC for it to be implemented. Determining the complexity of such a project is outside the scope of this paper, however, it is reasonable to assume that the majority of state agencies and the legislature would have to be involved. There is value to the RCC hosting the project of coordinating grants to ultimately better assist rural communities and the RCC, with its line-worker members, is well suited to provide insights into how the coordinated grants should take shape.

The third scenario is for the RCC to take on more research and needs assessment goals. With the GIS dashboard, the RCC is already dipping its toes into needs assessments by identifying geographical gaps in service provision. One of the expert and practitioner interviewees shared the perspective that the RCC, and the multitude of state actors, are not fully in tune with the needs of rural Utah. The point has been made before that the RCC membership consists of line-workers; however, the interviewee argued that the members' knowledge is incomplete. The interviews nor focus groups revealed any particular details about how such research and needs assessments would be carried out via the RCC. Nevertheless, the possibility and the need were still identified.

The next possible future, rural affairs advising, would constitute a rather dramatic shift in the RCC's vision and goals. Given the vision statement, "a grassroots initiative that seeks to better allocate time, resources, and strategies in rural Utah by increasing communication and collaboration with state and federal agencies, universities, and statewide public organizations," entering a rural affairs advising space would expand the vision of the RCC. The interviews and focus groups revealed that there is a desire amongst members for the RCC to serve such an advising role for the state government, either through the legislature or the governor. Tying the RCC to the state government would change the RCC's grassroots and member-guided mission and create a formal tie to the state government.

However, the interviews revealed a way that the RCC may be able to elevate issues to the state government without taking on the advising efforts themselves. Some of the interviewees talked about the Governor's Rural Partnership Board (GRPB) and its role as a rural affairs advising

body to the governor. The primary idea is that the RCC is able to hand off identified priorities or projects to the GRPB for them to take action on. Having this distinction between the RCC and GRPB would fulfill the identified need, previously discussed in the SWOT analysis, of having a clear line between the two entities. This possible future scenario would enable the RCC to pass on important information that should receive state attention.

Further, a brief from the RCC to the GRPB in February of 2019, states that "where the Governor's Rural Partnership Board provides insights and direction for the state concerning rural Utah, the Rural Coordinating Council then provides efficiency in better supporting the GRPB's initiatives on the ground." Therefore, unless the RCC wants to expand its mission to include advising and directly compete with the GRPB, the RCC should pass on identified needs and issues to the GRPB.

The second possible future that stands to dramatically shift the RCC is to look for permanent funding. Some interviewees said that funding would bring some stability and legitimacy to the RCC. Such funding enhances the RCC's administrative ability but also could facilitate minor projects. However, pursuing permanent funding was highly unpopular amongst the interviewees. Most of the opposition cited that with funding comes regulations, requirements, and, oftentimes, turf wars. One interviewee went as far as to say that funding that would require participation would be "the antithesis of the vision."

Interviewees discussed two different scenarios for achieving funding. The first is to look for funding from the agencies that members are coming from. The second, and most referenced, is to look for permanent funding through the legislative budget. During an expert and practitioner interview, there was a conversation about a hypothetical scenario of the RCC being recognized as Utah's new State Rural Development Council. While the details of such an arrangement are not in the purview of this report, the interviewee offered that such consideration may help achieve some legitimacy and funding for the RCC while keeping the grassroots and consensus-decision-making aspects intact.

In total, there is a strong will among members to engage in more than just information sharing

during the quarterly meetings and in working groups. As from the SWOT analysis, many members see burnout and disinterest as threats to the RCC. They see that one way of battling those pressures is to activate the quarterly meetings beyond information sharing. By cooperatively working on projects or initiatives, interviewees feel that members would feel more active and have something to take away from the meetings. Perhaps there is more satisfaction in walking away from a meeting and knowing the time was spent advancing a project rather than listening to people speak for 90 minutes without immediately realizing that value.

Again, the section offers no thorough evaluation of each possible future as its goal is simply to identify the scenarios using the analytic generalization and SWOT analysis methods.

5.4 RCC and Rural Planning

This section and the below questions address the objective to understand how the RCC affects rural planning. The two questions from the consistency table will be discussed below.

5.4.1 What prominent planning principles does the RCC embody?

To understand what planning principles the RCC embodies, the prominent theories must be reviewed. As identified in Chapter 2, the prominent planning principles in the US, and which are relevant to this report are:

- A "fundamental shift away from sectoral support policy for agriculture and top-down policy interventions shift towards a spatial, territorial, and integrated approach to rural development" (Shucksmith, 2000 as cited in Scott, 2019, p. 219).
- A practice that works "with and through different actors, connect in some way with the complexity of the countryside and can be a multi-sectoral activity, sometimes dealing with broad structural challenges" (Gallent and Gkartzios, 2019, p. 17).
- An "attention to the range of pressures and realities that will frame planning practice in the coming century" (Scott et al., 2019, p. 642).

Starting with the first bullet point, prominent planning principles are no longer solely agriculture sector-based, nor are they top-down oriented. Instead, policy interventions should be spatial, territorial, and integrated. While the RCC itself is not implementing policy, each of these three adjectives can be identified within the RCC model. The RCC focuses its work within rural Utah. With a loose definition, rural Utah includes both spatial and territorial definitions for its work

and the work of members. Integration is achieved through the RCC's grassroots and cross-sector approaches. The RCC also integrates vertically and horizontally across government levels.

The second bullet point uses words such as complexity, multi-sectoral, and structural challenges to describe planning principles. Similarly, these three adjectives can be identified within the RCC model. The RCC inherently recognizes the complexity of the countryside. The RCC purposefully lacks a strict, working definition of where rural Utah is and is not, what it is and is not, nor what it should or should not be. Without such a definition, this allows the RCC to recognize the complexity of rural communities and the challenges they face. There is no prescribed notion of what rural communities are nor what they should be. Concerning the principle of multi-sectoral, the RCC bases its existence on the goal of cross-sector working. As discussed, prior, the RCC takes a state-wide, cross-sector approach to its work. Members span across working areas and jurisdictions.

As for the principle of addressing broad-structural challenges, the RCC has yet to address such challenges. Nevertheless, the RCC model stands ready to take on such issues. While one could get lost debating and defining structural challenges, some say that such challenges within rural areas are based on "managing land-use change and mediating between competing interests in the use of land… particularly given threats to natural resources and importance of balancing global challenges with local demands and needs" (Scott et al., 2019b, p. 1). To date, there was little in the data that described the RCC taking on such work within quarterly meetings and working groups.

