

BUILDING BETTER RURAL PLACES: SUMMARY REPORT OF AN EVALUATION SURVEY

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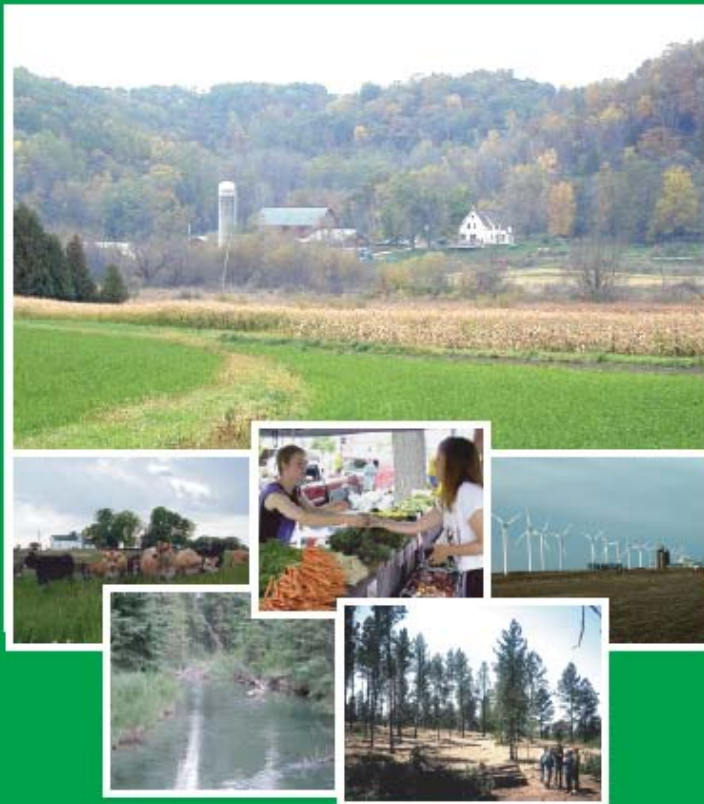
October 2006



August
2004

Building Better Rural Places

Federal Programs for Sustainable Agriculture, Forestry,
Entrepreneurship, Conservation, and Community Development



Introduction

This document provides an illustrative summary of an evaluation survey conducted on the 2004 United States Department of Agriculture publication entitled *Building Better Rural Places: Federal Programs for Sustainable Agriculture, Forestry, Entrepreneurship, Conservation, and Community Development*. The purpose of this report is to offer insights into users' satisfaction with *Building Better Rural Places*. In addition, this document reveals the media format(s) in which *Building Better Rural Places* is viewed, as well as the components of the publication that the user liked and/or disliked. No conclusions or inferences are made. Figures and tables are utilized throughout the report to simplify presentation of the results.

Acknowledgement

I wish to extend a special thanks to Feng-hsien (Sharon) Pang who helped collect, code, and clean the survey data.

Data

Data for this report were gathered using mail survey techniques. In July of 2006, a two-page survey questionnaire was mailed to 148 individuals who were considered knowledgeable of the *Building Better Rural Places* publication by USDA personnel. The contact information for these 148 individuals was provided by Patricia McAleer, Program Specialist, Economic and Community Development Systems, USDA CSREES. Four of the 148 initial surveys were returned as undeliverable.

Following a modified total design method, two follow-up questionnaires were mailed (August 2006 and September 2006). Overall, 90 of the 144 survey recipients completed and returned their questionnaires on or before October 2, 2006. This resulted in a 62.5% completion rate.

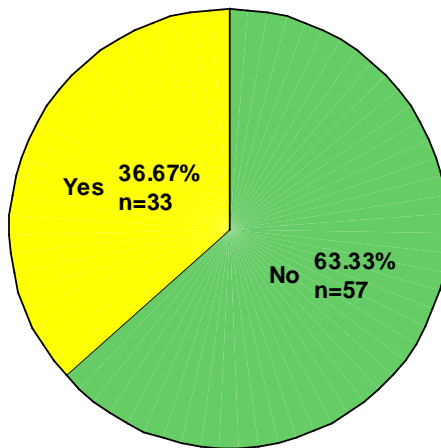
In the survey, respondents were first asked to indicate whether or not they had viewed the 2004 publication *Building Better Rural Places* (either the hardcopy version, the CD version, or the on-line version). If they had not viewed the publication, they were instructed to stop filling out the questionnaire and return it.

