



Items of Interest

Recently Launched: CREATE BRIDGES Curriculum



[CREATE BRIDGES](#) is a pilot project designed for multi-county regions to raise awareness of the role retail, accommodations, tourism, and entertainment businesses play in the local economy; determine challenges, barriers, and opportunities related to those businesses; and develop and implement strategies to strengthen the retail, accommodations, tourism, and entertainment sectors within a region.

CREATE BRIDGES is a collaborative partnership between the Southern Rural Development Center, the University of Arkansas, the University of Illinois, the University of Kentucky, New Mexico State University, North Carolina State University, and Oklahoma State University. It is currently active in eight regions throughout the six partner states.

Purpose of CREATE BRIDGES



1. **Raise awareness**
2. **Determine challenges, barriers, and opportunities**
3. **Develop and implement strategies**



CREATE BRIDGES was developed and implemented with funding from Walmart and was awarded the [NET Excellence in Tourism award in 2021](#).

The goal of the curriculum is to educate community and economic development practitioners on how to recreate the processes used in CREATE BRIDGES. The curriculum bridges theory into practice, emphasizes the processes used to attain results, and hopes to offer a new perspective on how to engage communities with workforce development.

To view the CREATE BRIDGES curriculum, visit <https://srdc.msstate.edu/programs/create-bridges/curriculum>

Webinars:

USDA ERS Releases Updated Rural-Urban Continuum Codes for U.S. Counties

The United States Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service (USDA ERS) recently released the updated [Rural-Urban Continuum Codes \(RUUCs\)](#) for U.S. counties and county equivalents across states and territories. Originally developed in the 1970s, the RUUCs are updated each decade following the Decennial Census. These codes are widely used for conducting research, planning programs, and informing policy.

Starting with metropolitan and nonmetropolitan designations through the U.S. Office of Management and Budget, the RUUCs provide additional subcategories, resulting in nine classifications.

- 1 = Metro - Counties in metro areas of 1 million population or more
- 2 = Metro - Counties in metro areas of 250,000 to 1 million population
- 3 = Metro - Counties in metro areas of fewer than 250,000 population
- 4 = Nonmetro - Urban population of 20,000 or more, adjacent to a metro area
- 5 = Nonmetro - Urban population of 20,000 or more, not adjacent to a metro area
- 6 = Nonmetro - Urban population of 5,000 to 20,000, adjacent to a metro area
- 7 = Nonmetro - Urban population of 5,000 to 20,000, not adjacent to a metro area
- 8 = Nonmetro - Urban population of fewer than 5,000, adjacent to a metro area
- 9 = Nonmetro - Urban population of fewer than 5,000, not adjacent to a metro area

For comparisons between the 2023 and 2013 versions of the RUUCs, it is important to note changes that were implemented to what is considered an urban area by the Census Bureau for 2020 data. The minimum threshold was changed from 2,500 to 5,000 persons.

To learn more about the RUUCs, view a map, and access the data (available in an Excel file), visit <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/rural-urban-continuum-codes/documentation/>.

SRDC Repository: Recent Readership Snapshot

In 2023, the Southern Rural Development Center partnered with the Mississippi State University Libraries System, through Scholar's Junction to host an archival system. Through this site, viewers can locate, download, and share annual reports and articles from the SRDC Special Topics Series. The system also includes a dashboard that tracks views and downloads of the posted content. In the latest metrics report,

Heirs' Property had **39** full-text downloads.

The most popular downloaded articles were:

- [Black land: Research note on the heirs' property to poverty pipeline in Louisiana](#) and
- [How Much Heirs' Property Is There? Using LightBox Data to Estimate Heirs' Property Extent in the U.S.](#)

Coming Together for Racial Understanding had **25** full-text downloads.

The most popular downloads were:

- [How Facilitating Dialogues on Race is Fostering Systemic Change in Cooperative Extension](#) and
- [Leading the Way: The Importance of Leadership in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Work](#)

To read more articles from these and other critical issue areas in the SRDC Special Topics Collection, visit <https://scholarsjunction.msstate.edu/srdc/>

Regional Spotlight

Transforming Rural Futures: A Placemaking Partnership



Rural placemaking is a strategic solution to address persistent challenges faced by rural communities. It fosters community engagement, enhances the physical environment, and cultivates a sense of identity. By investing in placemaking, we tackle the multifaceted issues of rural decline, transforming these areas into thriving, attractive spaces. This approach not only contributes to local economic development but also ensures that rural communities become appealing places to live, work, and visit, thereby securing a sustainable and vibrant future for residents.

In a groundbreaking collaboration, the Community & Economic Development Initiative of Kentucky (CEDIK) joined forces with the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development (USDA-RD) to pioneer a transformative placemaking initiative. Specifically, CEDIK created a digital toolkit and hosted two national virtual conferences to empower rural leaders in cultivating vibrant and livable communities through placemaking.

This cooperative agreement launched the interactive [Rural America Placemaking Toolkit](#). This resource empowers rural leaders nationwide to assess their community's readiness for placemaking activities and replicate successful projects. Whether you aspire to host community conversations, or engage in cultural and community assessments, the toolkit provides relevant processes for community leaders interested in placemaking efforts.

