



Items of Interest

Regional Rural Development Centers kick off year-long 50th anniversary celebration with recognition from Extension Committee on Organization and Policy and Experiment Station Committee on Organization and Policy



This year marks the 50th anniversary of the passage of the Rural Development Act. Among its many outcomes, the Act led to the creation of the nation's four Regional Rural Development Centers (RRDCs). To help kick-off the year-long celebration, the RRDCs were joined by two key partner organizations, who each took actions formally recognizing the Centers' significant contributions over the past 50 years and anticipating their leadership role in the continued vibrancy of rural America. The Board on Agriculture Assembly (BAA) [Extension Committee on Organization and Policy](#) (ECOP) and [Experiment Station Committee on](#)

[Organization and Policy](#) (ESCOP), which provide leadership and governance to the Cooperative Extension System and the State Agricultural Experiment Stations, respectively, each voted on the recognition at recent meetings. [Hear more from ECOP and ESCOP's leadership and help us celebrate!](#)

The Centers will be hosting additional programs throughout the year to highlight the successes and impacts of their first 50 years of service to Rural America, and to prepare for the emerging opportunities and challenges of the future.

Learn more about the Regional Rural Development Centers at: <https://rrdc.usu.edu/>.

Listening Sessions Report: Investing in Rural Recovery

The nation's four Regional Rural Development Centers (RRDCs) released *Investing in Rural Recovery: Findings from a Rapid Assessment of Stakeholder Priorities for Rural Development* from a national survey.

Webinars:

A "Big Idea" to Support Thriving Communities: A webinar to connect the dots of business, education, and health with the Cooperative Extension system.

Virtual: February 10th, 2022
11 AM – 1 PM PT
12 PM – 2 PM MT
1 PM – 3 PM CT
2 PM - 4 PM ET

[REGISTER HERE](#)

The survey, conducted in the fall of 2021, is part of an ongoing Listening Session Initiative aimed to identify key priorities, capacities, expansion, and valued programming that resulted in the [eight critical topic areas](#) for rural communities. This initial report marks the close of the first stage in the consultative feedback process. The second phase, in March and April of 2022, will provide a basis for a series of facilitated dialogues.

[READ THE FULL REPORT HERE](#)

Rural America at a Glance: 2021 Edition

The [2021 edition of Rural America at a Glance](#) focuses on aspects affecting the resiliency and recovery of rural communities in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, including population and employment change, intensity of infection and vaccination rates, and internet availability and adoption.

[CLICK TO READ FULL REPORT](#)

Regional Spotlight

Arts Extension at University of Kentucky makes its MARK with arts-in-health curriculum, Mind.Art.Recovery.KY

Managing one's personal health and wellness was difficult enough for the average person in 2021. But for those struggling with Substance Use Disorder (SUD), challenges to well-being were even more pronounced, and the stakes much higher. A pandemic, coupled with a worsening epidemic of opioid and substance misuse has challenged communities to meet the health needs of its people in new and creative ways.

Rising to this challenge, the Cooperative Extension at University of Kentucky (UK), with its broad reach statewide and with funding from Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), has found success in integrating the arts into existing SUD recovery and prevention efforts for increased holistic wellness benefits in the state. These results add to growing evidence that, for some, creativity could be key in unlocking a path to recovery.

Through a partnership between Arts Extension, Community and Economic Development Initiative of Kentucky (CEDIK), Family and Consumer Sciences Extension (FCS) and 4-H Youth Development, a new six-unit curriculum of arts-in-health classes was envisioned and implemented.

Partnering extension agents reported interactions with new clientele and groups not previously engaged, confidence in delivering new artistic programming, and an increased understanding of how the arts can contribute to wellness in individuals recovering from SUD.

These early results indicate that an expressive arts-in-health curriculum can provide substantial benefit for many in recovery and equip communities with an accessible platform for wellness engagement. The next phase of this program will train Extension Agents, recovery center staff, and community health coalitions across Kentucky to implement this program in their own communities.

[READ MORE HERE](#)

Employee Highlight: Keima Borsuah, Oklahoma State University



Keima Borsuah serves as an Assistant Extension Specialist for the Solid Waste Management Program at Oklahoma State University (OSU). She uses applied research to prepare solid waste educational materials for rural and underserved communities. This includes engaging in presentation and outreach, organizing workshops that promotes proper waste management practices, and delivering information on other environmentally friendly topics to residents locally as well as state, regional, and national audiences. Keima works with other solid waste experts across the state to organize trainings and conferences focused on rural Oklahomans. Additionally, she represents the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service on state and regional committees that derive rural waste policy. Keima is

currently serving as the Board President for the Oklahoma Recycling Association (OKRA).