As shown in Figure 1, thirty-three of the 90 respondents (36.67%) recalled viewing *Building Better Rural Places*.

The remainder of the report is based on those 33 respondents.

Figure 1

Have you viewed the 2004 publication *Building Better Rural Places* (either the hardcopy version, the CD version, or an on-line version)?
(n=90)

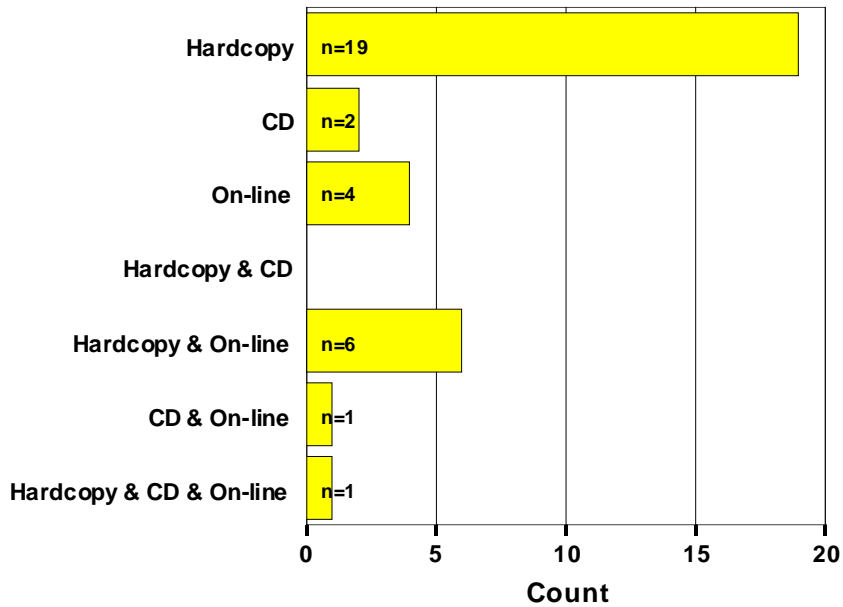


Currently, *Building Better Rural Places* is available in three different media formats. These formats include: hardcopy, CD, and an on-line version. Respondents were asked to indicate the format(s) in which they have viewed the publication.

The results are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2

**In what format have you viewed
Building Better Rural Places?
(n=33)**



Building Better Rural Places: Summary Report

Building Better Rural Places includes descriptions of federal program resources in five topical areas. These areas include programs that:

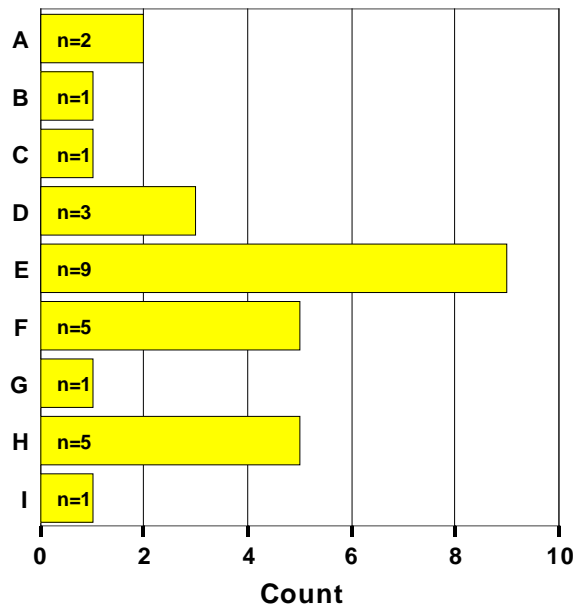
- (1) help individuals build sustainable communities;
- (2) assist farmers, ranchers, and agricultural concerns;
- (3) focus on food systems, nutrition, and health;
- (4) relate to forestry, fisheries, wildlife, and the environment; and,
- (5) help small businesses and entrepreneurs.

