



# Texas

## Groups Collaborate to Provide Valuable Resources for Rural Texas Communities

### The Tools

Things may be bigger in Texas, but sometimes the most impressive things come in small packages. Take Hunt County, for instance. Located in northeast Texas, this county has taken admirable steps toward improving its rural communities through small business and entrepreneurial development, educational opportunities, and citizen engagement – tools that are key factors in building healthy and prosperous rural communities amid the economic, social and cultural changes taking place in the Lone Star State.



### The Team

Texas Cooperative Extension and the Texas Center for Rural Entrepreneurship, or TCRE, have been major players in providing the necessary resources for sustaining the future of rural Texas. TCRE was created to provide educational and technical assistance to meet the needs of rural entrepreneurs and the organizations in Texas that support them. In tandem with the Southern Rural Development Center, Texas Cooperative Extension and TCRE have developed a variety of valuable community resource and economic development programs.

Perhaps one of the most successful projects was led by Greg Clary, chairman of TCRE and economist with Texas Cooperative Extension. Clary attended the SRDC's Business Retention and Expansion Workshop in Biloxi, Miss., in 2002. He saw an opportunity to apply what he had learned in his home state.

"I brought the business retention and expansion concept back to Texas and tried to generate some interest in it," Clary said. "I worked with a local economic development alliance to complete a version of it in Hunt County. We completed a survey of the business community and the education community because we wanted to find out what the common interests were between educators and employers."

### Quick Facts:

The Texas Center for Rural Entrepreneurship and Texas Cooperative Extension work closely with the SRDC to provide business development and educational opportunities for rural Texas communities.



In Hunt County, Texas, Project 20/20 was created based on the SRDC's Business Retention and Expansion training.



Hunt County's Project 20/20 was successful in strengthening the ties between business and education in order to address ways to sustain economic growth in the county.

“Project 20/20 is a locally driven, Extension-guided effort that uses resources I received from the SRDC training. Everyone involved considers this an extremely successful effort that has resulted in sweeping changes throughout Hunt county.”

- Greg Clary, Chairman  
Texas Center for Rural Entrepreneurship

The project, sponsored by the Hunt County Alliance for Economic Development and Texas Cooperative Extension, was called Project 20/20. Basically, Clary said, the foundation of the project was a survey that asked the schools what they were doing to train students for the workforce. In addition, businesses were asked what characteristics they looked for when hiring new employees. The idea was to improve the collaborations between business and education, and, in turn, build capacity to sustain economic growth in rural communities.

According to the project summary, 12 educators/trainers and 39 employers from across the county completed these surveys, sharing thoughts about the skills, traits and competencies needed to acquire and maintain jobs in rural Texas.

Clary summarized the findings into a report and presented them at a town hall meeting in Hunt County. Those findings prompted the formation of several task forces in the county which share a common purpose of addressing the critical issues found in the survey results.

“Project 20/20 is a locally driven, Extension-guided effort that used resources I received from the SRDC training,” Clary said. “Everyone involved considers this an extremely successful effort that has resulted in sweeping changes throughout Hunt county.”

The ultimate goal is for the results of the survey to be shared and discussed in public forums so that residents may become actively involved in their local economies and in the future of their communities.

## Additional Resources

TCRE's Web site serves as a repository for curricula and resources on a wide variety of topics of concern for rural communities. It also serves as a way to keep rural Texas informed of the projects being undertaken by the TCRE.

Some examples of resources available at <http://www.tcre.org> include:

- Texas Rural Community College Network Curricula Project
- Resources supporting rural entrepreneur development
- Information on diversified and value-added agribusiness
- Links to various tools and resources from a variety of sources

## For More Information:

Texas Center for Rural  
Entrepreneurship  
Overton, TX 75684  
903-714-0232  
<http://www.tcre.org>

----

Texas Cooperative Extension  
Hunt County  
2217 Washington St.  
Greenville, TX 75401  
903-455-9885  
903-455-9650 (fax)  
<http://hunt-tx.tamu.edu/>

----

Greg Clary, Economist  
Texas Cooperative Extension,  
and Chairman, TCRE  
[g-clary@tamu.edu](mailto:g-clary@tamu.edu)  
903-834-6191  
903-834-6257 (fax)

----

Southern Rural  
Development Center  
Lionel J. Beaulieu, Director  
[ljb@srcd.msstate.edu](mailto:ljb@srcd.msstate.edu)  
Box 9656  
Mississippi State, MS 39762  
662-325-3207  
662-325-8915 (fax)  
<http://srcd.msstate.edu>