



## SOUTHERN RURAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Strengthens the capacity of the region's 29 land-grant institutions to address critical, contemporary rural development issues impacting the well-being of people and communities in the rural South.

SRDC invests in research and extension outreach education programs that align with three properties:

- **FOSTERING** Civic-Minded Communities
- **BUILDING** Economically Vibrant Communities
- **STRENGTHENING** Capacity of Communities

## REGIONAL FOCUS NATIONAL IMPACTS

The SRDC's important work benefits communities in the South and throughout rural America.

For example, the Stronger Economies Together (SET) initiative reaches more than 70 regions in 31 states, with plans to expand through 2015.

### OTHER SRDC INITIATIVES WITH NATIONWIDE IMPACT

- Cashing in on Business Opportunities
- National E-Commerce Extension Initiative
- Entrepreneurs and Their Communities

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# SOUTHERN RURAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER

DISCOVERING NEW IDEAS  
APPLYING NEW STRATEGIES



## FOSTERING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Southerners want to have a meaningful voice in shaping the direction of their communities, but many have a tough time finding the right avenue for weighing in on important local matters. In response, the SRDC builds a stronger knowledge base and designs innovative programs that seek to strengthen the civic health of communities across the region.

### NEW MODES OF CIVIC-CENTERED ENGAGEMENT

The SRDC finds new ways for a wider array of residents to discuss, deliberate and act on challenging community issues. Through deliberative forums or community circles, the Center helps people embrace smart choices based on reasoned public judgment. Through these improved connections, communities are tackling the challenges of poverty, economic development, and food insecurity, among other topics.

### POPULATION DIVERSITY: PROMOTING RESPONSIVE COMMUNITIES

Helping communities respond proactively to the growing diversification of the South's rural population is important to their long term vitality. The SRDC supports the efforts of land-grant colleagues who are part of the SERA-37: Latinos in the New South. The SERA-37 team members work to improve the skills of Extension educators who help develop positive community strategies for addressing the needs of a growing Hispanic population.

### "LEADERSHIP FOR THE 21ST CENTURY" RESEARCH SERIES

Building a new corps of community leaders is a top priority in many rural communities today. Drawing on important national research, this SRDC-sponsored series showcases essential elements that contribute to more impactful community leadership development initiatives.



## BUILDING ECONOMICALLY VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

Global forces have brought major economic changes to the rural South. As a result, the traditional drivers of many rural economies are in flux. To survive, rural economies must be diversified. One of the keys to their long term sustainability includes finding the right mix of strategies to build on the important strengths and assets of rural communities.

### REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY IN RURAL AREAS

In partnership with USDA Rural Development, its three sister Regional Rural Development Centers and the Purdue Center for Regional Development, the SRDC is spearheading Stronger Economies Together (SET), which builds working ties among a cluster of contiguous counties (largely rural) to discover and build on the region's economic comparative advantages and to strengthen and expand job opportunities.

### BROADBAND AND E-COMMERCE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

Having broadband access is important, but helping people, small businesses, and communities learn the skills to effectively use this technology is necessary for success. Through the SRDC-led National e-Commerce Extension Initiative, more than a dozen quality training resources help address broadband and e-commerce education needs.

### ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITIES

The self-employed, along with home-based and micro-business enterprises, are on the rise in the rural South. In response, the SRDC has teamed up with top Extension educators across the nation to produce *Cashing in on Business Opportunities*, a 20-module curriculum providing these entrepreneurs with the technical skills to manage their businesses. In addition, as part of the eXtension initiative, the Center works continually with Extension educators to develop and deliver on-demand, web-based information relevant to *Entrepreneurs and Their Communities*.



## STRENGTHENING CAPACITY OF COMMUNITIES

The rural South faces a variety of economic and social challenges including high poverty rates, obesity, and low educational attainment. Moreover, the South continues to experience a variety of natural disasters. The SRDC works to create a better tomorrow for these vulnerable communities and people.

### TURNING THE TIDE ON POVERTY

Tide is a community-based effort that mobilizes diverse groups of residents to work in finding place-based solutions to poverty. Beginning with a five-week Community Circles process, they engage in thoughtful exploration of poverty in their communities and collaboratively implement an action plan to improve conditions for low-wealth people, families and neighborhoods.

### READYCOMMUNITIES: PROMOTING DISASTER AWARENESS AND PREPAREDNESS

The SRDC is partnering with USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture, FEMA, the Department of Homeland Security, Regional Rural Development Centers and land-grant university colleagues to assist vulnerable, rural communities in effectively preparing for disasters. Its ReadyCommunities program offers a step-by-step process for building and implementing a comprehensive community disaster preparedness plan with wide support.

### LOCAL AND REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS

SRDC is coordinating multi-state, multi-discipline teams across the South to address the complex issue of food access and security in the region. Approximately 16 percent of households in the South are food insecure, the highest of all four regions of the United States. A lack of access to healthy, affordable food particularly affects rural, low-income communities for a variety of reasons. Much of what we see in the Southern region is due to low income, no transportation, and an all-around lack of resources to obtain nutritious food. However, the synergies of a multi-state, multi-disciplined approach, bringing various perspectives and expertise aligned along a common goal, is well positioned for positive change.