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Feature articles highlight research or programs of merit as examples to professionals, researchers, and educators in rural development in the southern region. They should deal with one area or subarea of the four major concerns of rural development outlined by USDA:

Community Services and Facilities
People Building
Economic Improvement
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Opinion articles examine critical issues confronting Research and Extension practitioners in rural development, emphasizing implications for program planning and research.

Research notes are brief summaries of empirical research projects underway or recently completed.

Program notes are brief summaries of noteworthy rural development educational or assistance programs.

News and notes reports events and personalities of interest to the region.

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Mrs. Jewell Crawford, Secretary
Mrs. Libby Mitchell, Publications Clerk

Box 5406
Mississippi State, Miss. 39762
(601) 325-5843

The Southern Rural Development Center, one of four such centers in the nation, focuses on specific rural development problems of the region. It serves the thirteen southern states and Puerto Rico by developing knowledge essential to rural development and by providing technical consultation where needed.

The SRDC is jointly sponsored by Mississippi State University and Alcorn State University. Its clientele is the Research and Extension staffs of the 27 land-grant institutions with rural development or community resource development responsibilities.

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Planning for Rural Community Fire Protection

By Kenneth B. Wiegand
Extension Research Associate
Rural Development Cooperative Extension Service
and
Dr. Craig L. Ingham
Assistant Extension Professor
Rural Development Cooperative Extension Service
University of Kentucky

Establishing a fire protection program in a rural area usually depends upon the initiative of local citizens. In many cases a few individuals can awaken the interests of others and rally community support. Since fire protection normally requires a large investment, many individuals must cooperate to bear the cost of a program, so the decision to establish it must be a public one.

Once the decision to organize rural fire protection is made, the community faces several important decisions. This article looks at how careful planning of a fire protection program can avoid much wasted effort and lead to more satisfactory results.

Organizing a Fire Protection Program

Before planning can begin, a community must determine whether rural fire protection is practical. Residents and property owners can be contacted through a well-publicized community meeting, a door-to-door survey, or a mailed questionnaire. Alternatives for a protection plan are usually limited by financial considerations, distance to service areas, number and value of buildings, and availability of water.

Types of Fire Protection Programs

A community may decide to adopt one of three general types of fire protection plans:

1. A legal fire protection district supported by taxes and administered by an elected board of commissioners, empowered to establish a fire department or contract for services.
2. A county fire department supported by taxes and administered by local officials empowered to establish county-wide services.
3. A local voluntary fire protection organization supported by governmental and private donations and administered by elected officers. Using tax revenues for a fire department usually helps to stabilize a program and allows for planned replacement and growth.

Financing Rural fire protection may be considered an individual problem or choice. It is more practical, however, to consider it a public service and therefore a community or county obligation because normally an individual cannot bear the high cost alone. Obtaining and maintaining up-to-date equipment and providing trained men to operate it require funds. Here are some examples of the usual ways in which money to run a fire department can be generated:

- Payment "per call." Some larger towns or cities whose equipment is paid for by the taxpayers of the city have agreed to make rural calls on a fee basis. But this method of financing has two main faults. First, the equipment was purchased for city, not rural, use; second, experience has shown that fire protection costs paid on such a fee system would average $250. The city taxpayer would be paying the difference if these costs were lowered to a more affordable $25 to $100 fee.

- Public donations. Fund drives for new equipment or other needs are an annual feature of many rural fire departments. Rising costs of equipment have made it increasingly difficult, however, to get sufficient funds by donation.

- Membership. Selling fire protection memberships, usually at $10 to $25 per year for residents, and more for businesses, means refusing to answer the alarms of nonsubscribers. As an alternative, a fee can be set for nonmember calls. Unless it is substantial, however, the nonmember will not bear his share of the cost.

- Taxation. Taxes for fire protection may be offset, to a varying degree, by reduction in fire insurance premiums on residents’ property when acceptable protection is provided. These are some benefits of using tax revenues for fire protection:

- Broader distribution of cost, stability of planning for future needs of the fire department, possibilities for mutual aid agreements between fire departments to fight large rural fires, cooperation between a Board of Trustees and the town council, protection for everyone in the tax district, credit from suppliers for purchase of new equipment.

- Other sources of financial assistance include revenue sharing funds, revenue tax revenue, grants-in-aid obtained through the Office of the State Fire Marshal, and fire department-sponsored benefits such as dances or fairs.

Operating a Fire Protection Program

Successful operation of a rural fire department depends upon good leadership and adequate equipment. Most rural fire departments are organized on a volunteer basis, dependent upon keeping morale and enthusiasm high.

Generally no more than one volunteer in three will be able to respond to a call, so probably 15 to 19 volunteers, including the chief, will be needed. The 1974 Fire Prevention and Control Act was enacted to accomplish fire prevention and control through enforcement of better building codes and better-trained firemen. By emphasizing training, not equipment, states can make application for training money for certification of firemen.

Personnel

In Kentucky, 92 percent of the 408 fire departments are volunteer, so a regional approach to educating firemen is being considered, rather than establishing a state academy. Community colleges and vocational education schools would make likely class sites. At present the Kentucky Department of Education’s Fire Service Training program provides seven full-time and 65 part-time instructors. An 80-hour basic training course is available for volunteer firemen, offered at the local department.

Equipment

According to 1973 nationwide statistics from the National Fire Protection Association, only 45 percent of all service calls actually involved fires; 21 percent involved motorized vehicles; 16 percent involved fires with structural facilities. These figures show that fire departments are responding to an ever-increasing variety of service calls, many of which do not call for fire suppression. Those that do often do not require the full capacity of a standard pumper. Misuse of these $50,000 to $90,000 vehicles and their personnel causes costs to rise. Jurisdictions need to analyze their fire service operations to provide responsible protection while holding down costs.

