

South Lincoln County Rural Tourism Studio
Six Month Progress Report
December 2012



RURAL TOURISM STUDIO

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A. Introduction

This report presents a progress assessment for the Rural Tourism Studio (RTS) program in South Lincoln County (SLC). The region is comprised of the southern third of Lincoln County, located between the Coast Range and the Pacific Ocean along the central coast of Oregon. The RTS program workshops commenced in February 2012, and wrapped up in mid-May 2012. The information in this report reflects the status of activity six months *after* workshop completion, based on an electronic survey completed in November 2012. The survey focuses on determining what was most useful about the workshops; initial effectiveness of action teams; and planned tourism development activities for the coming year.

This six month progress report differs from prior RTS reports in that it only includes part of what was previously incorporated. Based on past experience, the balance of what had been collected at the six month interval will be collected twelve months after workshop completion to better capture project implementation experience and progress relative to logic model indicators. As a result, additional follow up interviews and assessment will be conducted in the late spring 2013, twelve months after workshop completion. The e-survey results suggest three specific areas for additional probing in interviews:

- What about RTS added to your ability to better attract and retain visitors? To increasing political support for tourism?
- What about the visioning and action planning has remained valuable as you are implementing?
- How could the RTS program improve connections with regional and statewide organizations?

B. Survey Findings

OVERVIEW OF RESPONDENTS

- 18% response rate: 11 survey respondents out of 61 who attended and had email address on record.
- Four respondents are members of the original RTS Project Steering Committee.
- People with high levels of participation in the RTS workshop series are heavily represented among survey respondents. Seven of the eleven respondents attended at least 6 different RTS workshops/events and received a certificate of completion as a result. These ten people represent 35% of all people who received certificates of completion (20 of 61).
- The three workshops that attracted the highest attendance *by survey respondents* were the “Community Tourism Planning Part 2”, “Destination Branding Part 1” and Nature-based Tourism Development” workshops.
- These workshops also drew the most *total* participants (34, 32 and 32 people respectively), with the exception of the opening workshop, “Community Tourism Planning Part 1” which attracted 46 participants and exceeded all others.
- 5 of the 11 respondents reported that they are currently members of action committees.

The e-survey asked respondents to rate their progress on two categories of success factors for tourism development: their level of personal engagement to work effectively on tourism development, and community

conditions—the broader context in which they operated. For respondents who were currently active on action teams or who owned tourism-related businesses, there were additional questions added to the e-survey for the first time. The full survey and results are available through the Travel Oregon survey monkey account.

The e-survey show strong evidence that RTS has led to positive change on most short term parameters in the logic model. RTS had a positive impact on all variables related to the level of personal engagement in future tourism development, and on all community conditions related to tourism. The greatest reported changes were around knowledge of emerging market opportunities; stronger working relationships and increased collaboration; and clearer vision for tourism development.

PERSONAL ENGAGEMENT

All of the indicators related to personal engagement in future tourism development improved significantly (by greater than 27%) after the RTS workshops. In terms of level of personal engagement, the two indicators (of 6) that changed the most and ended the highest were:

- Knowledge of emerging market opportunities for tourism development (+87.6% change)
- Effectiveness of working relationships with other organizations working on tourism development. (+61.7% change)

