

By The Cooperative Extension Service
U of A Division of Agriculture
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Fast Facts:

- SET targets regions with persistent poverty
- Application period opens Aug. 15, applications due Sept. 15
- Applications can be obtained from Deborah Tootle at 501-671-2228, or dtootle@uaex.edu, or Steve Mosher at USDA Rural Development in Fort Smith at 479-646-8300, or steve.mosher@ar.usda.gov.

(315 words)

Applications for Stronger Economies Together due Sept. 15

LITTLE ROCK – Sept. 15 is the application deadline for county clusters to be considered for the Stronger Economies Together, or SET, program.

“SET is designed to enable creation of regional economic development strategies by and for rural communities and counties based on their strengths,” said Deborah Tootle, associate professor-community and economic development for the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture.

Arkansas is one of 10 states added in 2011 to SET, which is a partnership among USDA Rural Development, Regional Rural Development Centers and land grant institutions such as the University of Arkansas.

The application process is competitive. Eligible areas are determined by USDA and are included on the application form. To obtain an application and more information about applying, contact Deborah Tootle at 501-671-2228, or dtootle@uaex.edu, or Steve Mosher at USDA Rural Development in Fort Smith at 479-646-8300, or steve.mosher@ar.usda.gov

Applicants selected by USDA will be notified by Oct. 17.

Selected regional teams will be provided training and technical assistance from state partner teams that harness the resources of key state and federal agencies, land-grant university extension programs and other organizations.

“Thirty-five hours of SET training will be delivered to each region, a process that guides the development of practical and viable regional economic development strategies,” Tootle said. “Much of this training involves actual hands-on work on the regional plan by team members.”

Each selected region will receive tailored economic analyses describing the region’s current and emerging clusters and its comparative economic advantages, and will run over the course of several months.

To supplement the SET training, each selected region will receive targeted technical assistance to help launch their plan.

Stronger Economies Together was launched in 2010. Pilot efforts are in place in 23 multi-county regions located in eight states: Arizona, Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, New Mexico, Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

For more information on community development, visit www.uaex.edu or contact your county extension office.

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