A similar dynamic can be seen in the State Rural Development Councils. These councils were "originally designed to deal with broader rural problems, in fact, they have not really attacked rural development in such a fashion, but have limited their actions to selected problems generated by member organizations" (Radin et al., 1996, p. 160). Much like the RCC, the model is able to address broad structural challenges, yet in practice, the work is determined by members.

With that said, the author notes that while the working topics of the RCC, such as main street,

resource inventory, and GIS dashboard, are not structural topics, the RCC itself embodies the work of addressing structural challenges. If one defines lack of resources in rural communities and inefficient allocation of resources, time, and money as structural challenges, as the author does, then the RCC's goals of mediating these challenges fulfill the planning principle of addressing systematic challenges. The fact that the RCC coordinates members throughout the state addresses structural issues, if not indirectly.

The third bullet point focuses on recognizing the array of pressures and realities of planning practices. As discussed, the RCC recognizes the complexity of rural communities and the challenges they face. With the progress of projects such as the resource inventory and GIS dashboard, the RCC moves closer and closer to fulfilling this planning principle. The RCC is not prescribing what communities need, rather they are coordinating efforts to simply better serve communities. In addition, if the RCC takes on a more consulting role for communities as discussed as a possible future, this will only strengthen the model's ability to recognize the array of pressures and realities of rural communities in Utah.

In summary, while rural planning within communities is not being executed by the RCC, the RCC as a coordinating entity embodies many of today's prominent planning principles of today. This is important as the RCC does still affect rural planning activities on the ground, as discussed in the following section.

5.4.2 How does the RCC affect rural planning on the ground?

Documents, interviewees, and focus group participants described numerous ways in which the RCC affects rural planning within communities. These effects are clustered into two main categories. The RCC first affects rural planning by being the link between service provider to service provider. Secondly, the RCC also serves as the link between service providers and local leaders.

By linking service providers together, the RCC develops better service providers. Those service providers involved with the RCC or who are utilizing the RCC's resources are better equipped to serve communities. To illustrate this process, the Comprehensive Community Development

Framework is used. As discussed, earlier in this chapter, the framework characterized the RCC from the very beginning and shapes how members understand not only their role as service providers but others as well. RCC members better understand that working areas affect and are affected by one another continuously. These members also activate this knowledge through cross-sector communication and collaboration via the RCC quarterly meetings, newsletters, working groups, and presentations.

The second effect that the RCC has on rural planning comes from the RCC linking service providers to local leaders. An interviewee says that this link empowers local leaders and therefore affects rural planning efforts. By increasing information sharing through projects like the resource inventory, the RCC enables local leaders to utilize a wide range of tools and resources. Without such information, the planning practice of communities would remain restrained by the knowledge of leaders and staff. By knowing the breadth of programs available, local leaders and city staff are able to tailor their plans to utilize the available resources.

While these processes do not directly alter planning practices within rural communities, they affect planning activities by providing better coordination, enhanced knowledge, and improved communication. An interviewee illustrated these processes of the RCC affecting rural planning during a conversation about how the interviewee came to work with the City of Milford.

A local leader from Milford was working with another service provider concerning issues within Milford. During an RCC quarterly meeting, the service provider was discussing with the group about the situation faced in Milford. The interviewee was then able to offer resources and services that posed to help Milford. Thanks to that conversation that the RCC facilitated, Milford now had access to a new resource and their planning efforts on the ground changed accordingly to utilize the resource. The interviewee also stated that the conversation sparked a new working relationship between the two service providers. That new connection stands to affect other communities that either service provider interacts with in the future.

The data demonstrates that when the RCC helps fill in the resources gap that many rural communities face, planning practices on the ground are altered. In the case of Milford, the

city's planning practices were affected in the immediate timeline but they stand to continue being affected thanks to the link between the two service provers and the link between that local leader and the service providers.

5.5 RCC and Rural Governance

This section and the below questions address the objective to understand how the RCC affects rural governance. The two questions from the consistency table will be discussed below.

5.5.1 What prominent new governance principles does the RCC embody?

To understand what new governance principles the RCC embodies, the prominent theories must be reviewed. Continuing from the principles of new governance and the converse practices as discussed in Section 5.1.2, Figure 19 is a hierarchy chart of codes from NVivo that visualizes the frequency of codes throughout the data.

