United States Department of Agriculture • Rural Development
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Date: March 26, 2012

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Applications Available for "Stronger Economics Together" Initiative
Provides Technical Assistance for Rural Regional Development

Applications Available online at: http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/nc/ , deadline is May 4, 2012

USDA Rural Development, in conjunction with the North Carolina Cooperative Extension and other state and local partners, has released details of an initiative called "Stronger Economics Together" (SET), which is designed to help regional teams develop new approaches to strengthen and enhance regional economic development activities. The SET initiative is an opportunity for current or newly formed multi-county teams to receive the latest tools, training and technical assistance to help their region move forward and capitalize on the strengths of the region to create jobs, wealth and economic development. Two multi-county regions in rural North Carolina will be chosen to participate in the initiative.

The SET initiative eligibility requirements are: 1) Applicants must be multi-county regions (at least 3 or more) in N.C. or in conjunction with counties in neighboring states 2) The average rural population must be 51% or more of the region's total population based on Census data or other sufficient data or documentation; or 75% of their land area is located in rural areas of that region based on Census data or other sufficient data or documentation.

Applications for the SET initiative are now available at North Carolina's Rural Development Website at: http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/nc/ . A complete application must be submitted electronically to brian.queen@nc.usda.gov by May 4, 2012. An acknowledgement of receipt will be sent within 36 hours. The two applicants that are selected will be announced by June 30, 2012. There is no application fee, but chosen applicants should be prepared to supply some minor logistical support.

The successful applicants will receive coaching and up to 40 hours of technical assistance over a period of up to one year on the following: 1) Valuable training on the core building blocks for developing and launching a regional economic development plan 2) In-depth economic data tailored to the region, information that helps delineate the critical drivers of your economy 3) Tools that uncover local assets and resources that can be tapped to advance your regions economic strategies and actions. We also encourage applicants to collaborate with their local Extension and Rural Development offices. Please see the application for more detail.

If you have questions, please contact:

- Brian Queen, 919-873-2072, Community Development Coordinator, USDA-NC-Rural Development, brian.queen@nc.usda.gov
- Susan Jakes, 919-515-9161, Family and Community Development Specialist, North Carolina Cooperative Extension, susan_jakes@ncsu.edu

USDA Rural Development has 7 Area Offices and 14 field offices across the state serving North Carolinians living in rural areas and communities. Area Office locations are in Asheville, Shelby, Lumberton, Asheboro, Henderson, Kinston and Smithfield. Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office www.rurdev.usda.gov/nc or by visiting the USDA Rural Development website at www.rurdev.usda.gov.

North Carolina Cooperative Extension (NCCE) is based at North Carolina's two land grant institutions, NC State University and NC A&T State University, in all 100 counties and with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. NCCE gives our residents easy access to the resources and expertise of NC State University and NC A&T State University. Through educational programs, publications, and events, Cooperative Extension field faculty deliver unbiased, research-based information to North Carolina citizens. See http://ces.ncsu.edu/ for more information.

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