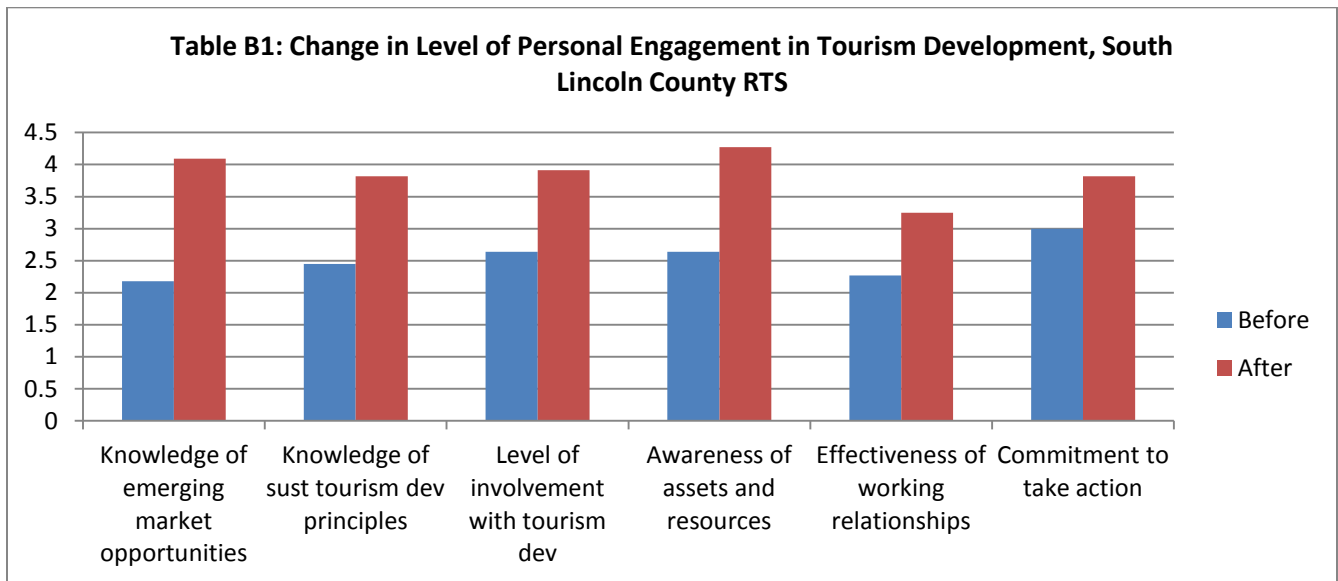


Table shows average scores, on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being “low” and 5 being “high”

In terms of which changes were most perceived to have been caused by the RTS program, respondent rankings were somewhat different. The two changes most caused by RTS itself were:

- Level of personal involvement with tourism development
- Awareness of assets and resources for tourism development

Table B2: Change and Relative Impact of Personal Engagement Factors, in order of starting level

	Pre-RTS (Jan 11)	6 months post-RTS (Nov 11)	% Change	Perceived impact of RTS on any changes noted	Importance of this factor in shaping future tourism
Your knowledge of emerging market opportunities for tourism development	2.18	4.09	+87.6%	4.09	4.00
Your knowledge of sustainable tourism development principles	2.27	3.25	+43.2%	3.73	4.00
Your level of involvement with tourism development in your community	2.45	3.82	+55.9%	4.45	3.91
Your awareness of assets and resources for tourism development	2.64	3.91	+48.1%	4.18	4.45
Effectiveness of your working relationships with other organizations working on tourism development	2.64	4.27	+61.7%	4.09	4.30
Your commitment to take specific action to tap tourism development opportunities in your community	3.00	3.82	+27.3%	4.20	4.10

In terms of their starting level of personal engagement, SLC respondents rated themselves slightly lower, on average, than past RTS communities. Compared with past RTS communities, they report by far the greatest level of positive change in terms of knowledge of emerging market opportunities. SLC participants also report greater positive change in their level of involvement with tourism development and their awareness of assets and resources than any prior RTS community. See Tables C1 and C2 for details.

COMMUNITY CONDITIONS:

In terms of their starting level of community conditions, SLC respondents rated themselves higher, on average, than past RTS communities. In particular, they rated the starting level of political support for tourism and their capacity to attract, retain, and bring back visitors as much higher than any past RTS community. Compared with other communities, they reported smaller changes in community conditions for tourism, in part reflective of higher starting levels. See Table C3 and C4 for details.

Nevertheless, all of the indicators related to community conditions for future tourism development improved positively (by greater than 6%) after the RTS workshops. See Table B4 for detail. In terms of community conditions related to tourism, the four indicators (of 12) that changed the most were:

- Level of collaboration (+58.1%)
- Clarity of community vision for tourism development (+44.1% change)
- Level of trust within the community around tourism development (+41.7%)
- Clarity of action plan (+34.7%)

These were also the lowest ranked community conditions at the start of RTS. This is the first of the RTS communities to report “level of collaboration” as the single most significant change.