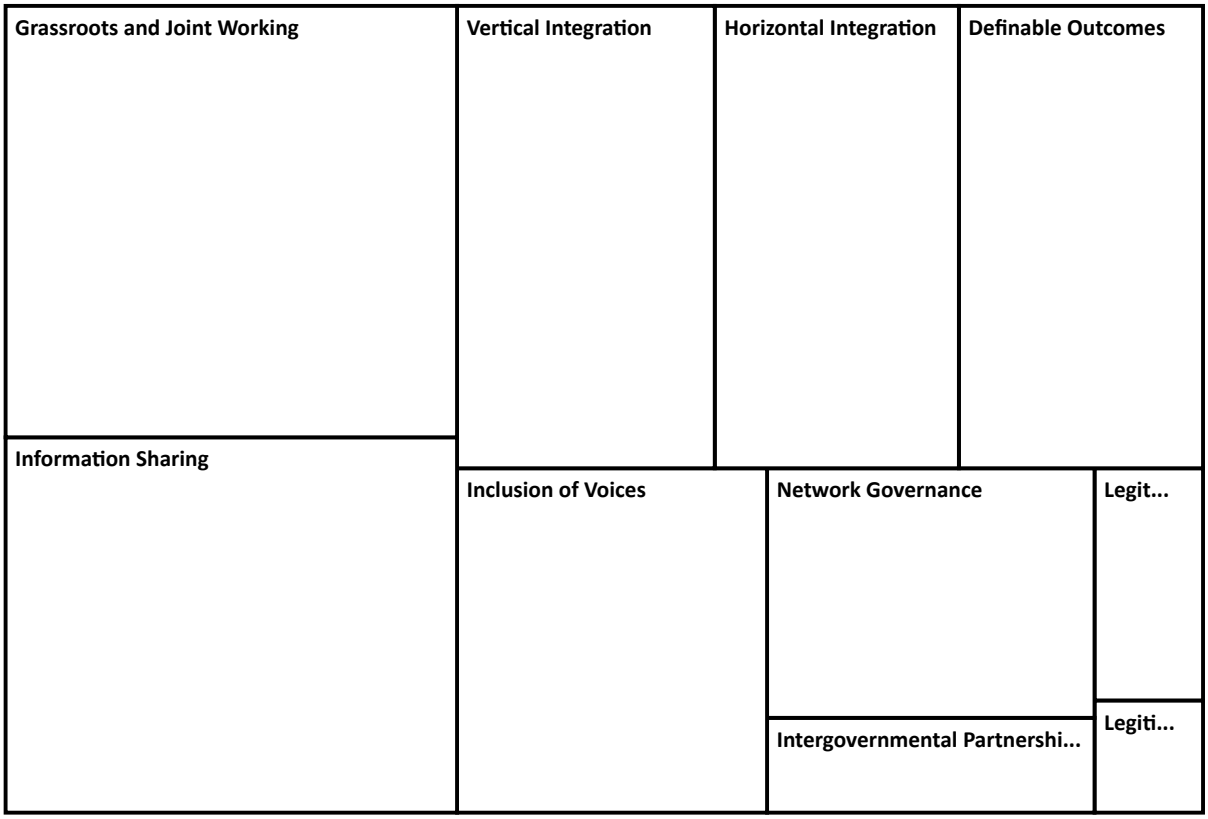

Figure 19. Theoretical Code Hierarchy

**The two smallest boxes in the bottom-right corner of the figure both reference legitimacy. The larger box is titled Legitimacy In-Line With State. The other box is titled Legitimacy Away From State.*

From the size relationships within the code hierarchy, it is clear to see that some new governance principles were identified frequently within the data. Grassroots and Joint Working was the most identifiable new governance theme within the data with 31 total references. The second most referenced theory topic is Information Sharing with 27 references. The next three most recognized new governance topics are Vertical Integration, Definable Outcomes, and Horizontal Integration.

It is no surprise that Grassroots and Joint Working was the most identifiable theme as these are at the heart of what the RCC is and does. As a coordinating body comprised of volunteer members from various sectors and levels of government, the RCC embodies the new governance principle in its entirety. Figure 20 charts the code reference in relation to the data files. The principle is identified across the array of data sources, from the interviews to the focus groups and documents.

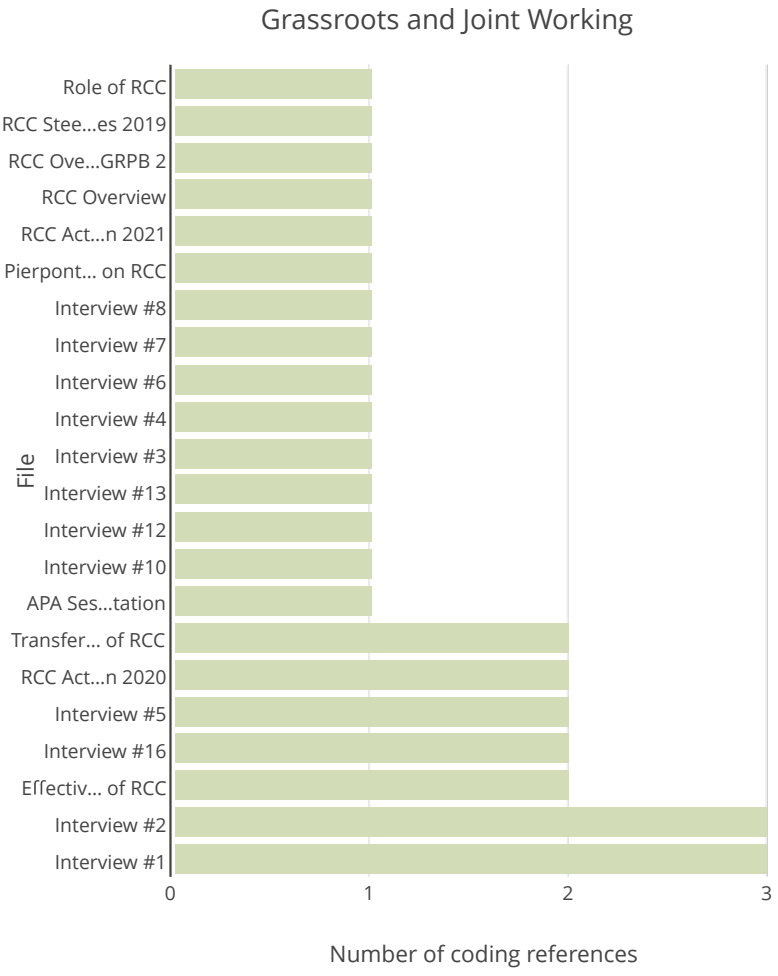

Figure 20. Grassroots and Joint Working Code Diagram

The second most coded new governance principle, Information Sharing, was similarly identified across the data sources. The code was often identified when participators discussed the sharing of information between service providers and between service providers and communities. Many interviewees mentioned that bringing people together to share information and coordinate allows the RCC and its members to have a larger impact and larger perspective.

Vertical and Horizontal Integration are the next two most identified codes. The concept of horizontal integration is straightforward as the RCC brings together individuals who work relatively at the same level of government, the state. Similarly, the vertical integration code identified that RCC membership spans between the state and federal levels. Additionally, while local officials are unable to be official members of the RCC, they are integrated into the RCC model as well. By the RCC being a link between service providers and local communities, the RCC vertically integrates from the federal level down to the local level.

To further demonstrate what prominent new governance principles that the RCC embodies, a specific document will be detailed. In Spring of 2019, the RCC administrator wrote a brief on the RCC to the Executive Director of Workforce Services, Jon Pierpont. Workforce Services is the Utah department that houses the CDO and therefore the RCC. This document was titled Pierpont Brief and can be found in Appendix C. While the brief is just two pages in length, it does an excellent job describing the RCC and its work. Therefore, the document is a great example to highlight the various new governance theory topics.

The Pierpont Brief contains six reference codes as can be seen in the explore diagram (Figure 21). Along with the top five most frequently identified topics previously discussed, the Brief contains two additional principles: Inclusion of Voices and Intergovernmental Partnerships.