Estimating Costs and Benefits

Many types of benefits accrue to a community fortunate enough to have an effective fire department. Some of these benefits cannot be measured in dollars — human lives saved, sentimental value of property protected, intangible social benefits. Tangible benefits might include industrial commercial development spurred by provision of effective fire protection.

Citizens of rural communities have to put their heads together to decide what kind of fire protection they need and how best to provide for it. At the bottom line, these decisions come down to: annual cost of the fire department, amount of uninsured property, premium reductions, and improved attractiveness and safety of the community.
Emergency Medical Service in Rural Areas
Who Can Afford It?

By Dr. Gerald A. Doakman
Economist
Oklahoma State University

To those living in big cities the wall of police and ambulance sirens rings day and night. Emergency vehicles are always on the move, always available. But in small, rural communities these sounds are heard seldom if at all. For some small towns cannot afford the first-class ambulance services that their city cousins take for granted.

This study investigated the affordability and availability of ambulance services in sparsely populated rural areas. As an example for solving a national problem, the study focused on providing the information needed by local leaders to evaluate and provide quality emergency medical systems.

The Problem of Declining Services

The basic objective of the study was to provide a general procedure for designing economically feasible ambulance services for a sparsely populated area. An area in western Oklahoma was selected, typical of low-population Great Plains counties with a predominately agricultural economy.

Many county and community leaders in Oklahoma — and the nation — face the problem of providing vital emergency medical services to rural residents. The situation has grown especially acute in recent years as communities providing ambulance service now have to evaluate the economics and quality of their services. Those responsible for taking over or continuing private ambulance service need to evaluate information about alternatives and their costs.

Private services, often funeral operators, have traditionally carried much of the emergency medical service in rural communities. Yet many of those have discontinued the service because of increased costs of labor and equipment. For example, in 1969 there were 221 funeral home ambulance operators in Oklahoma. In 1973, the number had declined to 124. In the eight-county study area, there were 19 private ambulance operators and 3 community-operated systems in January 1973. During that year, 5 private operators gave notice to their community leaders that they would discontinue ambulance service.

What Can We Afford?

A major problem for county officials faced with providing new emergency medical service systems is to estimate demand for ambulance service and probable receipts. Often, the best source of information is ambulance operators in the general area. For example, in the eight counties, ambulance operators provided information on the number of calls made, type of calls, age of patients, fees charged, and proportion of bills actually collected. Dealers of ambulance equipment and operators helped with cost estimates of vehicle and operating expenses.

In studying their problem, leaders must consider other changes taking place today. Before recent federal support for emergency medical service, the emphasis was on speedy delivery of a patient to the hospital. Today emphasis is on professionalism and upgrading of the emergency medical system as a complete system — technicians with special training, more adequate vehicles, life-saving equipment, and two-way radio communications with hospital emergency rooms. Speed has been de-emphasized. In the near future, the major emphasis will likely be on more comprehensive training involving technicians and emergency room physicians and nurses.

Patient Flow Data

Patient flow data were studied to predict likely income of an ambulance service. The procedure was designed to show that other areas facing similar problems can use it to predict receipts for an ambulance service area.

The procedure followed two basic steps: an estimate of the number of ambulance calls per year and an estimate of yearly receipts. Ambulance calls can be broken down into: (1) highway accident calls, (2) transfers, and (3) other medical calls. Data for estimating receipts include information on percentage of patients paying their ambulance bills, average fee, and mileage information.

Who Uses? Who Pays?

Frequency of medical calls as a general category of use can be projected by calling calls by age groups. For example, persons 19 years old or younger accounted for 3.23 ambulance calls per 1,000 population; those 20 and over accounted for 216.05 calls. These utilization rates can be meshed with area population data to predict the number of other ambulance calls.

In the study area in 1973, approximately 66 percent of the patients paid their bills. Ambulance fees charged in the study area ranged from $5 to $35 per call, plus mileage. The most frequent charge was $25 per call plus $1 per mile one way. Average mileage information can be obtained by judging the size of the service area and the spatial distribution of the population.

Once the average fee is estimated and a payment rate is selected, an estimate of yearly receipts for an ambulance service area can be derived.

Estimating Costs of Supplying an Ambulance Service

Ambulance service costs, as well as estimated receipts, are needed if community leaders are going to determine a method of providing ambulance services within their financial capabilities. Dealers selling ambulances and medical equipment and those selling communications equipment were interviewed to estimate capital expenses. Ambulance operators provided information as to operating expenses of the vehicle and the medical supplies used.

Vehicles. In 1974, regular ambulance vans cost about $8,000, high-top vans, $10,000, and auto chassis, $14,000 for basic equipment. In selecting a vehicle, three major decisions must be made: (1) number of dealers to consult to obtain the best bid, (2) considering options such as renting or buying a used vehicle, and (3) meeting requirements of federal and state regulations. In general, dealers and operators said that they preferred to retire a unit to backup service after 75,000 miles.

Communication. Local leaders have two choices in providing communication systems over a 30- to 40-mile area. If the community has a fire or police department with an acceptable communication system, a "phone patch" can be installed for about $150 through which telephone communications can be established with the hospital. Adding a two-way radio in a vehicle would cost about $2,000. Constructing a new communications system would require about $6,000.

Operating Expense. Expenses of vehicle operation, upkeep of medical supplies, and labor can run into thousands of dollars yearly. The study analyzed records of existing ambulance services for extent of use of medical equipment, arrangements for purchase, and labor requirements. For example, rural areas with a limited budget need to know to what extent services should be provided to eligible patients and the options in order to seek an economic solution. Alternative labor systems include a fully staffed system, volunteer-type systems, and a hospital-based system. Each of these would offer specific advantages and disadvantages to a given community depending upon resources and personnel available.

Finally, miscellaneous other costs such as storage for the vehicle and malpractice insurance should be included in the analysis.

