



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Applications Available for “Stronger Economies Together” Initiative Provides Technical Assistance for Rural Regional Development**

*Applications Available online at: <https://blogs.lt.vt.edu/setvirginia>, deadline is May 4, 2012*

USDA Rural Development, in conjunction with Virginia Cooperative Extension, and other state and local partners, has released details of an initiative called “Stronger Economies 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 strengths to create jobs, wealth and economic development. Two multi-county regions in rural Virginia 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 VA 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 available at <https://blogs.lt.vt.edu/setvirginia>. A complete application must be submitted electronically to [atate1@vt.edu](mailto:atate1@vt.edu) 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, 35 hours of training, and up to 40 hours of technical assistance over a one year period including: 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.

State partner organizations for the SET initiative include the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, Virginia Tourism Corporation, Virginia Tech Office of Economic Development, Virginia Economic Bridge, Virginia Business Incubation Association, Virginia Association of Counties, and the Virginia Department of Business Assistance.

If you have questions, please contact:

- Ellen Davis, 804-287-1552, Virginia State Director Rural Development U. S. Department of Agriculture, [ellen.davis@va.usda.gov](mailto:ellen.davis@va.usda.gov)
- Scott Tate, 540-315-2062, Extension Specialist, Community Viability, Virginia Cooperative Extension, [atate1@vt.edu](mailto:atate1@vt.edu)

The Virginia State USDA Rural Development Office, located in Richmond, Virginia, administers USDA Rural Development (RD) programs through four Area Offices and four Sub-Area Offices across the state. Each office is committed to serving those in search of information and assistance with RD programs and initiatives. Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office [www.rurdev.usda.gov/va](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/va) or by visiting the USDA Rural Development website at [www.rurdev.usda.gov](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov).

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