With a total of seven individual new governance codes identified within the Pierpont Brief, the RCC appears to embody many principles of new governance. These seven codes are also identified throughout the rest of the data. With the repetition of the same codes identified time and time again regardless of the data source, it is apparent that the RCC embodies many principles of new governance.

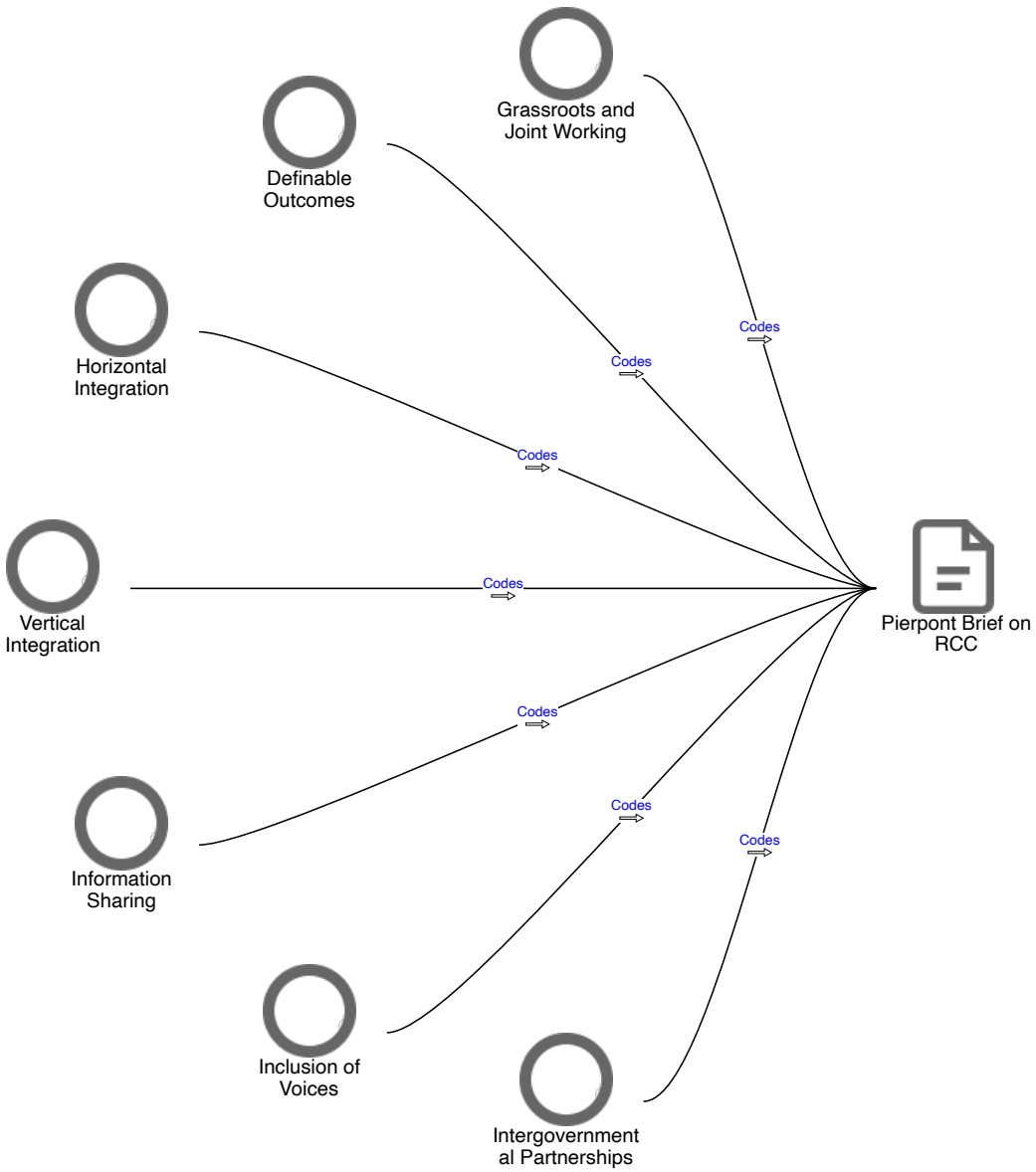

Figure 21. Pierpont Brief Explore Diagram

5.5.2 How does the RCC affect rural governance within the State?

The RCC pushes the dynamic between the State of Utah and rural communities towards a new governance paradigm. Section 5.5.1 demonstrated that the RCC embodies many principles of new governance. By doing so, the RCC is affecting the governance of rural Utah. The RCC first affects rural governance by being the link between service provider to service provider. This enables service providers to better execute their jobs and serve rural communities. Secondly, the RCC also serves as the link between service providers and local leaders. This shapes the knowledge base of communities and therefore alters their governance. These are the same links

and ways that the RCC affects rural planning. While they are the same in name, the underlying logic is different.

In order to understand how these links affect governance, a definition of governance must be reviewed: “the system of values, policies and institutions by which a society manages its economic, political and social affairs through interactions within and among the state, civil society and private sector” (UNDP, 2011, p. 287). The RCC and its members neatly fit into this definition as they are actors from state, civil society, and the private sector who influence and manage portions of economic and political affairs. The demonstration projects such as the main street program and the resource and assistance inventory alter how economic, political, and social affairs are managed.

For instance, the main street program is already serving two pilot cities that are receiving grant funds and technical assistance. The program also is designated to receive an annual appropriation from the Legislature to keep the program running efficiently. While the RCC was not the legislative institution that signed the program into law, the RCC was the host that carried the program from ideas to a well-constructed white paper. Therefore, the RCC played a large role in shaping how those tax dollars are to be used and their impact on rural communities. The resource and assistance inventory influences economic, political, and social affairs by sharing information. Doing so allows the information about grants and programs to become more accessible. Those rural communities that lack institutional knowledge about state resources are now able to access that information and start managing their economic, political, and social affairs accordingly.

It should be noted that neither of these demonstration projects, nor the RCC itself, alters the government of rural areas nor the state. When discussing the RCC’s effect on rural governance, an interviewee stated that the RCC “does not change how rural Utah is governed, but it changes the governance of rural Utah.” Nevertheless, without changing the government, the RCC has been able to influence the governance of rural Utah by sharing information and coordinating resources.

5.6 RCC and Transferability

This section and the below question address the final objective from the consistency table which is to understand the transferability of the RCC.