Case Study:
Alfalfa County, Oklahoma

In 1974, community leaders in Alfalfa County, Oklahoma learned from area funeral home operators that ambulance service would be discontinued. If the county were to have service, the communities or the county would have to provide it. With the results from this study, receipts and costs for various systems could be estimated. Based on application of the procedures, it was estimated that the county would expect about 335 calls per year. With a collection rate of 70 percent, receipts would be $13,909. For some of the alternatives, operating subsidies would be necessary.

The study team has created three forms for use by county and local leaders in estimating the feasibility of various emergency medical service systems for their particular requirements. These are available from the authors.

Leaders also need information about regulations and training programs for emergency medical system technicians. Programs are available through the Department of Transportation Rescue and Emergency Medical Training Program and Red Cross training programs. Regulations include those of the Emergency Medical Services Act of 1973, the Highway Safety Act of 1966, the Rural Development Act of 1972, and the Medicare and Medicaid programs.

Armed with these new methods of evaluating various emergency medical system alternatives, community leaders in Oklahoma and in the nation are better prepared to provide this life-saving service to their rural populations.

*Fuller details are available in Gerald A. Doakman, Jack Fyffe, and Ronald L. Green, Economics of Ambulance Service in the Great Plains, USDA-ERS, Agricultural Economics Report No. 308.
Food Stamps for Rural Americans

By Nancy M. Vrechek
Economic Analyst, Title V, Georgia Department of Agricultural Economics
and
Dr. E. Evan Brown
Professor of Agricultural Economics
University of Georgia

We live in what might well be called an "Age of Scarcity." We have come to realize that our collective resources are finite and that we must set priorities and make difficult decisions about how much, or even when, we can provide for society's needs. The federal Food Stamp program, certainly one of the most controversial programs of assistance, is a transfer payment program intended to provide an adequate diet for persons with limited (poverty-level) incomes. Yet, although many people are qualified to participate, not all do. A study conducted by the economic research staff of the Title V program in Georgia posed several important questions about participation: *Who are the food stamp recipients? What are the social and economic characteristics of participants? What factors influence whether a household decides to buy food stamps or not? What are the implications for policy decisions?*

Ware County, Georgia

We studied the use of food stamps and the types of families who use them in Ware County, Georgia. We used records of 778 families (58.5%) who were participants in June 1975, a sample drawn randomly from those on public assistance (54%) and the working poor (46%). Representative of small, southeastern rural areas, Ware County's families were plagued by

- underemployment
- frequent unemployment
- low per-capita income

relative to Georgia and the nation.

Information on participant families came from the Ware County Aid to Families with Dependent Children Services Office. These data included race, sex, age, household income, transaction frequency, household size, participant, amount purchased, and purchase price of food stamps. This study was not intended as a program evaluation, but rather an examination of the characteristics of these low-income people. By stratifying the population in this way it becomes clearer just what classes of rural people need and use food stamps. This investigation enables government decision makers to understand better how adequately food stamps do or do not help these people.

One significant factor, which must be repeatedly stressed, is that employment holds no guarantees, in itself, against poverty. Fifty-four percent of all participants were among the working poor. The following is a profile of the social and economic characteristics found among participants.

Who Gets Food Stamps?

What is the picture of the typical recipient of food stamps? Does he or she fit the stereotype of the nonworking, welfare recipient? Some interesting patterns emerged from the statistics.

Race and family type. Although about three times as many blacks in the study area could be classified as poor as whites actually received food stamps. The two largest groups of recipients were the white working poor and the welfare nonwhite. These data show the existence of a large pool of poor people, largely black, who would benefit from but do not receive food stamps.

As proof that work is no guarantee against poverty, the working poor families participated at a higher rate than did the welfare families.

Sex. As a rule, the household head in food stamp families was a nonwhite female. This result bespeaks the limited number of job opportunities for rural females and the need for child and elderly care services in the home. This combination of factors presents important considerations in their participation in government transfer payment programs.

Frequency. Most participants purchased food stamps monthly. Yet, as the size of households increased (average: 3.24), so did the probability of buying stamps on a semimonthly basis. The distributing agencies allow semimonthly purchases in order to ease the burden on these participants who cannot manage monthly transactions.

Income and age. The figures on age and income of food stamp recipients reveal a spiral of ever-increasing need. For instance, Ware County participants have incomes substantially below the national average. All but one percent had incomes under $7,000. And the average age of heads of households was 45.9 for females and 55 for males. The largest single group of food stamp recipients was over 65; the second largest group was 55 to 64 years of age. These older participants have a slim chance to leave the government assistance rolls because of the job barriers facing them due to their age.

Participation:

Who Bought Stamps?

Of those certified eligible, 96 percent in Ware County participated. The national rate is 92 percent. The most significant factor influencing participation was the size of the bonus value. As the bonus increased, so did participation.

Policy Decisions

Several points from this study should be important to policy makers:

1. Working poor families participated at a higher rate than did welfare families.
2. Females dominate the public assistance roles.
3. Bonus values per household member did not necessarily decrease as family size increased.
4. A majority of the heads of households were 45 years old or were faced with barriers for more highly skilled jobs.

What do these facts and figures mean for policy making based on the use and future of the food stamp program? Several points brought out in this study merit attention. First, working poor families participated at a higher rate than did welfare families. The true picture of participants, then, does not reflect the stereotype of the family perpetually on the dole, but of the family struggling to make ends meet with low-paying employment.

Second, females dominate the public assistance roles. Food stamps seem to offer some relief to families having to get along without a male head's income.

Third, bonus values per household member did not necessarily decrease as family size increased. Finally, a majority of the heads of households were 45 years or older. With increasing age, these people will find greater barriers to reentry into the labor force--and may end up on welfare for the rest of their lives.

