



# Kentucky/Tennessee

## Two States Join Forces to Build Promising Futures for Rural Communities

### The Situation

Rural communities in Kentucky and Tennessee face various economic and social issues that sometimes hinder their development abilities. Finding options for sustainable development, which can help these communities meet the economic, social and cultural needs of their areas, is a constant challenge. Extension professionals in Kentucky and Tennessee wanted to find a way to provide quality community development training that would help ensure bright futures for their states' rural communities.



### The Response

The need for sustainable community development led Kentucky and Tennessee Extension professionals to join together to create the Kentucky/Tennessee Institute for Sustainable Development. The idea for the 2002 KY/TN Institute, the goal of which was to provide quality community development training for county agents, came from the Southern Region Community Development Institute held by the Southern Rural Development Center.

Rick Maurer, University of Kentucky Extension professor and one of the originators of the KY/TN Institute, attended the SRDC training. He said the SRDC was instrumental in the formation of the KY/TN Institute because it provided the basic structure for the Institute as well as vital educational resources.

“When we were at that SRDC meeting, we all decided that what we really needed was to get our agents trained in community development,” Maurer said. “We started talking with the Tennessee people and they had the same needs and desires as we did, so we decided to get together.”

The KY/TN Institute took place in two sessions, one in April, one in October 2002, at the Kentucky Leadership Center in Jabez. Each session was broken down into two tracks, capacity building and economic development. Subcategories included such topics as conflict resolution, strategic planning, leadership and e-commerce.

### Quick Facts:

The Kentucky/Tennessee Institute for Sustainable Development took place in two sessions in April and October of 2002.

Close to 40 county agents were trained to implement sustainable community development practices in their communities.

Attendees represented each of the four Extension program areas: ANR, FCS, CRD and 4-H.

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*– Rick Maurer, Extension Professor  
University of Kentucky*

Participating agents even had the option of earning graduate credit. They were asked to take something they learned in the April session, apply it in their area and present a report on its success during the October session.

George Smith, professor of resource development for University of Tennessee Extension, was also one of the handful of professionals who initiated the formation of the Institute.

“We brought some county people together, and it was a chance for them to step back, take a look at what they were doing and gain a better understanding of how they could use these techniques and tools to improve community development in their areas,” Smith said.

### **The Outcome**

Close to 40 people, including some agents from West Virginia, were trained during the 2002 KY/TN Institute for Sustainable Development. The projects presented for graduate credit showcased the positive ways the Institute’s training resources could be applied in individual communities. It also built quality interstate relationships that promote continual sharing of resources and ideas.

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Not only did the Institute succeed in bringing states together in order to enhance the futures of their communities, but it also gave Extension agents the quality education and resources they needed to implement sustainable community development practices in their own areas. Essentially, the Institute laid the foundation for improving community development practices in rural areas.

“It’s like throwing rocks into a pond,” Smith said. “We’ve got some waves started and these agents have some great skills and abilities that they can take out into the state.”

Smith and Maurer agree that the overall impact of the KY/TN Institute is much further reaching than anyone will ever know. The success of the program will continue to grow as program participants use the knowledge they gained to improve sustainable community development efforts in their own communities.

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