5.6.1 What organizational factors of the RCC affect its transferability?

To discuss this question, two aspects will be considered. The first is the model's transferability to other geopolitical states or nations. The second is the model's transferability to other topics apart from rural.

Concerning transferability to other states or nations, the first question for one of the focus groups was, "how could other states use the model for rural efforts." Among the responses are:

- This model works well especially in geographically large states
- It would work well especially on a particular topic- like healthcare or arts
- Any state could benefit from assessing its resources and determining where there are gaps or overlap
- States could use this model to better coordinate service delivery to their rural spaces/ communities
- Looking at tools from a rural paradigm helps to focus efforts

These statements largely talk about the benefits of coordinating efforts, especially for geographically large landscapes. From the statements, the respondents appear not to be concerned about the transferability of the RCC to other states. Nevertheless, the factors that may influence transferability need to be identified to provide more detail with the respondent's assumptions.

A good way to understand the factors that may influence transferability is to look at the factors that enabled the RCC to start in Utah from Section 5.2.1. The first is its inception through the CDO. Secondly, the RCC has an organization chart that can be described as horizontal, informal, and consisting of line workers. Lastly, the State of Utah has experienced a growing interest in rural landscapes and communities.

The CDO proved to be a unique environment for the RCC to get its start. Due to the flexibility and innovation of the CDO, the RCC was able to be started through a grassroots effort rather than a top-down directive. Transferring the RCC to another state would be challenging to keep this grassroots aspect intact. There needs to be careful consideration about what office or entity is hosting the model and is there some aspect of a top-down directive that is making it happen.

The second factor, the horizontal organization chart, is an internal factor to the RCC rather than a contextual, external factor. Being an internal factor allows for other states and nations to replicate the same or similar organization chart. While the RCC considered having a steering committee rather than an administrator, the committee was to facilitate rather than dictate. It would have held a similar, horizontal position on the organization chart as the administrator. Straying too far from a horizontal organization chart poses to change the model in a way that differentiates it too much from the RCC.

Utah had an interest in rural landscapes and communities while the RCC was forming. The energy and focus around rural created the right context for people to volunteer their time to become a member of the RCC. Without such energy or concern for rural communities at the state or nation level, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to adopt the RCC model. However, it stands to reason that if a state or nation were looking at adopting the model, there is some level of attention to rural landscapes and communities already.

The RCC started in Utah at the right time when preparedness met opportunity. If other states or nations want to adopt the RCC, they must carefully consider these factors that made it successful in Utah.

The transferability of the RCC model could also be considered in terms of topic. As one of the focus group participants was quoted earlier, their opinion is that the model "would work well especially on a particular topic- like healthcare or arts." That same focus group was asked about the model's transferability to urban areas and to environmental features such as a cross-boundary lake. The focus group responded primarily positively to each of these questions but did note a few considerations.

One of the first considerations is for the scale of the entity. A participant noted that within an urban environment, metropolitan cities are largely considered more complicated as there are numerously more people and actors. Taking the model to an urban topic may require a rescaling from a state-level down to a region, county, or city scale. Another respondent considered the topic of urban to be too large and ambiguous to create an effective model. That respondent proposed doing it by narrower topics, such as drug use prevention, rather than urban.

The main consideration for the environmental features topic is concern over political boundaries. While there are numerous examples of authorities who have jurisdiction over cross-boundary environmental features, such as the Tennessee Valley Authority and the Tahoe Fund, many of these are constructed by the federal government. Creating a volunteer-based membership and grassroots initiative, such as the RCC, around a cross-boundary environmental feature could prove challenging as there is no power or authority. Adopting such a model would require preexisting cooperation, collaboration, and consultation with mutually reflective engagement.

The RCC model's transferability to other geopolitical states or nations or to other topics apart from rural is not without its challenges. There are legitimate concerns about the model's effectiveness given various factors such as political boundaries, attention and consideration to a given topic, and the implementation strategy.

Ch. 6 Findings and Implications

The aim of this research project has been achieved: “to understand how the RCC affects rural planning and rural governance in Utah, and to critically analyze the RCC to determine its prospects and transferability.” Data from the several collection and analysis methods provide answers to the five objectives and nine questions underneath the project aim within the consistency table. While answers were provided and discussed, this exploratory research project does not provide simple or absolute answers. The RCC is a dynamic entity whose purpose and functions are open to change. The aspects of informality and grassroots within the RCC keep the RCC from being easily defined or managed. However, these aspects also separate it from other initiatives such as the State Rural Development Councils.

The findings to each objective are covered in Section 6.1. The implications for theory and practice from these findings are discussed in the following two sections. Lastly, further research that could build upon this project or upon topics that were outside the scope of this project will be discussed.

6.1 Findings

As the notions of rural planning continue shifting from a paradigm largely devoted to the agriculture sector to a complex and integrated approach, the RCC is ready to embrace this shift. While the RCC does not directly control how planning takes place at a local level in rural Utah, the RCC both embodies new prominent planning principles and affects rural planning on the ground. Through its coordinating and information-sharing functions, the RCC serves as a link between service providers and service providers and between service providers and local officials. These links alter the trajectory of planning in rural Utah as local leaders are connected to new information and resources. Additionally, service providers gain a stronger connection to local leaders which has the potential to change how the State of Utah, its agencies, and multiple other organizations define and understand what rural Utah needs in relation to planning.

Rural governance blurs the boundaries between the state and civil society as “governments,

private corporations, citizens, and communities now work in partnership with one another to design and implement policies of economic, social, and environmental reform" (Cheshire et al., 2015). This emerging process of new rural governance is witnessed in the formation and functions of the RCC. The RCC embraces new rural governance principles such as grassroots, information sharing, vertical and horizontal integration, and inclusion of voices. Being a coordinating committee across levels and sectors, the RCC constitutes a form of intergovernmental partnership that heavily relies on both personal and professional networks. It is through this deep embodiment of new rural governance principles that the RCC affects governance on the ground in rural Utah. Through coordination and information sharing, the RCC facilitates and alters the process of governance in rural Utah.

The institutions, policies, and regulations of Utah created a context where the RCC was conceived and implemented. The innovative nature of the CDO, the significant social-political interest in rural Utah, and the horizontal organization chart each played a role in how the RCC started and operates in Utah. Additionally, the context of Utah poses opportunities and weaknesses to the RCC which it must face along with the strengths and weaknesses it inherently has. The SWOT analysis revealed that the RCC faces multiple elements within each of the quadrants.