Respondents were asked to indicate the area(s) of interest to them. The results are shown in Figure 3. Moving down the Y-axis, the letters (A through I) correspond to the following program(s):

- A = Programs to help build sustainable communities;
- B = Programs to assist farmers, ranchers, and agricultural concerns;
- C = Programs to help build sustainable communities & programs to assist farmers, ranchers, and agricultural concerns;
- D = Programs to help build sustainable communities & programs related to forestry, fisheries, wildlife, and the environment;
- E = Programs to help build sustainable communities & programs to help small businesses and entrepreneurs;
- F = Programs to help build sustainable communities & programs to assist farmers, ranchers, and agricultural concerns & programs to help small businesses and entrepreneurs;
- G = Programs to help build sustainable communities & programs to assist farmers, ranchers, and agricultural concerns & programs that focus on food, nutrition, and health, & programs related to forestry, fisheries, wildlife, and the environment;
- H = Programs to help build sustainable communities & programs to assist farmers, ranchers, and agricultural concerns & programs that focus on food, nutrition, and health, & programs related to forestry, fisheries, wildlife, and the environment & programs to help small businesses and entrepreneurs; and,
- I = Programs to assist farmers, ranchers, and agricultural concerns & programs to help small businesses and entrepreneurs.

Figure 3

***Building Better Rural Places* includes descriptions of federal program resources in five topical areas. Which area(s) is/are of interest to you?
(n=28)**

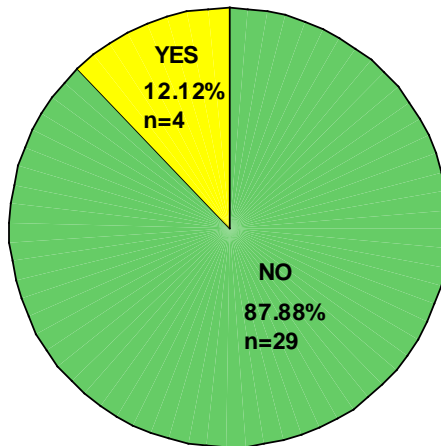


Respondents were asked to specify whether or not they had submitted any proposals to federal agencies as a direct result of viewing *Building Better Rural Places*.

As shown in Figure 4, four of the 33 respondents had submitted a proposal.

Figure 4

Have you submitted any proposals to federal agencies as a direct result of viewing *Building Better Rural Places*?
(n=33)



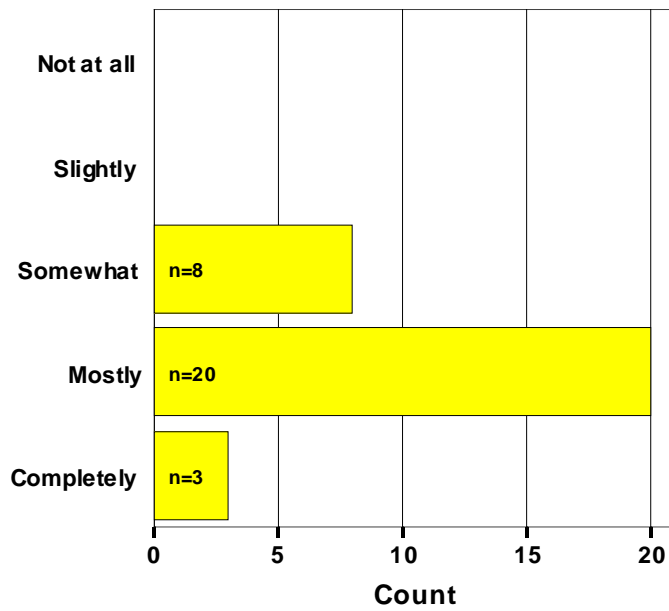
All four of the proposals submitted were funded. The federal agencies to which the proposals were submitted and the amount for which they were funded are as follows:

- SARE-CSREES proposal funded at \$75,000;
- USDA-NRI proposal funded at \$98,991;
- USDA-Rural Development proposal funded at \$25,000; and,
- USDA-Rural Development proposal funded at \$99,000.