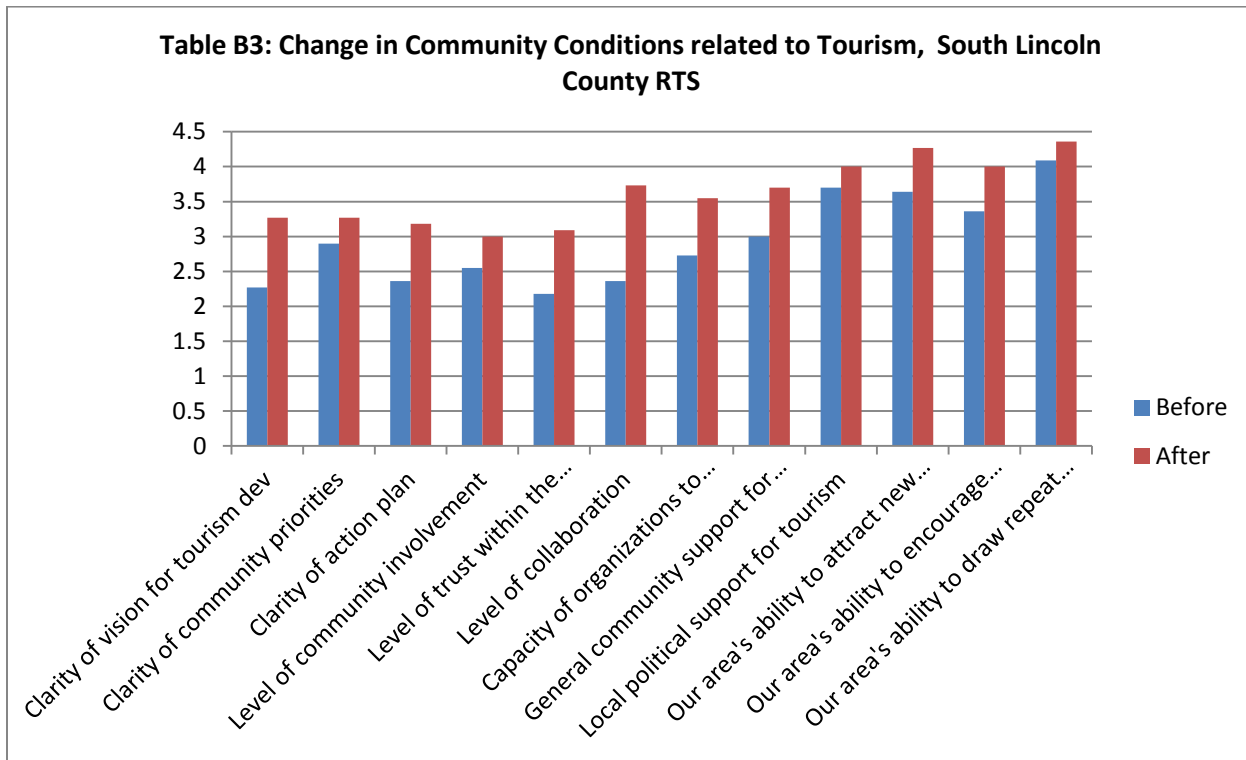


Table shows average scores, on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being “weak” and 5 being “strong”

In terms of the causal effect of RTS on community conditions, respondents in general judged RTS to be a significant factor in explaining the changes they observed, though in different areas than one might conclude given where the greatest magnitude of changes occurred. Specifically, participants cited change associated with the level of political support for tourism as attributable to RTS. They also attributed positive changes in their ability to attract new visitors and draw repeat visitors as significantly attributable to RTS. This is interesting because these are areas where they ranked themselves as strong at the start of the program, and therefore showed little change.

On the other hand, the changed conditions *least* perceived to have been affected by RTS were the level of trust in the community, clarity of vision and action plan for tourism, and the level of collaboration. This is interesting because these are the factors that the respondents rated as having most changed! This is something that will be further explored during the personal interviews at the 12 month post-program interval.

