



Items of Interest

Dr. Matthew J. Ulmer Named as the Recipient of the 2023 Bonnie Teater Community Development Early Career Achievement Award

The Southern Rural Development Center is proud to honor Dr. Matthew J. Ulmer as the 2023 recipient of the *Bonnie Teater Community Development Early Career Achievement Award*. Dr. Ulmer is the State Specialist and Priority Program Team Leader of Community Development with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES) and Auburn University. Dr. Ulmer began his career in Extension community and research development in 2015. His focus areas in Extension and outreach activities are on workforce development, tourism, leadership, civic engagement, and youth career development.

On behalf of Dr. Matthew Ulmer's nomination, Dr. Paul W. Brown, Associate Director, Alabama A&M and Auburn Universities Extension stated, "Dr. Ulmer's body of work has made an incalculable impact on Alabama Extension and the citizens of Alabama..." Dr. Kimberly Sinclair-Holmes, Assistant Director, Alabama Cooperative Extension System, detailed her support by saying, "Dr. Ulmer has made many commendable contributions to the community development field as both a leader and change agent in the Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES) at Auburn University and through his regional and national contributions to the Land Grant system...Dr. Ulmer has been an exemplary partner to Alabama Extension's co-affiliate institution, Alabama A&M University".

[FULL PRESS RELEASE](#)



Pictured: SRDC Director, Dr. John J. Green and 2023 Bonnie Teater Award Winner, Dr. Matthew J. Ulmer

Webinars:

Coming soon!

CREATE BRIDGES: Phase I Impact Video Recently Released

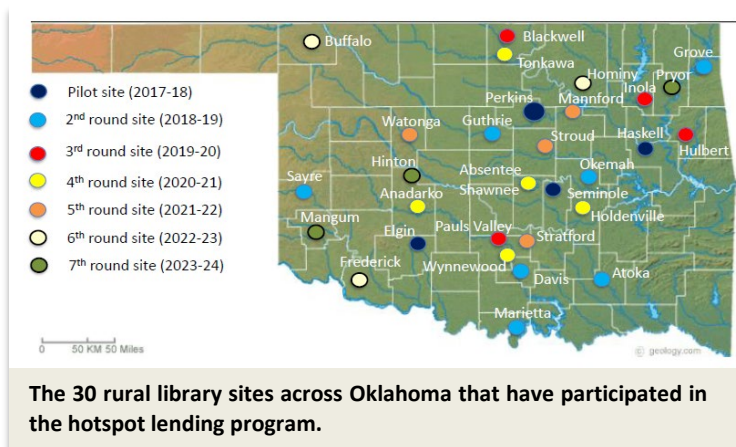
CREATE BRIDGES is an economic development initiative for rural, multi-county regions to strengthen businesses and workforce within the retail, accommodations, tourism, and entertainment sectors. The goal of the project is to raise awareness about how retail, accommodations, tourism, and entertainment businesses impact the local economy; look at current support and issues for these businesses and their employees; and develop plans to strengthen these areas in the local region. In 2018, the Southern Rural Development Center partnered with the University of Arkansas, the University of Kentucky, and Oklahoma State University to pilot the program with three Phase I states (Arkansas, Kentucky, and Oklahoma). In 2020, CREATE BRIDGES moved into Phase II of the pilot and expanded the program to three additional states (North Carolina, Illinois, and New Mexico), partnering with North Carolina State University, the University of Illinois, and New Mexico State University. This video highlights the program's activities and outcomes in the three Phase I states.



[CREATE BRIDGES: PHASE I IMPACT VIDEO](#)

Regional Spotlight

The Oklahoma State University Rural Library Hotspot Loan Program



Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service (OCES) partners with rural libraries across the state to loan out hotspot devices. These hotspots can provide a fast internet connection to help alleviate the “digital divide” between households that maintain regular internet access and those without. Through a partnership with AARP, the program adds 3-5 libraries each year and provides them each with 5-7 hotspots that have a full year of unlimited data. Each hotspot can connect to 7-10 devices (smartphones, tablets, laptops, etc.) and typically provides connection speeds that can handle video downloads or videoconferencing.

Each library sets their own policies, although most have a 1-week loan period and minor late fees. Libraries collect survey data from patrons once their loan is completed and attempt to continue the program on their own after the first year is up. The program is typically ranked very highly (average patron ranking of 9.5 / 10) and 24 of the 27 previously participating libraries have been able to continue the program by either building it into their budget or gathering sponsorships/donations from the local community. Many local businesses and organizations have sponsored devices after seeing how successful the program has been.

The patron surveys help make the case for the importance of the program. Statistics show that roughly half of the loans go to households making less than \$25,000 per year, and more than half have children in the household. They are used for a wide variety of online activities, including job searches, helping children with schoolwork, and

connecting with family and friends. Extension educators in each participating county promote the program to their clientele.

