



Items of Interest

UPDATE - PHASE II

Regional Rural Development Centers
Listening Sessions:
Investing in Rural Recovery

Phase II of the Listening Sessions Initiative for Rural Community, Economic, and Workforce Development

An [interactive data dashboard](#) has been launched where users can explore data from Investing in Rural Recovery, a [report](#) on findings from the Regional Rural Development Centers' (RRDCs) survey of rural development stakeholders. The dashboard was created in collaboration with the Extension Foundation. Users can combine and display results in a variety of ways.

Virtual listening sessions have also now been completed. These sessions represent Phase II of the RRDC initiative and brought together stakeholders for facilitated dialogue to identify critical investment opportunities. Eight sessions were held in total, with themes for discussion informed by the survey's results. Four regional sessions identified high priority investments across research, Extension, and other capacities for the topic areas most important to the given region. In addition, four nation-wide listening sessions were conducted on cross-cutting issues. These covered the topics of: Broadband and the Digital Divide; Community Planning, Leadership, and Governance; Rural Innovation and Entrepreneurship; and Workforce Development, Training, and Education. Following analysis of findings from these facilitated discussions, an overall report will be generated, reviewed, and disseminated to stakeholders. Updates can be found on the [Listening Session landing page](#).

Webinars:

Coming soon!

Heirs' Property Reports

Two Heirs' Property products have recently been released. The 2021 Southern Region Heirs' Property Collaborative Report and A Quick Guide to Addressing Heirs' Property in Your Community can be found on the [Heirs' Property landing page](#).

A curriculum is being developed for community professionals and will be coming soon. If you would like to be added to the Heirs' Property listserv and learn more, email Russ Garner at russ.garner@msstate.edu.

Delta Regional Forum: June 23-24, 2022

The annual Delta Regional Forum engages community and regional development practitioners and scholars working in and with partners in the multistate Delta region to learn from each other in pursuit of population health and wellbeing, economic renewal, and resilience. Held at the Coahoma County Higher Education Center in Clarksdale, Mississippi, the conference includes presentations, panels, workshops, and poster sessions. Diverse presentations are welcome. Abstracts are due May 12, and the event will take place June 23-24, 2022. For more information on the Delta Regional Forum, please visit the [landing page](#).

The Delta Regional Forum is organized by the Southern Rural Development Center in collaboration with the Delta Directions Consortium (DDC), an interdisciplinary network of individuals, academic institutions, non-profit organizations, and foundations that work together to create positive social change in the multi-state Mississippi Delta Region.

SRDC's History: Social Media Series to Highlight History of the Center in Celebration of the RRDCs' 50th Anniversary

SRDC History

August 2002

The Southern Rural Development Center has been promoting and growing rural economic development initiatives for over 20 years.

SRDC

Creating Vibrant Communities & Economies in Rural America
Linda J. Davidson
Southern Rural Development Center
August 2002

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Regional Spotlight

Using Deliberative Dialogue to Address Florida Community Challenges

Citizens across the nation feel increasingly removed from our system of governance. Even at the local level, they may wish to be engaged, but may not feel there is an appropriate venue that matches the time and resources they can dedicate to helping to resolve local issues. Compounding this challenge, members of some groups are historically underserved by government programs. In addition, people often believe they do not have enough information to offer a knowledgeable opinion about what should be done to improve their community. To begin to address these fractures in democratic governance, Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University and the University of Florida partnered to develop the *Community Voices, Informed Choices* (CIVIC) program. CIVIC prepares Extension faculty to help communities address challenging community issues. It complements other Extension programs by creating a platform for community members to learn about and discuss community issues that they care about but cannot solve as individuals.

CIVIC recognizes the importance of listening to a diversity of perspectives throughout the contentious political discussions characteristic of today's community discourse and aims to build community capacity to work toward resolutions of community-based issues. CIVIC brings together county agents and state specialists working across many program areas (Natural Resources, Sea Grant, Community Development, Family Sciences, and Community Development) to strengthen a community's capacity to explore problems, find resources, partner with organizations, deliberate possible solutions or paths forward, and provide science-based recommendations.

The concept of facilitating discussions to explore potential choices that address wicked problems is rather new in Florida Cooperative Extension. We have developed CIVIC in a methodical way, pilot testing projects and building experience as we understand how to share our vision with others. A retreat with interested specialists and agents in 2017 helped frame program possibilities while reflecting on their community needs and experiences. A 2019 needs assessment of 92 extension faculty demonstrated that over 80% are interested in learning community engagement techniques and in helping communities address complex issues. In addition, 86% reported they want to learn how to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion in extension programs.