Table B4: Change and Relative Impact of Community Condition Factors, in order of starting level

	Pre-RTS (Jan 11)	6 months post-RTS (Nov 11)	% Change	Perceived impact of RTS on any changes noted	Importance of this factor in shaping future tourism
Level of trust within the community around tourism dev	2.18	3.09	41.7%	3.18	4.55
Clarity of vision for tourism dev	2.27	3.27	44.1%	3.91	4.45
Clarity of action plan	2.36	3.18	34.7%	4.00	4.64
Level of collaboration	2.36	3.73	58.1%	3.91	4.73
Level of community involvement	2.55	3.00	17.6%	3.55	4.91
Capacity of organizations to implement	2.73	3.55	30.0%	3.73	4.82
Clarity of community priorities	2.90	3.27	12.8%	4.00	4.64
General community support for tourism	3.00	3.70	23.3%	3.73	4.82
Our area's ability to encourage visitors to stay longer	3.36	4.00	19.0%	4.00	5.00
Our area's ability to attract new visitors	3.64	4.27	17.3%	4.09	5.00
Local political support for tourism	3.70	4.00	8.1%	4.30	4.73
Our area's ability to draw repeat visitors	4.09	4.36	6.6%	4.10	5.00

Table shows average scores, on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being “weak” and 5 being “strong”

OTHER RESULTS:

As noted in the introduction, the e-survey for South Lincoln County included additional questions related to the value of action teams and potential new product and service development underway by local businesses. These questions provided limited insight, given the small number of responses.

With respect to the action teams, the five action team members all responded to this section with a sense of optimism. Some did express a desire for increased communication among action teams and with the broader community in the optional open-response section.

Question	Avg ranking
From your perspective, how would you rate the progress of your action team in moving forward since the end of the RTS workshops? (1 = poor, 5 = excellent)	3.8
How effective do you believe your action them will be in implementing its projects going forward? (1= ineffective, 5 = very effective)	4.2

With respect to business plans, only one respondent was a business owner, and that respondent did not plan to add any new products or services in the next twelve months.

Finally, in terms of what aspects of the Rural Tourism Studio workshops have had lasting impact, the most valuable and least valuable content aligns with that of past communities. “Connections with others in my

community” is among the top five most impactful aspects of the RTS program for each of the five communities evaluated to date. And “overview of sustainable tourism principles” (sadly!) is among the least impactful for all communities (note that SLC’s lowest ranking option, agritourism, was NOT a focus of its RTS sessions so should not actually have been a response option for this community).

South Lincoln County is the first to rank “action plan” as a top value-added, and the “community vision” is also seen as having more value added than for prior communities. These two items likely reflect the significant and successful redesign of the visioning and action planning workshops rolled out in this community. South Lincoln County is the first *not* to rank “connections with regional and statewide tourism development organizations in its top five. This will be probed during the 12 month interviews.