The virtual placemaking workshop, with approximately 1500 participants in 2022 and 900 in 2023 from all corners of the country, provided a platform for interactive learning, collaboration, and engagement. The Under-Secretary of Rural Development emphasized the importance of investing in physical, digital, and social infrastructure to fortify successful rural communities. Popular sessions explored themes such as the value of rural restaurants, community revitalization, rural partnerships, and equity considerations. CEDIK staff are currently planning the next conference that will be held in Summer 2024.

This joint effort between CEDIK and USDA-RD represents a collaboration fostering rural prosperity. The Rural America Placemaking Toolkit serves as an ongoing valuable resource, equipping rural leaders with insights, case studies, and resources relevant to their communities. Hosting the conference online helped remove barriers to participation and allowed us to reach broader rural audiences. This innovative partnership sets a precedent for collaborations empowering rural communities, aligning with the goal of building robust, lively, and resilient rural futures. Learn more at www.ruralplacemaking.com.

Job Opportunities

Extension Volunteerism Specialist, University of Tennessee

The University of Tennessee (UT) Extension seeks candidates for the Extension Volunteerism Specialist position. This position will provide leadership in building system capacity within UT Extension to effectively engage and support volunteers. The specialist will conduct, facilitate, and disseminate research related to emerging and contemporary issues affecting volunteerism and volunteer management. Collaborating with specialists and agents, the specialist will develop and implement strategies to attract, develop, and retain an appropriately diverse group of volunteers who will be demographically reflective of the communities they serve.

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Program Development Specialist, University of Georgia Extension

The University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (CAES) seeks a dynamic and innovative professional to provide statewide support and coordination for the University of Georgia Extension program development functions. This is a full-time Faculty appointment. This position supports more than 1000 full-time and part-time faculty and staff members across Georgia and is responsible for overseeing all aspects of the Extension Program Development process and developing a robust training system for the entire organization. The position reports to the Director for the Office of Learning and Organizational Development. The preferred home-base is in Athens, Georgia, however, there is potential to house the position at one of the district Extension offices in either Statesboro, Tifton, or Griffin Georgia. All applications submitted in UGA jobs by March 17 will receive full consideration, however, it will remain open until filled. Please contact Dr. Kristi Farner, Search Committee Chair, kfarner@uga.edu or 770-598-4798 with questions. To apply, visit <https://www.ugajobsearch.com/postings/360018>

Postdoctoral Fellow/Research Associate – Decision-Making & Team Science, Auburn University

The Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology at Auburn University is accepting applications for a postdoctoral fellowship. The anticipated start date is April 15, 2024, for an initial period of 24 months with a possibility of extension depending on the availability of funding. This is a benefit eligible, non-tenure track position. They seek an energetic and motivated postdoctoral fellow/research associate to conduct innovative socioeconomic research for a project titled, Socio-Agroclimatology: Farm Security, Equity, and Sustainability. The minimum qualifications include an earned Ph.D. in any of the following or closely allied fields at the time employment begins: agricultural economics, environmental economics, environmental studies, science, and technology studies, economic or cultural geography, sociology, or rural sociology. Prior research in agrifood systems studies, as well as the science of team science, transdisciplinary, and convergence is highly desired. Experience working with data in Excel is also desired. The individual selected for the position must have a valid driver's license and be able to drive and work independently. In addition, the candidates must be able to meet eligibility requirements for work in the United States by the start date and continue working legally for the proposed term of employment. Applicants must complete an online application process at the following link: <https://www.auemployment.com/postings/42639> and attach the following: 1) Cover letter stating research interests and experience, 2) current curriculum vita, 3) recent research paper, and 4) copies of academic transcripts. When prompted, please provide names, phone numbers, and email addresses of three professional references. Only complete application materials will be considered. Review of the applications will begin February 1, 2024, and continue until the position is filled. Salary will be commensurate with education and experience. For questions regarding the position, please contact Dr. Worosz at mrw0016@auburn.edu or Dr. Sawadgo at wendiam@auburn.edu. To learn more, visit the [Postdoctoral Fellow/Research Associate pdf](#).

Extension Leadership Specialist, University of Georgia Extension

The University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (CAES) seeks a dynamic and innovative professional for the position of Extension Leadership Specialist with primary responsibilities in leading the national faculty leadership development program, LEAD21, which is sponsored by the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities (APLU) and administered through a contract with the University of Georgia. This is a full-time Faculty appointment home-based in Athens, Georgia. The position reports to the Director for the Office of Learning and Organizational Development.

Applications received by Dec. 15, will be assured full consideration, but the position is open until filled. Applicants must submit their application via the UGAJobs website (<https://www.ugajobsearch.com/postings/349481>) and will require the following documentation: (1) a letter of application; (2) curriculum vitae; and (3) contact information for three letters of reference. Please contact Michael Toews, Search Committee Chair, mtoews@uga.edu with questions.