To date, CIVIC has delivered at least 18 in-person or virtual deliberative forums. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted our ability to recruit participants, so although participation has been limited, the small groups have generated meaningful conversations that have led to important outcomes. For example, in a forum discussion on water quality in the Indian River Lagoon, the discussion pivoted from environmental health to human health and opened the door to engage those who fish for their dinner. From there, a partnership was formed with the nearby Ocean Research and Conservation Association (ORCA) who conduct research on fish toxicity to sponsor a youth fishing clinic that raised awareness of water quality issues, provided fishing equipment to predominantly under-resourced community members, and collected fish for ORCA's research.

Employee Highlight: Trevor Hylton, Florida A&M University

Trevor Hylton is the Urban Agriculture Agent for Leon County Florida with expertise in fruit and vegetable production. Trevor has single-handedly transitioned Urban Agriculture into a Community Economic Development program focused on community gardens and schools, small farmers, and back-yard gardeners. Sustainability and environmental protection strategies with intuitive techniques are critical elements of his work.

Trevor has worked with Florida A&M University Extension for 22 years and holds a courtesy appointment with University of Florida's Extension program housed in the Leon County Extension Office. Trevor developed a model greenhouse awarded for its affordability featured in Hobby Greenhouse Magazine. Trevor's expertise has resulted in 10 international assignments, notably in South Africa, India, Guyana, and Haiti.

Trevor is a recipient of many awards, principally from the Extension Professional Associations of Florida-UF/IFAS. Additionally, Trevor is referred to as the Citrus Expert throughout North Florida.

Trevor is a native of Jamaica, received his B.S. in Agri-Business (1986) and MBA from Florida State University (1993). In his free time, Trevor enjoys gardening and is known to "grow just about anything", sports, and basks in being an all-around family guy. He is married to his college sweetheart Julia Hylton for 42 years. Julia's career path has led her to the area of administration in the public and private sector. They are the proud parents of three girls and four grandkids.

Grant Connections

Southern SARE Releases 2023 Education Grant Call for Proposals

The deadline for submitting proposals is August 5, 2022, at 12 p.m. (noon) EST. Grants will be announced in February of 2023. Projects begin April 1, 2023.

The [Southern region of the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education \(SARE\) program](#) has released its [Call for Proposals](#) for the 2023 Education Grants program.

Southern SARE's Education Grant, falling under the [Research & Education Grant Program](#), is a broader education and outreach effort. Education Grants are open to organizations, institutions, and individuals who are interested in conducting education and outreach activities for the benefit of the greater sustainable ag community, and promote efforts in farmer innovations, community resilience, business success, agricultural diversification, and best management practices.

[DOWNLOAD THE CALL FOR PROPOSALS](#)

Job Opportunities

Associate Dean and Director, Virginia Cooperative Extension

Open until filled

Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) and the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs) at Virginia Tech are recruiting its next Associate Dean and Director of VCE. The Associate Dean and Director provides primary leadership for all aspects of VCE. The Director reports to the Dean of CALs, and serves with the associate deans for Academic Programs, Research and Graduate Studies, and CALs Global as a member of the dean's executive team. The director is also one of the voting members of the University's Administrative Council for Extension and Experiment Station Research. The director collaborates closely with the Extension Administrator at Virginia State University to ensure a shared vision and to promote a state-wide joint Extension program. The director will also represent VCE at the state, regional and national levels, as well as build strong relationships with stakeholders, partners, and funders.

Conferences, Workshops, Trainings

National Extension Energy and National Sustainability Joint Summits

In-person: May 15-18, 2022, State College, Pennsylvania

The Summit is the best, single venue to learn about the latest in sustainability and energy research, share innovative Extension programs, update your program toolbox, and cultivate new communities of practice.

[REGISTER HERE](#)

NACDEP Annual Conference: Creating Connections at Every Crossroad

In-person: June 5-8, 2022, Indianapolis, Indiana

The 2022 NACDEP Annual Conference will be held at the Alexander Hotel, Indianapolis, Indiana. Registration begins March 1, 2022.

[CLICK HERE TO VIEW MORE](#)

International Workshop on Agritourism

In-person: August 30 – September 1, 2022, Burlington, Vermont

The International Workshop on Agritourism will take place in person in Burlington, Vermont, USA. This workshop is designed to be a hybrid event to allow those unable to travel to have access to content as well as a variety of other ways for all participants to engage and connect with colleagues in the agritourism community. The conference will feature over 140 presentations, workshops, and posters. Topics cover every aspect of agritourism, including running and marketing an agritourism business, managing farms stays, promoting rural development, creating regional partnerships, and sharing research and case studies. Registration is now open.

[REGISTER HERE](#)

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