*Vrechek, Michael J., and E. Evan Brown, Food Stamp Participation: Ware County, Georgia, 1973, Agricultural Experiment Station Research Bulletin 194, University of Georgia, Athens, August 1976.*
While backup support and technical advice from experts often provide a vital boost to community development, local leadership is always indispensable. After all, it is local, indigenous leaders who must finally make the crucial decisions for improvement of their communities.

Alcorn State University’s Title I Program in Rural Community Leadership Development emphasizes the responsibility that falls so heavily on these rural leaders. Program goals recognize two basic requirements for community improvement:

1. Some kind of organizational structure must be built.
2. Leadership abilities of leaders and potential leaders must be increased.

The first requirement can usually be met in a given community, though in many cases organizational structure may be loose. The second can be realized only with organized, systematic instruction in the fundamental arts and sciences of leadership.

Pulling Together the Experts

The program at Alcorn State University consists of two major components: the Rural Community Development Consortium and the Rural Community Development Institute. The Consortium is an aggregate of county, community, or neighborhood development councils. The Institute brings together statewide campus-based knowledgable and other experts in various disciplines who can provide technical support for leadership training, to prepare indigenous leaders and potential leaders for their roles. Generally this support means service as teachers, instituting the bare knowledge for successful leadership. As desirable as it might be to provide on-the-job training for leadership, the teaching is assumed to be the best practical approach because of obvious limits in funding, time, and travel.

Who Will Lead?

A total of 119 indigenous leaders in five centers within a five-county area are enrolled in a course in Rural Community Leadership, for credit or non-credit, depending upon enrollees’ eligibility for admission to collegiate-level education. The enrollees come from the ranks of local elected officials, public school personnel, officers of churches and fraternal groups, farmers, industrial workers, housewives, Extension workers, Headstart workers, and community social workers.

Once-a-week, three-hour sessions are held in the centers where Institute personnel instruct enrollees in the fundamentals of organizational formation and maintenance, parliamentary usage, local government structure, fundamentals of citizenship, duties and responsibilities of all elected officials (local, state, and national), and determining community goals.

Pilot Program

A two-year program under the State’s Title I grant, the effort is designed as a pilot project to test the ways in which institutions of higher learning can work with local communities to aid rural development.

One recent project took the group to the Parris School Outdoor Education Center in order to introduce community leaders to the varied opportunities available for local outdoor recreation.

What It Means

Participants in the classes have found much in the way of information and suggestions to carry back to their home communities. “I enjoyed this class very much,” wrote one member, “and will do my utter best to carry it back to my community. Thank you very much.” Of 62 responses, all indicated that the class was “worth taking.”

Influencing Intactive Business Location Decisions

A New Approach

High taxes and poor governmental services are keeping industries from locating in the very areas where they are most needed. Solving the employment shortfall requires development of an industrial base. Investment creates jobs. Additionally, it creates a broader tax base out of which to finance government.

In attacking the problem, states should realize that lack of economic development comes from lack of enthusiasm by private capital to invest in relatively high-risk plant facilities where the profit potential is minimal. Even economically feasible investments may be kept out by inadequate government services or high taxes in relation to those services provided.

Government and Industry

States have taken several approaches in attempting to encourage industry to provide jobs in underdeveloped or declining areas. Their range is broad, but all address the singular issue of profitability. Both tax and nontax incentives are designed to increase profits in the area by reducing costs, primarily interest and tax costs.

Industry must necessarily view taxes as cost of production. Subsidization is neither wanted nor desirable, but tax costs, should be commensurate with the services provided. If local governments do not provide necessary services at reasonable cost, industry is likely to look elsewhere for expansion. While many surveys have found taxes to be a minor factor in location decisions, it is highly likely that at least within a particular state most other location factors often rank about the same for alternate locations, and taxes (local) could be a swing factor. Many times, however, local governments most in need of new industry are unable to compete with developed areas because of a low tax base. In Tennessee and a few other states the problem is compounded by the practice of taxing business property at a higher effective rate than residential or farm property.

A New Approach: Tax Credit

The purpose of this article is to suggest a unique way to remove the effect of differential property tax levels as a factor affecting location decisions. If property taxes were largely equalized across the state at a reasonable level, location decisions could be made on the basis of economic criteria alone.

A high degree of property tax equalization can be accomplished by means of an income tax credit for a portion of local property taxes paid rather than by adjusting local taxes. This procedure has two very desirable attributes from the standpoint of local government.

First, the credits would not affect local assessment and administration of property taxes. They would not affect the amount of property taxes collected by any local jurisdiction.

Second, they would be administered as a state program, at state expense.

How it Works. Each business subject to the state income tax (or even another state tax) would be awarded a credit in an amount equal to its “excess” county property taxes paid. The credit would be computed by multiplying an “excess” county property tax rate by the assessed value of taxable property. The “excess” rate would be determined by reducing the nominal local rate by the median rate for all similar jurisdictions in the state. In the case of an income tax credit, both a deduction and a credit for the “excess” tax would not be allowed. The result: reducing the effective property tax rate to the median level, leaving jurisdictions with below-median rates unaffected. The equalization is not complete, but the range is vastly reduced. It may also be desirable to establish a maximum above which the local tax would not be subsidized by the state. For example, in computing a maximum rate to use in computing the excess rate, the factor of 1.5 could be applied to the median rate.
Leadership
The SRDC Project Development Network
By Jay Chance
Program Analyst, SRDC

Each county is listed by class according to its nominal rate in column 1 and in column 2 by class as if the credit would reduce its property tax rate. Only two counties had a rate in excess of $4.00 per $100 of assessed value after application of the credit; 26 counties were in the over $4.00 classes in the absence of credits. These counties obviously benefited—taxwise—in their quest for business expansion. Of the 95 Tennessee counties, 83 would have rates from $2.00 to $3.13 after the application of the tax credits, 38 having an after-credit rate of $2.13. Ten counties with before-credit rates ranging from $4.70 to $5.60 were reduced to a range of $3.17 to $4.03.