This research also determined some of the significant ways in which the RCC may move forward. The possible future scenarios were constituted in part by the factors that have characterized the RCC evolution to this point: the Community Development Framework, ensuring everyone is at the table, and the main street program as the catalyst. From this point in time forward, the RCC faces many possible futures whose impact would change the RCC in minute and significant ways. While an exhaustive list of possible future scenarios could not be discussed, prominent scenarios from the data are presented as findings with no intention or attempt to evaluate nor provide counsel concerning the scenarios.

The final aim of understanding the transferability of the RCC resulted in multiple factors that must be considered when transferring the RCC model to a different geopolitical space or to a different defining topic. The analysis revealed that the factors that allowed the RCC to start and operate in Utah foreshadowed the factors responsible for transferability. There are legitimate

concerns about the model's transferability given various factors such as political boundaries, attention and consideration to a given topic, and the implementation strategy. However, the RCC serves as a great blueprint for how prominent new planning and governance principles were able to take shape within Utah for the goals of coordination and information sharing. This blueprint can be useful to other scenarios given consideration to the factors that may hinder transferability.

6.2 Implications for Theory

6.2.1 Implications for Rural Planning Theory

Recalling from Chapter 2, the current rural planning paradigm is spatial, territorial, and integrated. While there is no set prescriptive agenda for rural planning, this new paradigm is taking a variety of shapes via different interventions in many contexts. The RCC presents a unique model for activating the most common principles of rural planning that create on the ground change. Each of the planning descriptions from Chapter 5 outlined the principles that the RCC embodies.

At the very least the RCC model is a proof of concept for those principles. While attempts to activate such planning principles have been implemented before, the RCC provides a unique model that implements principles such as integration, recognition of complexity, multi-sectoral, and attention to the range of pressures and realities of rural landscapes. These principles take new life within the RCC.

The RCC is not a traditional planning entity. It does not deal with master plans or infrastructure planning. Its responsibilities are not to specific constituents or a narrowly defined program. Regional planning authorities may include many of the same principles of planning; however, the RCC has no official authority and its membership is volunteer-based. As a coordinating and information-sharing entity, the RCC truly detaches itself from a top-down, descriptive approach that planning is all too famous for. Rather, the RCC seeks to better allocate time, resources, and strategies in rural Utah by becoming a resource for rural communities.

The multifunctional transition and localism movement of the 1960s, 70's, and 80's left rural communities hurting as they lacked the professional and resource capacities of their urban counterparts. Multifunctional transition being the production, consumption, and protection of rural landscapes that defined the complex and overlapping uses of rural spaces (Holmes, 2006; McCarthy, 2005). Localism being the process where "responsibility for planning and implementation [was] devolved to local communities and non-state associations" (Dandekar and Hibbard, 2016, p. 227). In the midst of this void of attention, the new planning principles in discussion started taking shape in the 1990s. After several decades of better definition and increased practice of these principles, the RCC was born. By being a resource for rural communities through the better allocation of time, resources, and strategies, the RCC helps fill that professional and resources gap faced in rural communities for decades.

The State of Utah and various organizations did start paying attention to rural Utah before the inception of the RCC. This attention resulted in new funding and technical assistance opportunities. However, the RCC takes those resources and creates links with service providers and local officials with minimal additional resource commitment. Projects such as the Resources and Assistance Inventory further integrates efforts through a multi-sectoral approach that recognizes the complexities of rural landscapes. Perhaps with time, the RCC will start shaping the resources and assistance offered to rural Utah through various state, federal, and non-government actors to more closely match the same planning principles.

6.2.2 Implications for Rural Governance Theory

As described in the previous chapter, the RCC embodies many principles of new governance. Section 5.5.1 presented Figure 18 Theoretical Code Heirarchy. The RCC model uniquely integrates principles of new governance such as grassroots and joint working, information sharing, inclusion of voices, vertical and horizontal integration, and definable outcomes. Much like for rural planning, the RCC model is a proof of concept for these rural governance principles. Entities such as the Utah Rural Development Council, the Governor's Rural Partnership Board, and the Zion Regional Collaborative all have creation dates that predate the creation of the RCC. Those entities each have affected the governance process of rural Utah; however, the RCC does

so with the most emphasis on grassroots and joint working and information sharing. By doing so, the RCC separates itself from those other entities and serves as one of the first models to focus on rural governance. The RCC model poses two main implications to governance theory in addition to being a proof of concept.

The first implication is that the case study of the RCC adds to the conversation about intergovernmental partnerships and legitimacy. The RCC has the acknowledgment to operate as an initiative of the CDO from the Department of Workforce Services and the former lieutenant governor of Utah, now the incumbent governor. Additionally, one of the interviewees from the Office of Management and Budget stated the RCC does not go against the values and missions of the state. In this regard, the RCC derives its legitimacy from the state, if not directly from the executive branch of Utah.

However, the RCC also derives some legitimacy away from the state. Considering that members are attending and participating voluntarily, they are not representing their home agency. Members from public entities simply show up with the knowledge of their agency. In this regard, RCC members are acting outside of their state duties. Nevertheless, interviewees stated that members from the public sector often have to seek permission from their superiors to participate in the RCC as they are clocked in for those hours. The RCC also derives legitimacy away from the state by including members from non-government sectors. Members from non-profits and other state-wide organizations bring legitimacy not directly tied to the approval of the legislative or executive branches of Utah.

The RCC is both simultaneously deriving its legitimacy from and away from the government of Utah. Edwards et al. do recognize that "partnerships are commonly scaled to match the existing scalar division of the state" and that "the capacity of partnerships to redistribute power away from the state is illusory" (2001, p. 308). However, the RCC model appeals for legitimization both through the electoral process of the state and from entities outside that electoral process.

Due to the voluntary and grassroots nature of the RCC, the second implication to governance theory is that the RCC may serve as an interesting case study to those interested in the

conversation surrounding mandatory and voluntary participation within systems. While the Rural Governance Initiative directly identifies "grassroots visioning" as a principle of new governance (Fluharty, 2004), the RCC takes the concept of grassroots to a deeper level with volunteer-based membership and primarily, consensus decision making. To understand how this deeper embodiment may have implications to governance theory, additional theory needs to be briefly reviewed.