The hotspot devices come from PCs for People, a non-profit organization focused on bridging the digital divide, and use a cellular network that has proven to be robust even in rural Oklahoma. The data package can be turned off if the devices are not returned on time. Recently, OCES also partnered with the libraries to promote the [Affordable Connectivity Program](#) which provides a monthly broadband subsidy for low-income households.

The program has won several awards, including NACDEP's National Innovation and Creativity Award in 2019 and the AAEEA's Distinguished Outreach Program Award in 2022.



Hinton Library's mascot Toothless (a bearded dragon) helps promote the hotspots for loan in the library.

For more information, please visit the [Rural Library Hotspot Lending Program's site](#) or contact Dr. Brian Whitacre at brian.whitacre@okstate.edu.

Grant Connections

USDA Seeks Applications to Strengthen Community and Economic Development in Rural Communities Across America

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development (RD) Under Secretary Xochitl Torres Small announced that USDA is accepting applications for grants that will improve housing, community facilities, and community and economic development projects in rural areas around the country. USDA is making the grants available under the [Rural Community Development Initiative](#) program. The program provides grants to organizations that will provide financial and technical assistance for housing, community facilities, or community and economic development projects.

[FULL STAKEHOLDER ANNOUNCEMENT](#)

USDA Accepting Applications to Spur Job Growth and Economic Development in Rural Areas

Applications must be submitted to the USDA Rural Development State Office where the project is located no later than 4:30 p.m. local time on June 30, 2023.

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development (RD) is accepting applications for funding to help create jobs and economic growth in rural communities. USDA is making loans and grants available under the Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant (REDLG) program. Through this program, USDA provides zero-interest loans and grants to current and former Rural Utilities Service (RUS) Electric Program and Telecommunications Program borrowers and utilities that are eligible to receive assistance from the RUS Electric or Telecommunication Programs.

Applicants will use the funds to help local businesses finance projects that will create and retain jobs or finance community facility projects. Projects must be in rural areas or towns with a population of 50,000 or less.

Interested applicants are encouraged to contact their local USDA Rural Development State Office well in advance of the application deadline to ask questions about their project, the program, or the application process. Additional information is available on page 53443 of the [Aug 31, 2022, Federal Register](#). If you'd like to subscribe to USDA Rural Development updates, visit our [GovDelivery subscriber page](#).

USDA Invites Applications for Grants to Strengthen Rural Cooperatives and Expand Access to New and Better Markets for People in Rural America

Electronic applications must be submitted to [grants.gov](#) by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on June 26, 2023.

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development (RD) Under Secretary Xochitl Torres Small announced that USDA is inviting applications for grants to strengthen rural cooperatives and expand access to new and better markets for people in rural America. USDA is making the \$5.8 million in grants available under the [Rural Cooperative Development Grant \(RCDG\)](#) program to start, improve or expand rural cooperatives and other mutually owned businesses that will help improve economic conditions in rural areas.

Nonprofit organizations and institutions of higher education are eligible to apply for grants to provide technical and cooperative development assistance to individuals and rural businesses. The maximum award is \$200,000. Grants are awarded on a competitive basis through a national competition.

Additional information on the required materials and how to apply for the RCDG program are available on page 25369 of the [April 26, 2023, Federal Register](#).

Job Opportunities

Assistant Administrator, Community Development and Outreach, Fort Valley State University

Open until filled.

The assistant Administrator for Community Development and Outreach will develop, coordinate, and facilitate programming through the Cooperative Extension Program designed to assist communities to realize their long-term goals; through provision of education, technical assistance, and opportunities to secure grants that support strategic planning and community visioning to provide a foundation for economic development. Coordinate or assist in the coordination of programs through outreach efforts with USDA Agencies, State, private and public and nonprofit entities. Master's degree in Agricultural Economics, economics, business administration or other business disciplines is required. Preference will be given to applicants with extension and strong community development experiences. Applicants with degrees in closely related disciplines with community development experiences may also apply.

[LEARN MORE AND APPLY](#)

Assistant Professor, Nutrition and Food Safety, Family & Consumer Sciences Department, University of Tennessee

Open until filled.

The University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, Extension Family & Consumer Sciences Department is looking to fill the position of Assistant Professor, Nutrition. The position will work to develop and teach effective, research-based nutrition programs across the state, which enhance the lives of Tennesseans. The position will work collaboratively with cross-functional teams within and outside of the FCS department and the university to contribute to the mission of the FCS department, UT Extension, and the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture (UTIA).

[LEARN MORE AND APPLY](#)

Associate Professor, Community Health, Family & Consumer Sciences Department, University of Tennessee

The position of Associate Professor in Community Health, Family & Consumer Sciences Department is responsible for planning, developing, and implementing research-based adult and you Extension programs in nutrition to promote safe food handling practices, healthy dietary habits, and to improve health and nutritional status among Tennesseans, including, but not limited to, Extension programs for diet-related disease prevention and management, food safety, and food preservation.

[LEARN MORE AND APPLY](#)

Non-Tenure Track Assistant Research Professor, Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development

Open until filled.