While large metropolitan counties dominated in total dollars of tax credit, in percentage terms of rate reduction many small and middle size counties benefited even more. In fact, the four major metropolitan areas' percentage reduction in rates varied from 21.8 percent to 23.8 percent while the ten highest tax rate counties had the indirect rate reductions due to the credit ranging from 28.0 percent to 33.1 percent.

Adding It Up. What all these facts and figures mean for communities seeking to attract industry can be stated simply: this novel approach to assessing taxes might prove a valuable "swing" factor in the quest for new firms. Without such tax incentives, much-needed industries might give up before investigating the labor supply, physical facilities, or community goodwill which would help to make a go of it.

But at the bottom line are profit dollars. Profits in dollars for new companies mean profits in dollars, opportunities, community development, and economic growth for many communities. This system of tax credits is designed to put both of those profit lines "in the black."

*The local property tax is largely responsible for tax differentials since nonproperty taxes are usually substantially equal across the state.

Community resource development programs at Cooperative Extension Services have reached out to help local people in their development programs. To meet the growing desire among the people of the rural South to improve the quality of life for themselves and their neighbors, even more is needed. There is so much to be done that organization is the key to helping accomplish rural communities' goals.

Without proper understanding and guidance in developing grassroots leadership, no one will be there to answer or to help when local communities have to face up to glaring problems.

Training Package

Funded through a grant provided by the Rural Development Service, USDA, the Southern Rural Development Center has been working to develop a comprehensive package for training local leaders in rural development. The package will be in the form of a programmed-instruction model, designed as a "how-to-do-it" approach to rural development. The design committee funded by RDS is called the Project Development Network. The committee's task is to prepare tentative materials, test these in a state workshop, revise components based on the test results, and then introduce the package through a regional workshop.

The package will be published and available through the SRDC sometime during the latter part of 1977.

Work of the Committee

Under the auspices of the SRDC, the Network will convene for at least three meetings to consider existing models for leadership development as they could be adapted for use in rural development. From this starting point, the Network met in Memphis in July and January, with representatives from several agencies and organizations making up the committee. They included county commissioners; community, state, and regional development specialists; private and public interests; national and federal employees. About twenty people attended each of the Memphis sessions.

The Network determined that the package should contain six building blocks or components. These constitute the step-by-step process of leadership development and decision making.

Components

1. Understanding rural development and the need for it — setting the stage.
2. Defining problems and/or opportunities.
3. Finding the best approaches.
4. Locating resources.
5. Developing and implementing action programs.

At their last meeting, the Project Development Network determined what educational activities and materials will be used to communicate the desired results in each of the six components.
Evaluating Title V: Observations and Comments

By Dr. Arthur G. Conley
Associate Professor
Department of Rural Sociology
Texas A&M University

G. Richard Werbel
Research Associate
Department of Rural Sociology
Texas A&M University

Howard Ladesig
Graduate Research Assistant
Department of Sociology
North Carolina State University

Collectively, rural development programs have included a wide range of activities, including electrification, subsidy programs, crop insurance, credit to farmers and rural industry, grants for water and waste disposal and fire protection, as well as community organization and improvement programs. These share a common intent: to improve the human condition in the hinterlands.

Recent legislation for rural development programs requires evaluation, but the agencies responsible for evaluation have not created overall systems for evaluating programs. One can look at Title V of the Rural Development Act of 1972 as a case study depicting the evaluation strategies that have evolved in response to these requirements.

Title V is a varied and diffused development program with responsibility for determining program content fixed at the state level. The design of the overall program reflects a philosophy of decentralized control with local planning and decision making. The content, the funding level, the specificity of problems, the intensity of programs, and the concern for processes and outcomes vary from state to state.

Evaluation Study Recommendation

Berstein and Freeman report in Academic and Entrepreneurial Research (AER) the results of a recent national study on quality of evaluative research. This study of more than 250 federally supported evaluations indicates that quality evaluation is associated with: (1) evaluation conducted in an academic setting, (2) evaluation researchers with higher level professional degrees, (3) utilization of peer review committees, (4) grants monitored by Federal officials with social science training, and (5) evaluative research in collaboration with the program administrator. AER recommendations can be grouped into four parts dealing with timing of studies, sponsorship, monitoring, and the evaluation enterprise. Space does not permit discussing these in depth, but some have particular relevancy to Title V.

Timing of Evaluation

AER recommends anticipating future programs, keeping evaluation close to the highest levels of decision making, and pre-developing evaluation models and modules. Unfortunately, the evaluation component of Title V is in some respects an eleventh-hour exercise. Implementation of broad research strategies has been sporadic and inconsistent. Responsibility for evaluation is diffused among administrative heads of the various states, who have responsibilities other than Title V. As for models and modules, we know of no standardized design, measurement, or analysis packages developed to facilitate the evaluation.

Sponsoring Evaluation Research

AER recommends employment of regular, full-time employees with evaluation expertise, competitive grants and contracts awarded through a peer review system, centralized funding responsibility, and multiple evaluations for critical programs. Since Title V evaluation is primarily an internal enterprise, there are few clear specifications detailing what should be evaluated and how evaluation should be implemented. Precise specifications are a necessary requirement for quality evaluation. Also, to our knowledge, no independent peer review system has been used in Title V. Obviously it is incongruous to discuss a peer review system when evaluation is internally structured. As to funding, it is expected to come out of the budget of each program with no specific percentage for evaluation. Therefore, the program evaluators must compete with other program needs for resources to carry out their studies.

Monitoring Process in Title V

AER indicates that the most productive evaluation includes “outside” monitors, annual audits of evaluations, periodic review by a nonfederal board, and publication of evaluation reports through journals or monographs. In Title V evaluation, the opposite situation prevails. There seems to be an implicit
Recognition for Rural Development

Moving Up

Charlie Holeman, Sr., is a 44-year-old farmer in the Mississippi River Delta country of eastern Arkansas. The 80 acres he owns and works with his wife, Maude, and four of their seven children were bought by his father after the Civil War as the first of many bridges the Holemans have built between slavery and independence. Charlie was born on this farm and expects to be buried there.