Respondents were asked to rate their overall level of satisfaction with *Building Better Rural Places*. The results are presented in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Overall, how satisfied are you with this publication?
(n=31)



Respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with certain aspects of *Building Better Rural Places*. The results are shown below in Figures 6 through 12.

Figure 6

**Information being what you expected to receive
(n=32)**

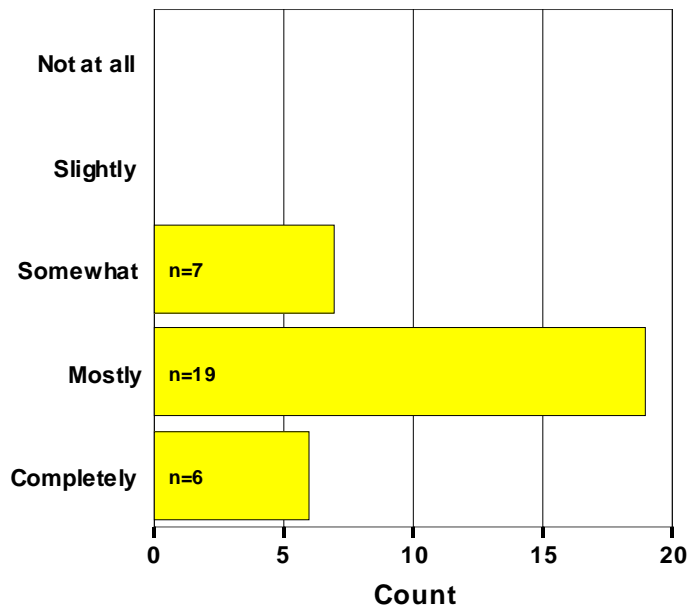


Figure 7

**Accuracy of information
(n=31)**

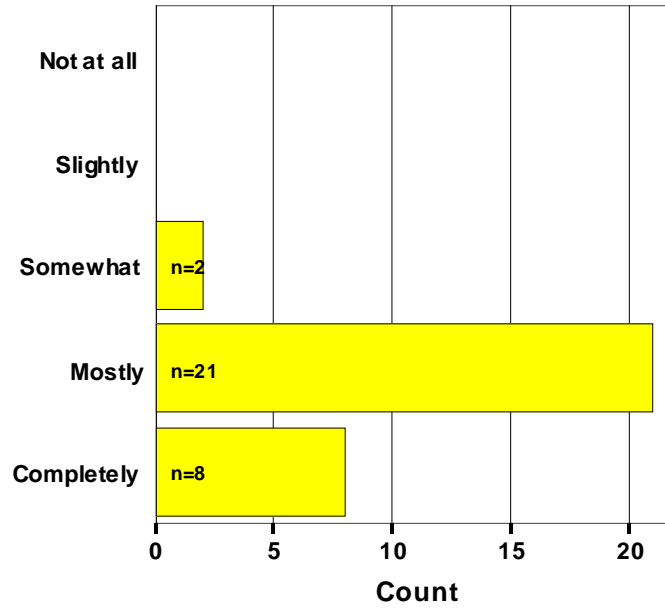


Figure 8

**Information being easy to understand
(n=31)**

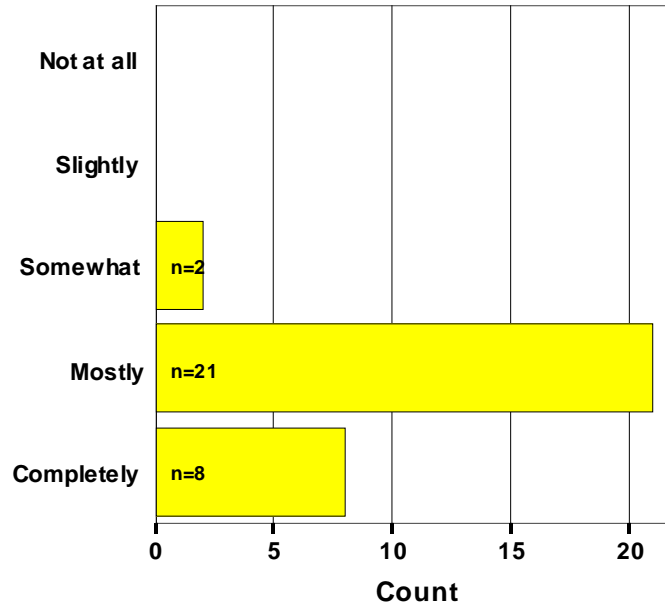


Figure 9

Completeness of information
(n=31)