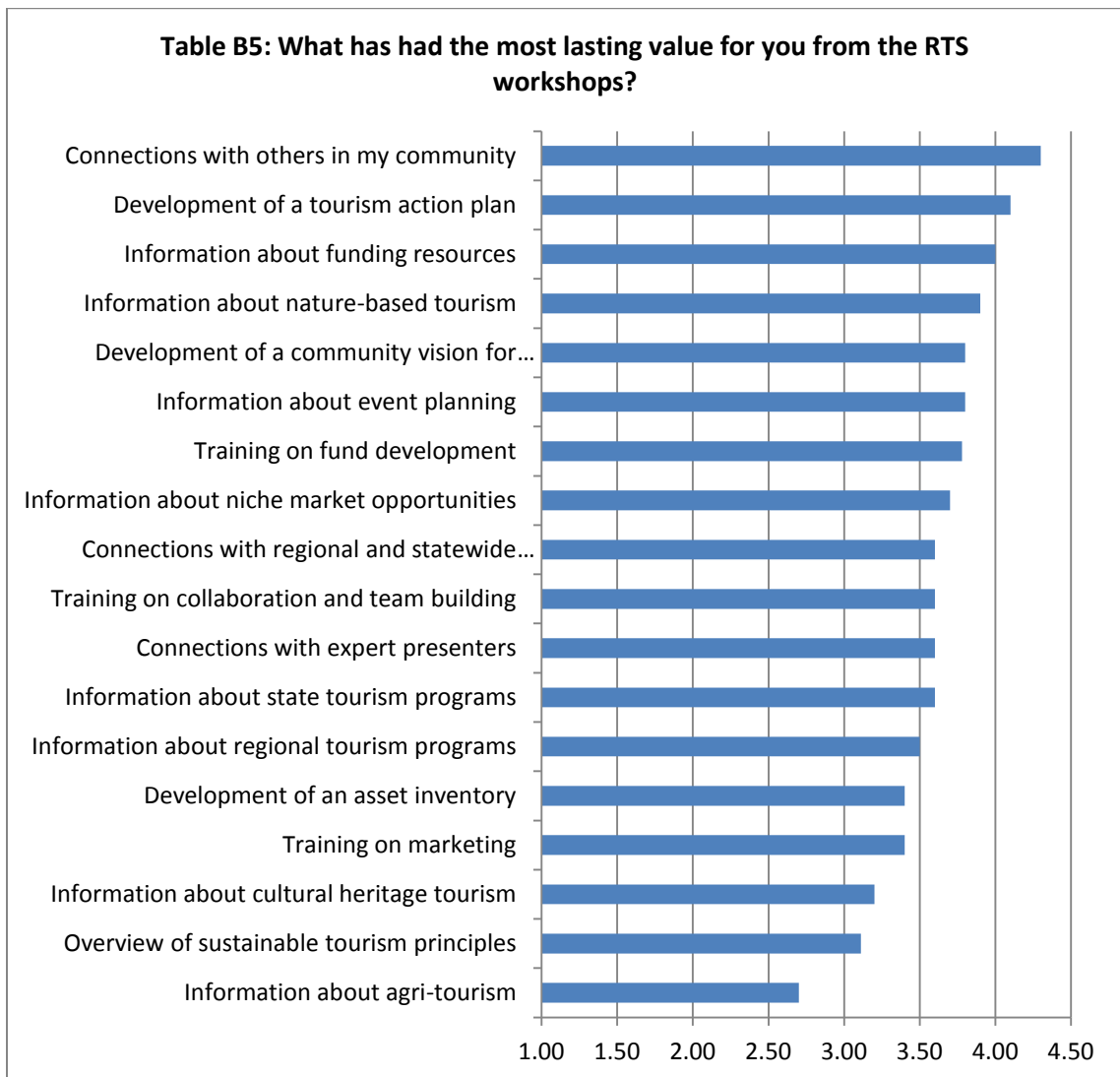


Table shows average scores, on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being “not useful” and 5 being “extremely useful”