This family grew up in a typical Delta farm shack—unpainted, raised above the ground to escape flooding. Inside were four small rooms; outside, an old-fashioned privy. On the open, sagging back porch stood a washing machine with a hand wringer. Charlie built the house himself in 1952 with the help of three friends.

Today a visitor would find the house empty because Charlie Holeman has a new home, surrounded by fertile, grey-black fields. These fields produce cotton, soybeans, wheat, corn, and okra. Together with 4 Black Angus cattle, 2 calves, and 30 hogs, the fields will bring Charlie Holeman between $4,500 and $5,000 this year. Three years ago, his income was less than $3,000, which, in the Delta, borders on welfare.

What, in three years, has made the difference? The answer broadens the story from the Holeman family to most other Delta farm families. Their plight was similar, and the answer applies to them all.

T. R. Betton’s “Okra Miracle”

They discovered okra, and Birds Eye discovered them. T. R. Betton serves as Extension Specialist for Special Programs with the Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service. He initiated the organization of 11 vegetable growers’ associations in this Delta region and brought them together with private vegetable marketing facilities. His work in procuring contracts for okra and cucumber growers of eastern Arkansas earned him the USDA’s Superior Service Award. His citation reads:

For creative leadership in nutritional activities to improve participation, increase incomes, and enhance the level of living of small farmers and minority business people in Arkansas.

Charlie Holeman and nearly 2,000 other small farmers in eastern Arkansas are reaping the benefits. Not only did Betton’s work help to save one of the South’s oldest and most familiar crops from extinction, but also it added more than a million dollars a year to the income of those 2,000 farm families, 95 percent of whom are black.

Beginning in 1954 . . .

For more than 20 years Betton has assisted in obtaining contracts for the vegetable growers, with an estimated value of $650,000 annually. He continues to provide management training assistance to the association of growers, and has offered them bookkeeping and auditing assistance through his current assignment, a minority business assistance program.

Minority business development has also led to recruitment of more than 20,000 high school graduates for college entrance. In one year he brought in 3,000.

A Better Life

The results of this pioneering work by T. R. Betton in helping minority farmers and businessmen in Arkansas will be felt for generations to come. Just as Charlie Holeman’s family has moved up from slavery, so have hundreds of families moved up from rural farm poverty—thanks to the “okra miracle” and to the business assistance and student recruitment work of T. R. Betton.

Meeting Many Needs: Morgan County, Tennessee

A river watershed development association . . . rural county health council . . . a solid waste disposal program . . . a local water utility district . . . a flood control plan . . . a new industrial park . . . a new sewerage system . . . housing for the low-income elderly . . . ambulance service . . . that’s quite a score sheet of achievement in meeting many pressing needs of rural development.
This is the tally chalked up by the Morgan County, Tennes- see, Rural Development Committee. Their work over the past several years in all of these areas recently earned them the USDA’s Superior Service Award for outstanding accomplish- ments in improving rural life.

The citation states that their award is in recognition of accomplishments resulting from committee action and involve- ment of local citizens in the development of Morgan County and achievements of the goals of its people.

Since 1968

Organized in 1968, the Morgan County Rural Development Committee is composed of Extension Leader Charles R. Jansch, Chairman; representatives from the Farmers Home Administration, Soil Conservation Service, and Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service representing USDA; and local representation, including the county judge, superin- tendent of schools, representatives of other governmental agencies, and the banking, newspaper, and business communi- ties. The Emory River Watershed Development Association has served as a catalyst in numerous projects and programs to further the socioeconomic development of the three-county area. Medical recruitment programs have brought doctors and dentists to the area, and the county court provided more than $75,000 to renovate and equip a county health center. Two satellite centers have also been funded. A system for pickup of solid waste went into operation in 1974; the number of pickup points in the county now exceeds 150. The committee requested that a local utility district expand services to several communities in the county. Two proposals were completed, accepted, and approved for funding.

Flood Control . . . and More

After a devastating flood, the town council of Oakdale requested assistance in development of a flood control plan. The committee, working with the University of Tennessee, TVA, and the state, developed a master plan, expanded to include a community park and 12 low-income housing units. The town of Sunbright suffered over $300,000 in damage in three floods in less than 12 months. The committee brought in the Corps of Engineers, who found that flood damage could be reduced by 90 percent by channeling. A penal farm abandoned by the state has been turned into a 67-acre industrial park, using railroads, electrical systems, and other services already installed. Increased population in the county seat led the committee to determine costs and need for a new sewage treatment plant, completed in 1974. Plans and grant application for $1.6 million for a housing project for the elderly also came through the committee. And their plan for and funding of a rural ambulance service brought the first emergency medical assistance to Morgan County.

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The Granville County, North Carolina, Rural Development Panel

“Solid achievements with lasting impact . . .” are the words to describe the work of the Granville County, North Carolina, Rural Development Panel. Recently awarded the USDA Superior Service Award, the panel has provided creative leader- ship and assistance in improving public services, upgrading housing, initiating solid waste disposal and environmentally sound land-use programs, and stimulating economic growth.

But, more important, the panel has helped to give the people of Granville County a sense of momentum – a positive feel- ing that “we can do it, too.”

Thirteen public and private groups were represented when the panel was first organized in March 1970. That membership has now grown to 36, representing nearly every government agency and major business located in the county. The panel has become an effective mechanism for assisting local leaders in identifying problems, setting priorities and implementing programs.

These are some of their landmark projects.

Environmental Quality

The most extensive and far-reaching work of the Granville County Rural Development Panel has dealt with land use plan- ning, a comprehensive soil survey, sedimentation control, and other environmental problems.