The NERCRC seeks applications for a one-year Non-Tenure Track Assistant Research Professor, with good chances of renewal, subject to funding. The Non-Tenure Track Assistant Research Professor will be responsible for conducting economic and statistical analyses on a wide range of rural development topics, as determined by the Center's emerging needs and priorities. There is a strong expectation that this research will contribute both to the science base as well as to informing U.S. rural economic development policy. Importantly, the opportunity exists to work with Penn State's Census Data Center. Examples of topics to be studied range from policy impact assessments (including the impact of farm subsidies, agritourism activities and extension education); to the interdependence of rural and urban areas, as well as agricultural and non-agricultural industries; to the determinants of local economic well-being and health.

Candidates should upload a letter of application, names, and addresses of three professional references, curriculum vitae, and official transcripts at the time of application. Questions can be directed to Stephan J. Goetz, Department of Agricultural Economics, Sociology, and Education, The Pennsylvania State University at sig16@psu.edu. Screening of applications will begin March 8, 2023, and the position will remain open until filled.

[LEARN MORE AND APPLY](#)

Director of Agricultural Research & Extension Communications, West Virginia State University

Open until filled.

The Director of Agricultural Research and Extension Communications is responsible for the production and dissemination of information via written, video-graphic, online and spoken means with emphasis on graphic design and new media management. The position reports directly to the Vice President and Dean and Director of Agricultural Research and Extension. Duties include coordination and production of organizational publications; social media management; website content management; assisting staff with programmatic marketing needs; representation at campus and community events; and maintaining a catalog of published materials and photographs.

Information accepted as emailed in a Microsoft Word or PDF format to rdemployment@wvstate.edu. Qualified candidates may submit a cover letter, resume, unofficial transcript and contact information for three professional references (name, title, address, phone number, and email address).

[LEARN MORE](#)

Research Assistant Professor, Department of Agricultural, Leadership, and Community Education, Virginia Tech

Open until filled.

The Department of Agricultural, Leadership, and Community Education (ALCE), in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs) at Virginia Tech, invites applications for a Research Assistant Professor with a focus on interdisciplinary and community-based food systems research. This is a 12-month, non-tenure track position with full benefits and the opportunity for promotion. The position will support the Virginia Tech (VT) Center for Food Systems and Community Transformation, which is housed in CALs as an Extension and outreach center with community-based programming, research, and teaching aims and activity. Through its community-based and participatory work, the Center asserts the importance of epistemic justice and inclusion by valuing and uplifting diverse forms of knowledge and ways of knowing. As such, we encourage those committed to the promotion of justice and equity as core values in their scholarship to apply.

[LEARN MORE AND APPLY](#)

Assistant/Associate Professor, Rural Development, University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture

Open until filled.

The Assistant/Associate Professor-Rural Development is a non-tenure track faculty member of the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service and part of the Community, Professional and Economic Development (CPED) team. CPED fulfills organizational support functions in the areas of navigating the extension career pathway, program development, and professional development. The position is responsible for developing a nationally recognized extension education and applied research program focusing on economic development with strong emphasis on supporting economic, social, and quality of life advancement in rural Arkansas counties.

[LEARN MORE AND APPLY](#)

Conferences, Workshops, Trainings

Understanding Heirs' Property at the Community Level

In-Person: June 6-7, 2023, Dallas, Texas

SRDC is joined by the Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Policy Research Center at Alcorn State University and the Southern Extension Risk Management Education Center to provide a train-the-trainer workshop for Extension professionals titled "Understanding Heirs' Property at the Community Level." To keep up with future training opportunities, you can visit the [Heirs' Property landing page](#). To be added to the Heirs' Property listserv and learn more about this topic, please email Rachel Welborn at rachel.welborn@msstate.edu.

[REGISTER HERE](#)

The Delta Regional Forum

In-person: June 22-23, 2023, Clarksdale, Mississippi

The Delta Regional Forum is intended to engage 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 community resilience. The 2023 Forum will entail discussion sessions, lightning talks, and networking opportunities.

[LEARN MORE AND REGISTER](#)

The Rural Sociological Society (RSS) 2023 Conference

In-person: August 2-6, 2023, Burlington, Vermont

RSS President, John J. Green, SRDC Director

Theme: Pursuing Equity and Access in Development: Roles for Rural-Focused Public Scholars.

The 2023 RSS Annual Meeting will be held on the campus of The University of Vermont in the Davis Event Center.

[LEARN MORE AND REGISTER](#)

National Extension Tourism (NET) 2023 National Conference

In-person: September 24-27, 2023, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

This year's conference theme is "Envisioning the Future of Extension in Tourism." This is an opportunity for Extension professionals, academic faculty, industry professionals, and others working in the broad area of tourism and recreation, including tourism service providers and businesses, to share programs, initiatives, research, and success stories, and network with other professionals. The conference is open to all industry and academic professionals.

[LEARN MORE AND REGISTER](#)

Extension Disaster Education Network Conference

In-person: September 26-29, 2023, Savannah, Georgia

[LEARN MORE](#)

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