Assistant Professor & Extension Specialist in Tourism Economic Development, Auburn University

Auburn University is seeking a 12-month tenure track assistant professor and Extension specialist to provide statewide leadership in tourism economic development. This position is housed within the Horst Schulze School of Hospitality Management at Auburn University in the College of Human Sciences. This position is designed to assist the College of Human Sciences and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System in developing the state's full economic tourism potential. The selected applicant will provide strategic and inclusive leadership in tourism economic development in the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. Required qualifications include an earned doctorate in Hospitality and Tourism Management, Tourism Economics, Sustainable Tourism Development, Outdoor Recreation, Natural Resources, Economic Development, or a related field when employment begins.

Applicants should also have evidence of, or strong promise in, building a record or scholarship, grantsmanship, and multi-disciplinary collaborations. The candidate selected for this position must also be able to meet eligibility requirements to work in the United States when the appointment is scheduled to begin and continue working legally for the proposed term of employment.

Apply online using the link: <https://www.auemployment.com/postings/40771>. Provide application letter, complete CV, transcripts from all universities attended, research and educational interests, and three (3) professional references (names, email addresses, and phone numbers). For more information about the position, contact Dr. Alecia Douglas, Ph.D., Chair- Search Committee, at acd0011@auburn.edu.

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. To learn more and apply, visit <https://fvsu.applicantpro.com/jobs/2568591>.

Conferences, Workshops, Trainings

National Extension Climate Initiative (NECI) Connecting Climate to Communities Webinar Series

NECI is hosting a free webinar series featuring 17 outreach perspectives for engaging different communities in addressing climate. The goal is to share resources, stories, methods, and tools from across the U.S. for re-use locally.

February 28: YOUTH & Climate, [REGISTER](#)

March 27: STORYTELLING & Climate, [REGISTER](#)

April 24: DIY–Self-Guided Climate Instruction, [REGISTER](#)

May 22: COMMUNITIES & Climate, [REGISTER](#)

June 26: AGING & Climate, [REGISTER](#)

2024 Heirs' Property and the Racial Wealth Gap: The Initiative on Land, Housing, & Property Rights Conference

In-person or Virtual Option: March 21-22, 2024, Boston College Law School, Newton Centre, Massachusetts

The Heirs' Property and the Racial Wealth Gap Conference will feature panels addressing many heirs' property issues, including partition law abuse, property tax foreclosure, clear title/tangled title matters, and racial will-making gaps.

[LEARN MORE & REGISTER](#)

2024 Association of 1890 Research Directors (ARD) Research Symposium

In-person: April 6-9, 2024, Gaylord Opryland Hotel, Nashville, Tennessee

Save the date for the 2024 Association of 1890 Research Directors (ARD) Research Symposium.

Theme: Climate, Health, and Cultivating the Next Generation of Agriculture Leaders: Creating Solutions in Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources.

[LEARN MORE & REGISTER](#)

2024 Joint Council of Extension Professionals (JCEP) Public Issues Leadership Development (PILD) Conference

In-person: April 15-17, 2024, Hyatt Regency Crystal City at Reagan National Airport, Arlington, Virginia

The Joint Council of Extension Professionals' Public Issues Leadership Development (PILD) Conference brings together Extension professionals, elected officials, and volunteers to learn how to communicate Extension's value, increase understanding of our federal partnerships, and build experience and confidence in engaging with elected leaders. PILD is open to all Extension professionals in 1862, 1890, and 1994 institutions and invites proposals from a wide array of disciplines that reflect the themes of the conference. Mission: Enhance education and advocacy skills to positively affect federal, state, and local resources available for Cooperative Extension.

[LEARN MORE & REGISTER](#)

2024 National Extension Technology Community (NETC) Conference

In-person: May 13-16, 2024, State College, Pennsylvania

Save the date for the 2024 National Extension Technology Community (NETC) Conference to innovate, educate, and connect NETC Style, with a unique Nittany Lion flavor. In early January, the NETC will share logistics including hotel blocks and airport considerations, a "Call for Proposals," and registration. The NETC website, conference tools, and services will be online early January. If you have conference-related questions, please contact NETC2024@psu.edu.

2024 National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals (NACDEP) Conference

In-Person: June 17-20, 2024, Marriott Marquis Houston, Houston, Texas

Save the date for the 2024 National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals (NACDEP) conference.

[LEARN MORE](#)

2024 Community Development Society (CDS) Creating Capacity for Resilient Communities Conference

In-Person: July 14-17, Omaha, Nebraska

Save the date for the 2024 annual Community Development Society (CDS) Conference.

[LEARN MORE](#)

2024 Rural Sociological Society (RSS) Conference

In-Person: July 24-28, Madison, Wisconsin. Proposal Deadline: March 1, 2024

The 86th meeting of the RSS will explore the theme “Reconceptualizing Rurality: Toward a More Diverse and Inclusive Understanding.” Abstract submissions for individual papers, posters, and special organized sessions are being considered! Submissions that are relevant to the symposium theme are encouraged, as are those that focus on rural life and livelihoods, demography, community structures and economies, technologies, environmental conditions, agriculture and food systems, or other sociological knowledge of rural communities.

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