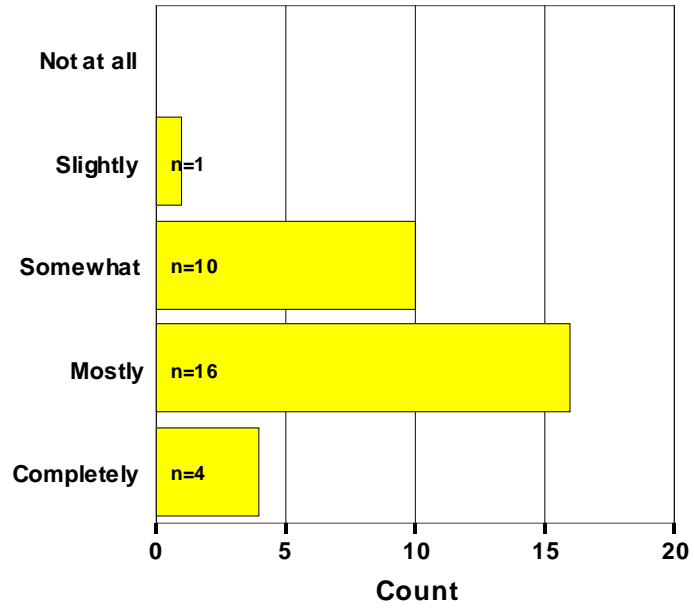


Figure 10

Timeliness of information
(n=31)

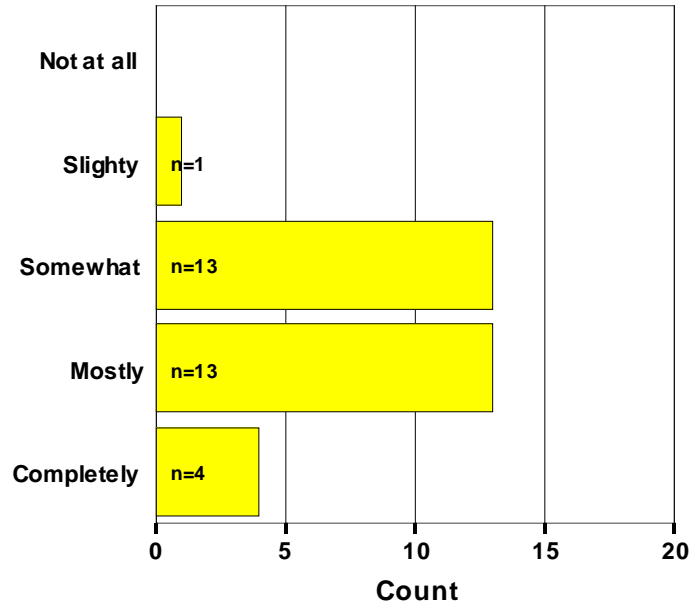


Figure 11

Helpfulness of information
(n=31)