The panel provided primary leadership in getting a sanitary solid waste disposal system for the county. Subcommittees of the panel gathered information on solid waste disposal systems for the Board of County Commissioners and recommended landfill sites. As a result, the county now has two approved landfills in operation and a county-wide garbage pick-up serv- ice for all rural residents.

The environmental quality momentum was continued in 1974 and 1975 with “Operation Big Crush,” during which 7,500 junked cars were collected, crushed, shredded, and made available for recycling. Involved in this project were 100 local leaders representing 51 organizations.

Public Services

The panel prepared A Guide to Public Services to help citizens, especially the disadvantaged, become aware of the technical and financial assistance available to them.

The panel has developed plans for installation of a Zenith telephone number that will serve rural fire departments, ambulances, rescue squads, police, and sheriff’s department. The system, which will cost $32,000, should be of particular value to the county’s 11 rural fire departments. Citizens will have to call only one number to get emergency assistance.

Economic Development

The panel led in the establishment of a pick-up station for high school students seeking farm employment. It has also promoted on-farm grain storage, planned for a freezer locker, and developed a program to improve forest production. The forestry program offers great potential. Forest lands cover 66 percent of Granville’s 210,000 acres. Income from these forest lands averages less than $11 per acre annually. With good forestry management practices, this income could be doubled.

With establishment of an Association of Forest Landowners, three forestry "show windows" have been established. A for- estry tour and workshop have been held.

Housing

At a county "Housing Fair," some 15,000 people, or nearly 50 percent of the county’s population, attended, and more than 50 business firms participated.

The panel also assisted in organizing a Housing Authority, which has now provided 182 housing units for the elderly and disadvantaged in three different locations. The Housing Authority has requested 100 additional units.

Construction of more than 850 new permanent homes, purchase of 375 mobile homes, and remodeling of over 200 homes in the county are indicative of the leadership and assist- ance being provided by the panel in their efforts to cope with the problems of substandard housing (37 percent) and a short- age of new homes.
Rural Development Through Electronic Technology

By Stan Wilson
Coordinator, APL Laboratory
Department of Agricultural Economics
and Rural Sociology
Texas A & M University
College Station, Texas 77840

The key to redistributing people between rural and urban areas is to redistribute economic opportunities: that is, to redistribute jobs. Inducing firms to locate in rural areas is only one alternative in providing jobs; commuting is only a second alternative. A third alternative is possible when an individual's efforts are not physical products. Then it becomes possible for him to work at home in a rural area and transport his efforts to a distant firm.

Many services, when examined closely, are discovered to be information-processing activities. All those who work in offices are basically performing information processing:

1. An individual receives information.
2. Using this information and other experience and expertise, he forms judgments.
3. The judgments may be used to modify the information, generate new information, or select existing information.
4. The judgments (information) are transported to others.

The first and fourth activities are transportation of information. At this point one comes to the crucial importance of one characteristic of information for rural development. Information can exist in the mind of an individual, but if it is to be transported between individuals it must be embodied in some physical medium. The most effective of these is electronic transmission.

The electronic media transport information at a speed of 10,000 times faster than a telephone conversation, with a speed of light, high volume and cheaply, how can it be utilized by the employee? The answer is to have a cable system attached to a computer terminal in the home.

Once the information can be transmitted into rural homes at the speed of light, in high volume and cheaply, how can it be utilized by the employee? The answer is to have a cable system attached to a computer terminal in the home.

The Rural Land Market and Rural Real Estate Values in Louisiana, 1974

By Dr. Floyd L. Corty
A. Frank Ramsey
Department of Economics and Agribusiness
Louisiana State University

Land use planning is one of the major issues confronting public policy makers today. The need for reliable market information is vital to any sound land policy decision. Land values, however, are changing so rapidly that the land market may be characterized as being volatile, somewhat secretive, and subject to considerable speculation, both as to knowledge and investment.

This study identified the rural land market of Louisiana. It appraised and compared land values by farming regions and by parishes, emphasizing the level of land market activity, prices, and transaction terms. In addition, the relationships between price per acre, parcel size, and distance from a major metropolitan center were examined.

Most agricultural products can be graded, standardized, and moved to the most promising market. Land, however, is a natural resource, fixed in location, with unique characteristics of its basic composition, appearance, fertility, topography, and location. Moreover, the rural land market is usually limited to a small number of buyers and sellers. Normally there is a larger number of buyers than sellers, and those in the market generally lack complete market information.

This study found that rural land values in Louisiana have increased tenfold since 1945, and economic adjustments over the past ten years have had a significant impact on rural land values throughout the nation.

Information regarding rural real estate values serves many useful purposes. Buyers, sellers, borrowers, lenders, investors, tax authorities, real estate appraisers, agricultural policy makers, and others need land market information for decision making. The value of rural land is affected by many factors, some of which are measurable and some of which are not. This study identified the Louisiana land market and evaluated some of its more important characteristics.

One noteworthy result showed an inverse relationship between price per acre and parcel size. The relationship between price per acre and proximity to a major metropolitan center was also an inverse relationship. The current interest in development rights associated with land ownership and the trend toward use-value assessment of agricultural lands emphasizes the importance of land value information. The dynamic nature of the land market suggests continuing studies of a similar nature.
Housing Research and Development Center

The Housing Research and Development Center at the School of Architecture of the University of Tennessee is the research and development arm for housing programs for the University of Tennessee system. The research team consists of staff plus consultants in various areas of expertise.

With an interest in revitalization and stabilization of neighborhoods, the Center looks at what contributes to neighborhoods’ existence in the first place—economic life, economic networks, shared activities, and values.

Housing is considered by the Center to be the major problem of today. Finding a place to live is at best difficult, and constitutes the single biggest budget item. Basic human needs of our society in housing—urban and rural—are not being met. The past few years have generated changes; for example, Tennessee’s population is moving from rural to urban areas, except for the East Tennessee Appalachian area, which is growing. People are becoming increasingly aware of their effect on the total environment. Common land uses, such as hiking and biking trails and parks, become increasingly important.