C. Comparison across RTS Communities

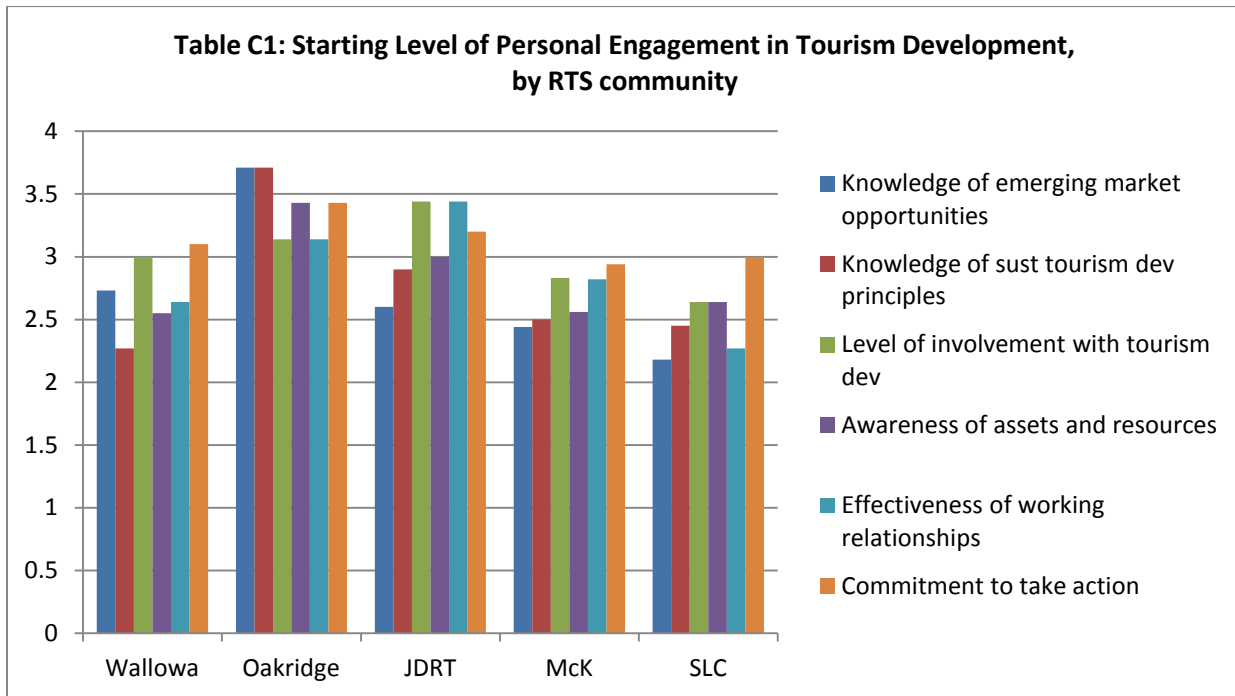


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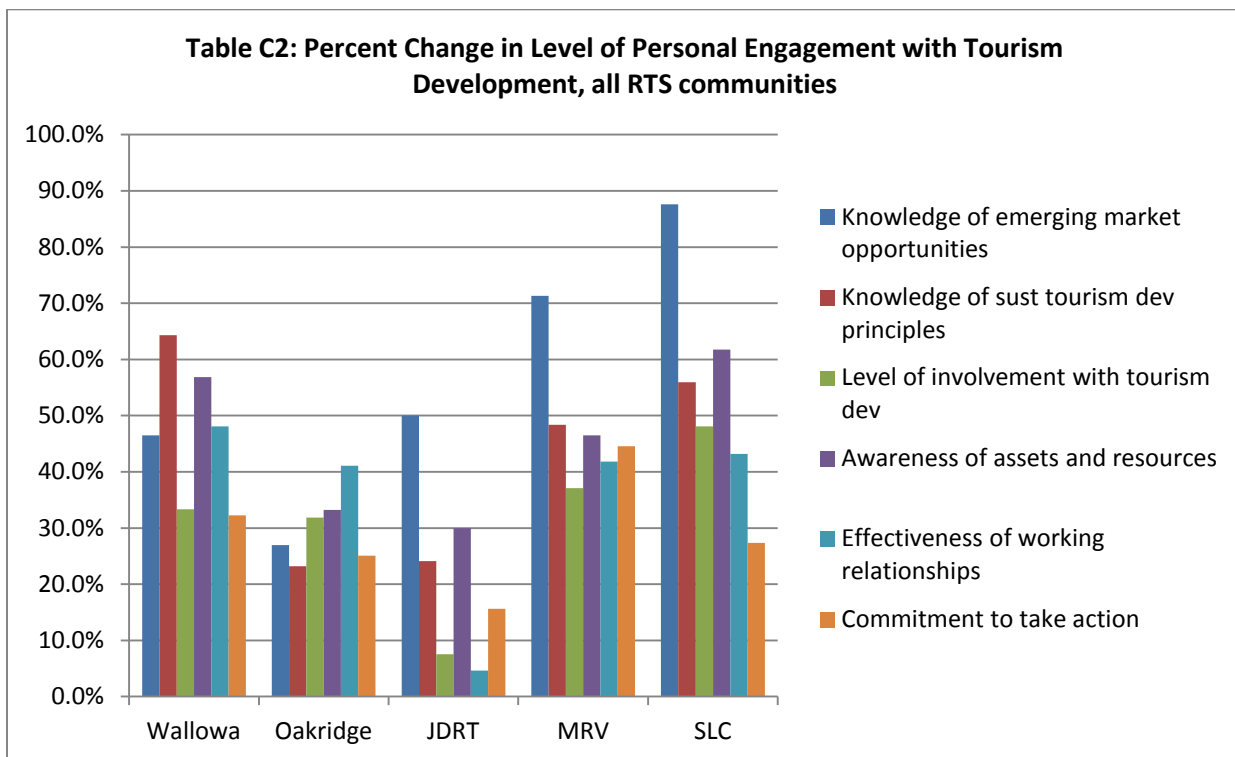