Punished by Rewards by Alfie Kohn (1999) discusses the trouble with traditional reward systems; which Kohn describes as bribes. Essentially, Kohn says that the basic strategy used to manage workers can be summarized in six words: "do this and you'll get that". Following such a strategy will disengage even the most interested workers through time. Kohn reasons that the focus becomes the reward, which faces diminishing marginal utility, instead of the task itself. Additionally, *The Progress Principle* by Steven Kramer and Teresa Amabile (2011) discusses that workers perform better when they are happily engaged in what they do.

By being volunteer-based, the RCC is forced to keep members engaged and interested. If the RCC were to be mandated, at least among state and federal employees, a question may arise concerning the effectiveness of the mandated member's involvement compared to those who volunteered. The governance theory in Chapter 2 did not include conversations about such extensive considerations of being grassroots-based. The RCC model demonstrates that in the context of governance theory, the term grassroots needs to be further debated and determined if grassroots in the case of the RCC, should be a principle of new governance. Especially given that much of the governance material covered in Chapter 2 is in relation to formal government institutions and intergovernmental partnerships.

6.3 Implications for Practice

6.3.1 Implications for the RCC

This research project took a broad, external, and explorative view of the RCC. Interviewees from inside and outside of the RCC expressed many viewpoints on what the RCC is and what it should become. While this research may not have posed questions that were not already

discussed amongst RCC members, the research attempts to answer the questions through thorough, replicable, and reliable data collection and analysis methods. The author urges RCC members to understand the results and findings. At the conclusion of this research, the RCC will be halfway into its third year of existence and still continually inventing itself. This research revealed multiple strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. In addition, several possible future scenarios were identified from the data and discussed. This research provided valuable information that may inform how members want to take the RCC forward.

With that said, the author hesitates to make any formal recommendations concerning what the RCC should or should not do related to specific matters. This research aims to understand how the RCC affects rural planning and rural governance in Utah. Additionally, it aims to critically analyze the RCC to determine its prospects and transferability. By means of presenting the results and findings, the author has fulfilled this aim. Going beyond this aim, applying the author's interpretation, and providing do's and don'ts would take away from the grassroots spirit of the RCC. Therefore, the following paragraphs are simply only meant to highlight the key implications of this research.

Recalling from the interviews, a member said that "the RCC may meet its goal, but the need will never be fully met." The coordination and information sharing goals of the RCC are achieved every quarterly and working team meeting. Such coordination and information sharing are needed consistently throughout the year given the changing nature of politics, programs, and communities. The author recommends that RCC members do not undervalue such coordination and information sharing in the face of more tangible projects within communities. While there is significant value within such projects and it is the members of the RCC who ultimately decide what the RCC should do, the author recommends that the RCC should continue meeting the constant need to coordinate and share information.

This research identified possible future scenarios primarily from interviews and focus groups. As stated before, the presented scenarios are not recommendations on what should or should not be done. Rather, the author urges the members of the RCC to carefully consider these scenarios. By continuing the conversation internally, members are able to better fully understand the

consequences for each scenario and likely will draft up additional scenarios. As is the case with many of the findings from this exploratory research, the possible future scenarios are in no shape or way the final word. They are a starting point for RCC members to take the conversation forward.

The last implication that the author wants to highlight is the notion that participants of the focus groups and interviews are generally happy with the RCC and its work. While a degree of this satisfaction may be due to sampling bias as participation in the research was voluntary, no significant qualms were revealed through the data. There are always going to be weaknesses and threats to any organization; however, the data lacked any substantial anger or frustration about the RCC and its work. While many factors may construct this situation, the author contributes this to the grassroots and consensus decision-making aspects that are at the core of the RCC. An implication of this research to the RCC is that in general, active members of the RCC are satisfied. This implication is a sign that the RCC model is successful, at least from the viewpoint of its members.

6.2.1 Implications for Practitioners Outside of the RCC

While the topic of this research is based on a case study of the RCC, the author wants to discuss what implications this research has on those built environment professionals outside of the RCC. As much as it is an implication for the RCC, this explorative research on the RCC helps make a proof of concept argument for those looking outside-in on the RCC. By understanding how the RCC affects rural planning and rural governance in Utah, and critically analyzing the RCC to determine its prospects and transferability, this research provides valuable information to those who wish to study and perhaps replicate the RCC model. This research allowed the information of the RCC model to become more accessible. With consideration to the variables identified, the RCC model is able to be transferred to other states and other parts of the world. The author urges those who find the RCC model interesting and who may want to replicate it to first understand these findings and to contact those involved with the RCC.

6.4 Further Research

This research project is only the first, exploratory look of the RCC with emphasis on rural planning and new governance. In an attempt to document the first two years of the RCC, this project covered a total of nine questions under a broad aim. While there was a need for this project to have the breadth it did, there is further need for the existing questions and gaps between them to be explored. For example, continuing from Section 6.2.2, the RCC model advanced the understanding of what it meant to be grassroots within governance theory. Further research is needed to determine if this deeper understanding of the grassroots principle should be included in the principle or if it is outside of its intended scope. The following are a few more ways in which the theories of rural planning and governance, along with the RCC, are able to be researched

The original intent of this thesis was to conduct interviews with local leaders who have benefitted from the RCC. However, the interviews revealed that there were no local governments that directly interacted with the RCC. Three cities have benefited from the actions of the RCC but not directly. Price City and Brigham City are the chosen pilot cities for the main street grant program that was a result of one of the first working groups under the RCC. The third city that has benefited is the City of Milford. Thanks to the networking and communication that took place during a quarterly meeting, a state service provider recognized a need that Milford and another state service provider were facing and was able to step in and help. With no local leaders who have directly interacted with the RCC, there remains a rather large need to research how local communities in rural Utah believe they are impacted by the RCC.

On a similar note, it is known that the RCC affects planning and governance processes within rural Utah. However, further research is needed to determine to what degree these effects are in line with prominent planning and new governance principles. While local officials will change their planning and governance processed due to the coordination and shared information that the RCC provides, are those changes moving those processes closer to the principles that the RCC embodies? Or are those changes simply adding another resource to the toolkit of local officials when in reality the toolbox itself needs to adopt the new principles of planning and governance?