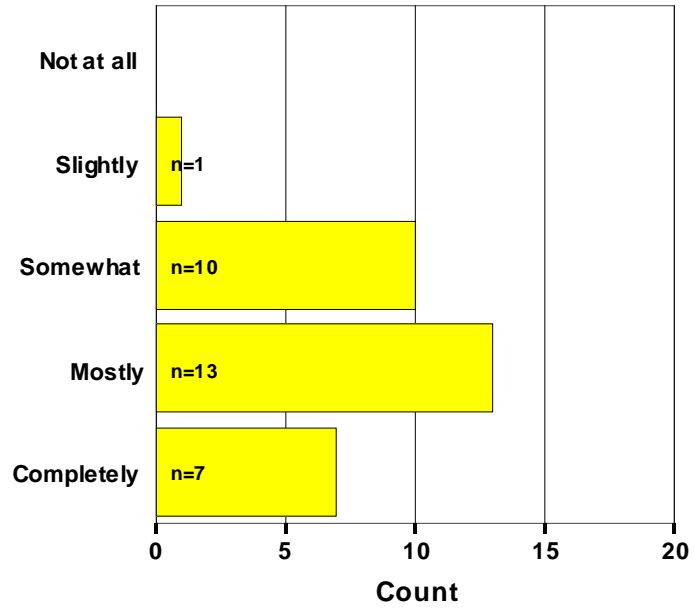
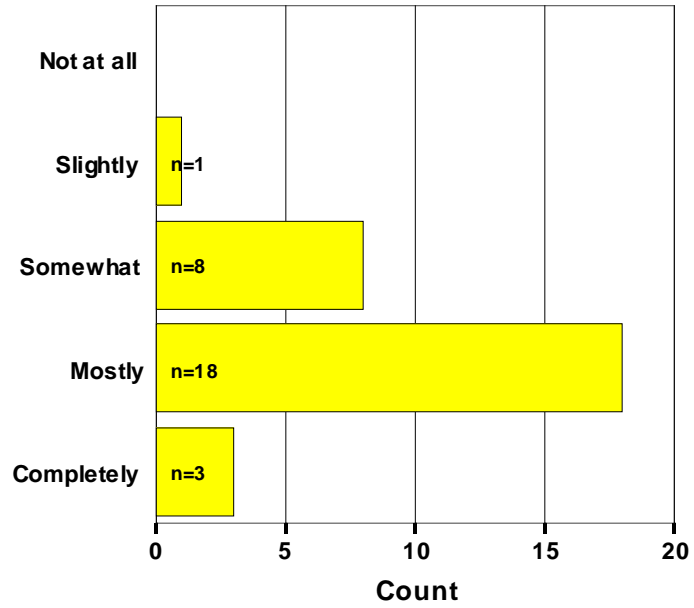


Figure 12

**Relevance of examples used
(n=30)**



Respondents were asked to report what they liked MOST about *Building Better Rural Places*. The results are listed in Table 1.

Table 1

**Liked MOST about *Building Better Rural Places*
(n=21)**

- Access to what agencies fund.
- Being able to link to program descriptions from the table of contents, and to link to websites from program descriptions.
- Comprehensive information.
- Comprehensiveness.
- Ease to use.
- Everything is in one place.
- Friendly, easy to use appearance.
- Good examples. Top quality printing.
- Good index of services and programs, more or less comprehensive listing of federal programs to assist my clientele.
- I appreciate that it is still available in hard copy. Have forwarded quite a bit - both English and Spanish versions.
- I thought it was a good introduction to resources and forwarded copies to many county Extension directors.
- It is compiled in a handy reference guide.
- One stop shop.
- Relevance to critical issues/topics; available on the web; ease of use by titles and great you spelled out agency acronyms.
- Simple 2-page outline I can share with groups seeking funding.
- Site is easy to navigate. The content allows the user to identify a range of agencies and resources available to community development.
- That is a lot of information in one place. I refer a lot of people to it.
- The template which standardizes the information so a reader can easily ascertain whether he is eligible to apply and whether it is a grant or a loan.
- Topical features with only pertinent information included.
- Understanding rural demographics/agriculture trends. Also, articles dealing with community development and environment.
- Very well organized.

Respondents were asked to report what they liked LEAST about *Building Better Rural Places*. The results are listed in Table 2.

