

**Southern Rural Development Center
2018 Plan of Work**

In October 2016 at the annual meeting of the Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC) Board of Directors and Technical Operations and Advisory Committee (TOAC), the SRDC was given guidance to help set the course for the next five years. Based on a survey distributed throughout the region in the early months of 2016, the following broad priorities were established to guide efforts:

5 Year Plan Priorities:

- Develop Pathways for Vibrant Communities
- Build Strategic Partnerships
- Mobilize Resources around Emerging Issues

With these three broad priorities as the framework, the FY2018 Plan of Work continues to build on these directives. The section below details the specific plans under each priority that will be given attention in the coming year.

- **Priority One: Develop Pathways to Vibrant Communities.** The SRDC will continue the following efforts:
 - **Stronger Economies Together (SET)** – Using funding from the Cooperative Agreement with USDA Rural Development (RD), SRDC will fund and coach selected regions in Phase VII of the SET initiative.
 - **Leaders in Economic Alliance Development** – If regions that apply to SET are more appropriate for LEAD, SRDC will work with coaching teams made up of Cooperative Extension Service (CES) professionals and RD field staff.
 - **Civil Dialogue** – SRDC will continue to work with a national team to develop training for a train-the-trainer event to expand efforts toward civil dialogue, especially related to race relations.
 - **Broadband Access** – SRDC will provide leadership to a national team of CES professionals to explore options to help build the CES capacity to respond to broadband access and usage needs in communities.
 - **SERA 47: Local Foods** – SRDC will continue to provide support to the SERA 47 as it continues progress toward its five year plan.
- **Priority Two: Build Strategic Partnerships.**
 - Continue to advance partnerships related to the Priority One and Three initiatives – SRDC will help facilitate quarterly RRDC meetings in DC, seeking opportunities to collaborate with federal and non-federal agencies that share interests in the Southern Region priorities.
 - Continue support for the Southern Region Program Leadership Network – SRDC will continue its ongoing support for the Southern Region Program Leadership Network comprised of state program leaders across the South as well as the 1890 and 1986 Directors and Administrators in the South. SRDC's role is to coordinate the annual

meeting, provide logistic support for all committees throughout the year, and work closely with the Community Resource Development committee (and other committees as appropriate) on issues related to rural development.

- Priority Three: Mobilize Resources around Emerging Needs/Issues/Opportunities. Explore the following emerging issues as described below:

Community Capacity Building:

- Action steps for the SRDC:
 - Examine the extent of expertise across the South to address these issues
 - Convening CES to discuss these issues
 - Potentially refreshing/reformatting existing materials, providing training where materials already exist
 - Consider how these skills can be useful for other CES programmatic areas (across disciplines)
 - Explore potential partnerships including:
 - Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement, USDA
 - Foundations (Mary Reynolds Babcock, etc.)

Infrastructure with an Emphasis on Rural Water and Sewer:

- Action steps for the SRDC:
 - Inventory what is being done in the South within the LGUs within both Extension and Research
 - Identify best management practices along the continuum of water systems (wells, small community systems, etc.). This might include generating case studies.
 - Provide education and outreach to broadcast what is being done around the South
 - Explore potential partners, including:
 - USDA Rural Development
 - Natural Resources Conservation Service
 - Environmental Protection Agency
 - Rural Community Assistance Program
 - State Water Control Boards
 - Identify other partners through LGUs

Heir Property:

- Action steps for the SRDC:
 - Inventory what is being done across the LGU and other organizations in the South (USDA agencies, LGUs, community based)
 - Convene a meeting to explore what is being done
 - Possibly develop a common template for information and education
 - Explore potential partners, including:

- Federal government (USDA, Fed Reserve)
- LGU system
- Federation of Southern Cooperatives
- Ole Miss Law School
- Center for Heirs Property
- Look for opportunities to address research questions, such as:
 - How extensive are issues around heir property in the South?
 - What are the economic, social, and personal impacts?
 - What state and federal policies exist that impact the situation? What is the impact related to those?