Table C3: Starting Level of Community Conditions for Tourism Development, all RTS communities

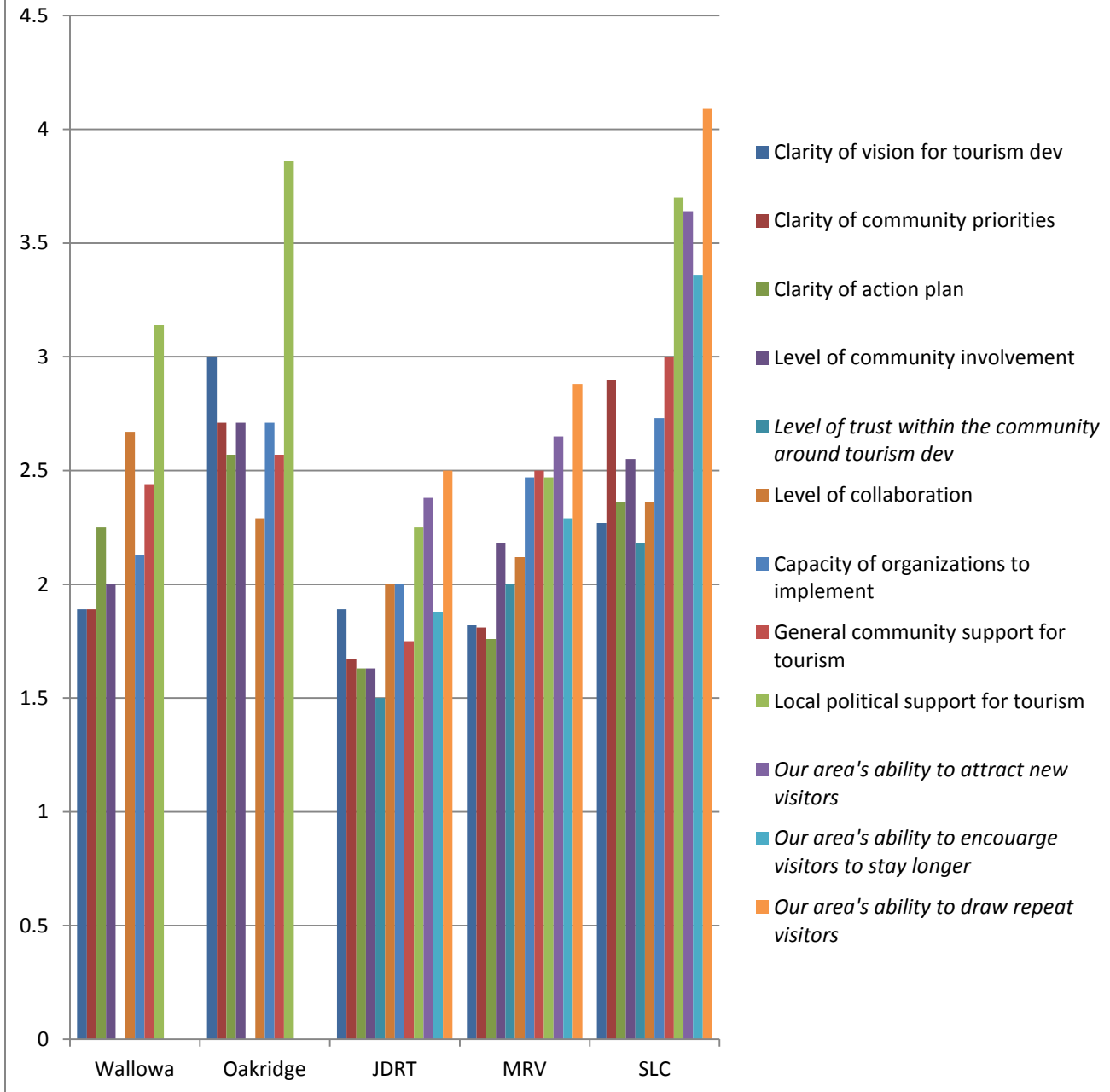


Table shows average scores, on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being “weak” and 5 being “strong”: The four categories in italics were added to the survey after the first two communities were complete. Thus, there are not comparative results for these changes across all RTS communities.

