



NEWS RELEASE

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Applications Available for Stronger Economies Together Program

Traverse City, April 6, 2011—Applications have been released for the Stronger Economies Together (SET) Program. Michigan is one of eleven states chosen to pilot the second Phase of this program.

“We’re really excited Michigan was chosen to be a part of this program” said USDA Rural Development Area Director Shelly Fuller. “Our communities could really use this type of assistance.”

USDA Rural Development, the Regional Rural Development Centers and Land Grant College (Michigan State University) extension offices all across the country are partnering with other agencies and private foundations to provide the technical assistance of SET. The program is designed to encourage and train regional partners how to plan and implement regional economic strategies.

“The days of one community supporting itself and offering everything the citizens could ever need are going the way of the dinosaurs” said Fuller. “More and more communities are starting to understand that the key to economic success is in allowing communities to specialize in what they are good at while building a regional plan to meet all citizen needs.”

Regional based development plans keep farmers or manufacturing plants located in the communities where they are successful then builds the capacity to meet other economic needs in the areas adjoining them.

“The SET Program will teach regional groups how to work together to identify their own communities’ individual strengths and weaknesses as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the communities surrounding them” said Fuller.

The program includes 35 hours of initial training and planning workshops to design a regional strategy and offers up to 40 hours of technical assistance in the implementation of the regional plan. Applicants are required to commit \$5,000 of their own funds to use as they wish towards the implementation of the regional plan.

Applications can be requested via email from Shelly Fuller at shelly.fuller@mi.usda.gov or MSU Extension State Specialist David Ivan at ivand@msu.edu. Applications are due by midnight EST on May 13, 2011 and recipients will be contacted to set the training schedule by July.

Committed to the future of rural communities.

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USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs in a way that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of rural residents. As a venture capital entity, Rural Development provides equity, liquidity, and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure. Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/>

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