Recently, at work on a prototype house to provide basic shelter, and well-planned space for low-income families, the Center is directed by Don Hanson, Dean of the School of Architecture at the University of Tennessee.

Government Publications in Rural Development


With selections from Government Publications, issued by the Superintendent of Documents, the categories are: (1) people building—job training, education, health services, nutrition, cultural, income security, leadership, (2) community facilities—housing, transportation, utilities, waste disposal, water supply, (3) environmental improvement—conservation, recreation forests, wildlife, land use planning, zoning, (4) economic development—jobs, agriculture, industry. The book includes an order blank so that publications can be obtained directly from the Superintendent of Documents. With annotations, the bibliography runs more than 100 pages.

New SRDC Publications

The Southern Rural Development Center publications series includes 18 titles on community resource development, rural development, and program and research strategies. Three of these are new:

The Southern Rural Development Center, slide narration. Prepared to accompany a new 16-minute slide cassette program introducing the work of the Center in relation to the rural development research and programs of the land-grant universities in the region.


Summary of Quarterly Reports, SRDC Functional Networks, Spring 1976. Reports from the ten SRDC Functional Networks on their meetings, publications, and comprehensive bibliographies. Summaries of the progress and results of their research in important problem areas of rural development.

Rural Development Bibliography

Title V funds allocated to South Carolina under the Rural Development Act have produced a new bibliography of rural development. Published in June 1976 by the Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology of Clemson University, the compilers were Carrie G. Parker, former Agricultural Science Associate; Howard W. Landreg, former visiting Assistant Professor; and Dr. Edward L. McLean, Professor.

This bibliography includes twelve topics: agriculture area development community economic development environmental improvement facilities and services human resource development leadership organization rural development rural-urban relationships social action It is organized into these twelve areas. Available as AE Report No. 391 from the College of Agricultural Sciences, the bibliography runs 80 pages and includes hundreds of entries.

SRDC Slide Presentation

A new 16-minute slide presentation highlighting the goals and work of the Southern Rural Development Center has been prepared for use at orienta in visits to the land-grant universities in the region. The program begins with a brief discussion of the Rural Development Act of 1972 and the programs of cooperation between Research and Extension staffs at the land-grant universities. Also included are mentions of the programs of work of the SRDC Functional Networks.

Grants-At-Your-Fingertips

FAPRS is coming—a low-cost computer system that locates in minutes all federal assistance programs for any rural local government. Officials are led step by step to a complete list of programs for which a given community is eligible. Counties and cities, no matter how big and small, can use this new system "on-line." Various state Extension Services throughout the nation have computer terminals with which to access the needed information. Since 1965, the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance has been published annually; it now is more than two inches thick and contains lists of more than 1,000 different programs.

Through FAPRS any public official or community representative can gain immediate access to specific information concerning community programs. The computer displays an electronic printout by program name and prints a copy for the questioner.

FAPRS stands for Federal Assistance Program Retrieval System. The program was initially developed by the Rural Development Service and Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service. The process of questioning takes from 5 to 15 minutes and costs from $2 to $4 per run.

USDA officials expect that the new system and its wealth of information will help to provide a remedy for the problem of lack of resources needed to search out available federal assistance. As field terminals go into operation and the system is ready for use, announcements will be made. Community representatives looking for additional information may write to the Administrator, Rural Development Service, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250.

How can community leaders use and benefit from this new computerized fact finding? How can they access the information? The most direct way is to contract for the services of a nationwide computer agent—but this way is also the most costly. Other ways include using existing computer systems at the local or state level, for example at a university campus. County Extension personnel or Farmers Home Administration field representatives can provide such information. In several states computer terminals are being set up to allow access to FAPRS.

"Unfinished Miracles"

A new film aimed at agricultural and nonagricultural audiences alike highlights the continuing contributions of agricultural research. Titled "Unfinished Miracles," the 28-1/2-minute color film is available on loan from the agricultural experiment station in each state.

The film looks at the past contributions of research, such as new high-yielding crop varieties. It also identifies future problems in meeting the challenge of worldwide demands for food and improving the stability of our food supply without increasing the demand for energy or harming the environment. Thus the miracles of the phenomenal increase in farm production and product quality are still unfinished.

The film was produced by the State agricultural experiment stations and the Cooperative State Research Service (CSRS) of the U. S. Department of Agriculture in celebration of the centennial of the first experiment station at New Haven, Connecticut.

"Although America's farmers are producing more than ever before, rising populations and greater world-wide demands for food pose a continuing challenge to agricultural scientists," says former Administrator R. L. Lovorn. "These scientists must find ways to increase agricultural productivity and improve the stability of our food supply without increasing the demand for energy or harming the environment. The film shows how agricultural scientists are meeting that challenge."

Program Design and Evaluation

Professionals with project design and evaluation responsibilities attended a workshop on these topics sponsored by the SRDC at Mississippi State, Mississippi, March 7-11. Directed by Dr. Andrew Steinmetz of New Mexico, Charlottesville, Virginia, the workshop emphasized rural development concerns in project design and evaluation. The techniques studied, however, are applicable to other areas as well.

Most individuals involved in rural development programs recognize the importance of effective project design. Even so, problems do arise in project development. For example, when a new project is under way or even before the project is underway or completed.

This 3 1/2 day intensive workshop provided an effective approach to designing and evaluating a program. It outlined practical and immediately useful techniques which can be easily adapted to situations as necessary. Reassuring are the fact that participating were Drs. Arthur C. Cosby and Richard Witherill, Texas A & M University; Dr. Ed McLean, Clemson University; Dr. Ed Mos, Cooperative State Research Service; Mr. Howard Tankersley, Extension Service; and Dr. William L. Linde, SRDC Director.