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Appendix A: Interview Table

Number	Interview Type	Sector	Office
1	In-Depth	State Agency	Community Development Office
2	In-Depth	State Agency	Community Development Office
3	In-Depth	State Agency	Utah Governor's Office of Economic Development - Office of Tourism
4	In-Depth	State Agency	Community Development Office
5	Focused	Federal Agency	National Park Service
6	Focused	Non-Profit	Bike Utah
7	Focused	Academic	Dixie State University
8	Focused	State Agency	Utah Governor's Office of Management and Budget
9	Focused	State Agency	Utah Governor's Office of Economic Development - Office of Recreation
10	Focused	Academic	Utah State University Extension
11	Focused	Organization	Utah Association of Conservation Districts
12	Focused	Organization	Utah League of Cities & Towns
13	Focused	State Agency	Utah Division of Arts and Museums
14	In-Depth	Private	N/A
15	In-Depth	Academic	N/A
16	In-Depth	Academic	N/A

Appendix B: Thematic Analysis Codes

Title	Files	References
Coordination	11	21
Information Sharing	14	20
Possible Future	12	17
Networking	10	15
Scope of Rural	13	15
Community Resource	8	11
Member Participation	8	11
Horizontal Organization Chart	9	10
Service Provision	8	10
Collaboration	9	9
Communication	8	9
Dependent on Administrator	8	9
Holistic Focus	6	8
CDO is Unique	5	7
Outcomes	3	7
CDO Role	5	6
Breaking Down Silos	4	4
Frontline Staff	3	4
Impetus for RCC	3	4
Meeting Accessibility	3	4
Cross Collaboration on Projects	3	3
Gauge Needs	3	3
General Goals	3	3
Increase Recognition	3	3
Informal	3	3
Threat of Lost Interest	3	3
Understand Gaps	2	3
Voluntary Participation	2	3
Access to Communities	2	2
Burnout	2	2
Cross Sector	2	2
Exposure	1	2
Grassroots	2	2
Less Duplication	2	2
One-Stop-Shop	2	2
Partnerships	2	2
Proof of Concept	1	2
RCC Independence	2	2
Reciprocal Communication	2	2
Role of Facilitator	2	2
Transferability	2	2
Turnover	2	2

Advise Legislature	1	1
Assist Rural Planning	1	1
Brick and Mortar Projects	1	1
Can’t Shape Policy	1	1
Consensus Decision Making	1	1
Empowering Local Leaders	1	1
Flexible Goals	1	1
Get More When Working Together	1	1
Governance	1	1
Increase Participation	1	1
Influence Governance	1	1
Larger Impact	1	1
Listening to Needs	1	1
Little Investment	1	1
Multi Sector	1	1
Network Governance	1	1
New Programs	1	1
People Centered	1	1
Relationships	1	1
Unified Voice	1	1
Urgency	1	1

Appendix C: Pierpont Brief

TO: Jon Pierpont, Executive Director
FROM: [redacted], Community Development Specialist
DATE: April 8, 2019
SUBJECT: Lt. Governor Meeting w/ Rural Coordinating Council Overview

BACKGROUND:

Established in December of 2018, the Rural Coordinating Council (RCC) is a grassroots effort spearheaded by the Utah Community Development Office, which seeks to better allocate time, resources, and strategies in rural Utah by increasing collaboration with state agencies, universities, and organizations.

The overall goal of the RCC is to ensure that state agencies, organizations, and universities all working in rural Utah are aware of the resources available, and know of where everyone is serving on the ground. The RCC's first major project is to complete a Rural Resources & Assistance Inventory Database, which compiles all of the funding streams, training opportunities, programs, and informational resources available to rural Utah. This ensures that state agencies not only know of their own resources, but can better connect our local leaders with additional services outside of their own agencies.

The second major project is to create an online GIS dashboard, which showcases where state agencies, universities, and organizations are serving across the state. By establishing this online GIS dashboard, we'll have a better understanding of where assistance is currently happening (and identify where it's not), and also see where we can collaborate together for working groups.

The RCC meets on a quarterly basis, and establishes working groups to collaboratively pursue particular initiatives. For example, a Main Street Utah Working Group has just started to research the best Main Street option for our rural communities.

RURAL COORDINATING COUNCIL MEMBERS:

While very new, the Rural Coordinating Council has hosted just two meetings (December 2018, April 2019), and currently includes the following agencies/organizations/universities (please note, we're still adding members to this council):

- Brigham Young University
- NPS: Rivers, Trails, & Conservation Assistance
- Preservation Utah
- University of Utah
- USDA Rural Development
- USU Extension
- Utah Association of Counties
- Utah Dept. of Agriculture & Food

- Utah Dept. of Environmental Quality
    - Water Quality Division
- Utah Dept. of Heritage & Arts:
    - Arts & Museums
    - Historic Preservation
    - UServeUtah
    - Indian Affairs
    - State Library
- Utah Dept. of Public Safety
    - Emergency Management
- Utah Dept. of Transportation
- Utah Dept. of Workforce Services:
    - Housing & Community Development Division
    - Utah Community Development Office
    - Workforce Development Division
- Utah Dept. of Health: Office of Primary Care and Rural Health
- Governor's Office of Economic Development:
    - Office of Tourism
    - Rural Development
    - Office of Recreation
- Utah League of Cities & Towns
- Governor's Office of Energy Development
- Governor's Office of Management and Budget
- Office of the State Auditor

UPCOMING LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR MEETING:

Kirsten Rappleye, Chief of Staff, attended our kickoff meeting on December 4th. Afterwards, she reached out to coordinate a one-on-one meeting with the Lt. Gov to discuss the RCC. This meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 10th from 12pm to 12:45pm in his office. Keith Heaton and I will be attending the meeting.

As quoted by Kirsten: "Kirsten attended their first meeting and was excited and impressed at the initiative. Kirsten has invited Jordan and her team to come provide the Lt. Governor an introduction to the effort and update on their latest. Evan Curtis (GOMB) is involved in the group and may attend the meeting."

In this meeting, I plan on sharing the following:

- Sharing the inception of the RCC
- Sharing our vision/goals
- Discussing our first project (Rural Resources & Assistance Inventory)
- Discussing our working groups (Main Street, GIS Rural Assistance Dashboard)
- Discussing how the RCC can support the GRPB

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