Table C4: Percent Change in Community Conditions for Tourism Development, by RTS Community

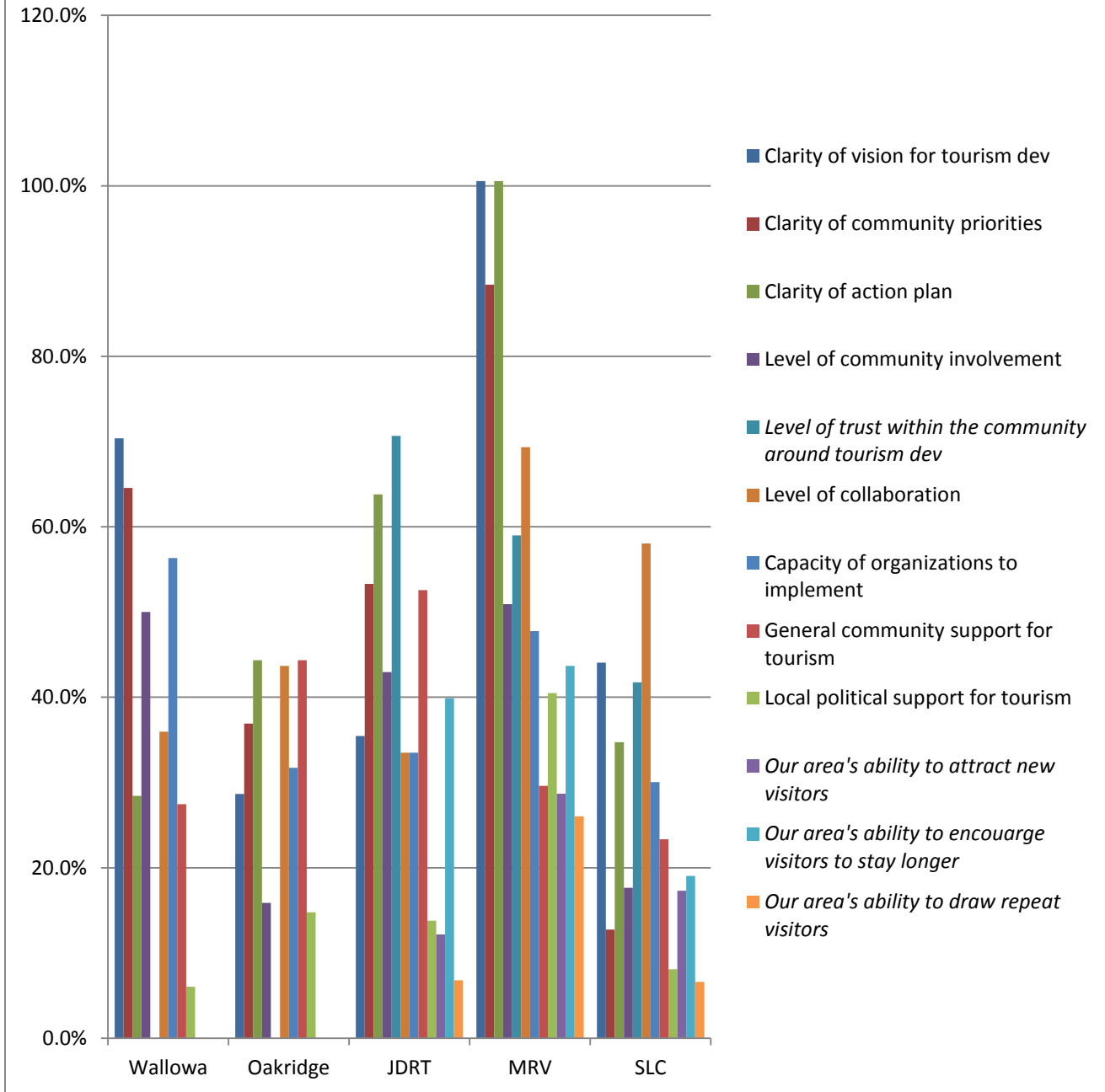


Table shows average percentage change in before and after rankings of community conditions, on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being “weak” and 5 being “strong”: The four categories in italics were added to the survey after the first two communities were complete. Thus, there are not comparative results for these changes across all RTS communities.