Table 2

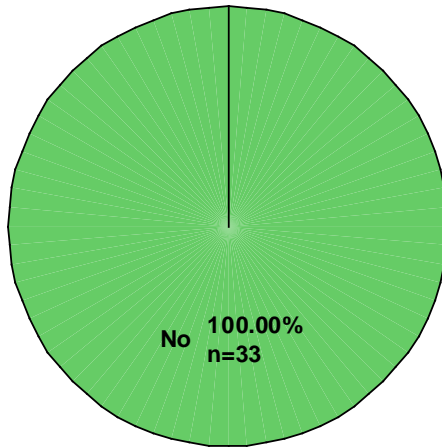
Liked LEAST about *Building Better Rural Places*
(n=14)

- Funding sources continue to change; difficult to keep it current.
- Gets out of date too quickly. However, I realize publishing more often would be a big, expensive undertaking.
- If you do not understand the jargon you cannot understand where to look for help.
- Insufficient funding available.
- It all useful, and like all good things it's full of information
- It is very ugly. Better type and layout would make it easier to navigate.
- Its compendium format - why only a list of resources?
- Lack of timely updates.
- Needed more about community development program funding.
- Online version could/should be updated annually.
- So many pages to look up on page vii.
- Some issues hard to relate to (i.e., place-based ranching).
- Some parts become out of date almost as soon as "printed" - web updates would be great. Document is long but probably has to be.
- There's less info on programs to assist smaller local government entities. This is not a fault of yours, however.

The Michael Fields Agricultural Institute offers workshops to help use *Building Better Rural Places*. Respondents were asked if they have ever participated in one of these workshops. The results are shown in Figure 13.

Figure 13

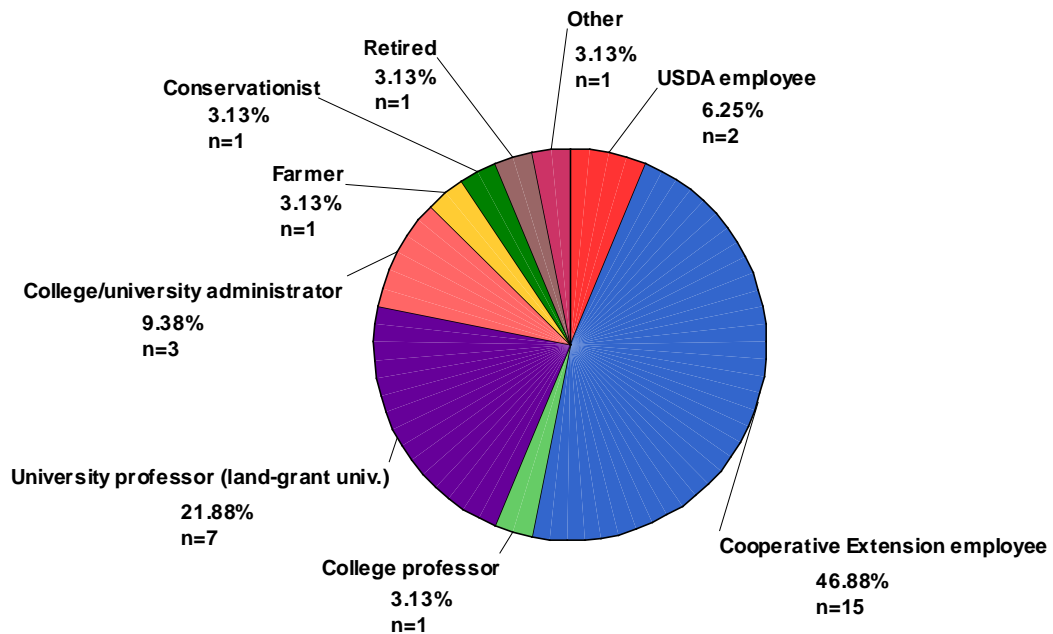
**Have you every participated in a *Building Better Rural Places* workshop sponsored by the Michael Fields Agricultural Institute?
(n=33)**



From a list of 20 possible choices, respondents were asked to select the one category that best described them. The respondents could choose from the following categories: USDA employee; federal agency employee (non USDA); Cooperative Extension employee; state agency employee (non Coop. Ext.); elected official (city/county); city/county employee; community college professor; college professor; university professor (land-grant univ.); university professor (non land-grant univ.); college/university administrator; farmer; rancher; entrepreneur; conservationist; community developer; volunteer; retired; self-employed; and, other. The results are shown in Figure 14.

Figure 14

**The category that best describes you
(n=32)**



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