Originally from Sierra Leone, West Africa, Keima holds a master's degree in environmental science from Oklahoma State University and an environmental management degree from Njala University in Sierra Leone. In her home country, she worked with rural communities as an extension intern for water quality and biodiversity.

Job Opportunities

Assistant Dean and Professor, Agriculture & Natural Resources and Community Economic Development, University of Tennessee Extension

Open until filled

The Assistant Dean is responsible to the Dean of the University of Tennessee Extension.

Responsibilities include:

- Providing leadership and direction to the agriculture, natural resources and community economic development agents, specialists, and programs.
- Working closely with department heads, specialists, and regional agriculture program leaders in the overall program planning, etc.

Information about programs and personnel of UT Extension is available [HERE](#)

Assistant Extension Director for County Operations, North Carolina State University

Open until filled

This position will be expected to strengthen the relationships with county partners, campus community partners, NC A&T University, and the national level organizations that support Extension. The Asst Extension Director will ensure

that alignment between the five District offices is improved, and that NC State Extension is functioning as one organization. The Assistant Extension Director will maintain ongoing responsibilities for County Operations for NC Cooperative Extension.

[CLICK TO LEARN MORE AND APPLY](#)

Assistant Research Scientist / Rural Social Scientist, University of Georgia

Open until filled

The position supports the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FR-SAN) grant. The purpose of FR-SAN is to establish a network to connects individuals engaged in farming, ranching, and other agriculture-related occupations to stress assistance programs. Establishing a network to assists farmers and ranchers in times of stress can offer a conduit to improving behavioral health awareness, literacy, and outcomes for agricultural producers, workers, and their families. The USDA/NIFA established four regional centers across the US. This position will serve in the Southern FR-SAN Region. The regional center is headed by the University of Tennessee. [Click here to apply](#)

[LEARN MORE](#)

Applied Economist/ The Institute of Government, University of Georgia

Position closes April 1, 2022

The Carl Vinson Institute of Government at The University of Georgia invites applications for a Public Service Faculty position in the State Services and Decision Support Division's Workforce and Economic Analysis Unit. This position carries rank in the public service faculty career ladder of the University.

The successful candidate will have primary responsibilities in conducting economic analysis, fiscal analysis, economic impact studies, research and providing professional services for state agencies and local governments. The applied economist will also work on collaborative projects with the Institute's applied demographer, workforce development team, and data analytics teams. The position monitors and interprets economic, labor, demographic, and government administrative data indicators. The position analyzes developments in Georgia's labor market, state tax and revenue, and other area effecting Georgia's economy and considers the impacts on the state's economic outlook. The position uses and adjusts computer programs, models, and databases for data retrieval, manipulation, presentation, statistical analysis.

[LEARN MORE AND APPLY](#)

Grant Connections

STAKEHOLDER ANNOUNCEMENT: USDA Seeks Applications to Advance Equity and Expand Regional Economies in Distressed Rural Communities

The deadline to submit applications is 11:59 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, April 19, 2022. Applications must be submitted through Grants.gov. Potential applicants may submit a concept proposal for review by the agency to SM.USDA-RD.RISE@usda.gov no later than February 18, 2022.

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Under Secretary for Rural Development Xochitl Torres Small announced the Department is accepting grant applications that will advance equity in rural America by creating new opportunities in distressed communities. USDA is offering [priority points](#) to projects that advance key priorities under the Biden-Harris

Administration to help communities recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, advance equity, and combat climate change. These extra points will increase the likelihood of funding for projects seeking to address these critical challenges in rural America. The [Rural Innovation Stronger Economy \(RISE\)](#) grant program encourages a regional, innovation-driven approach to economic development by funding job accelerator partnerships in low-income rural communities. If you'd like to subscribe to USDA Rural Development updates, visit [our GovDelivery subscriber page](#).

[LEARN MORE](#)

Conferences, Workshops, Trainings

A “Big Idea” to Support Thriving Communities: A webinar to connect the dots of business, education, and health with the Cooperative Extension system.

Virtual: February 10th, 2022 • 11 AM – 1 PM PT/12 PM – 2 PM MT/1 PM – 3 PM CT/2 PM - 4 PM ET

The “Big Idea” was developed by the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy’s (ECOP) Health Innovation Taskforce to unite local, state, tribal, and national resources to advance public health, economic vitality, and educational attainment in underserved communities.

The purpose of this webinar is to build on the momentum and learnings from the Big Idea Leadership Summit, to galvanize new regionally based connections and projects, and to provide new information about the next institutional home of the Big Idea.

[REGISTER HERE](#)

National Extension Energy and National Sustainability Joint Summits

In-person: May 15-18, 2022

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](#)

This material is based upon work supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.