



Items of Interest

SRDC 50th Anniversary Website



The Regional Rural Development Centers were established under the Rural Development Act of 1972, and the Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC) was operational in 1974, with the first plan of work approved that spring. The SRDC is excited to celebrate our 50th anniversary of “serving the south since 1974.”

We welcome you to view highlights of our history through publications and milestones via our website.

To view, visit <https://srdc.msstate.edu/50th-anniversary>.

National Agritourism Survey Seeking Input from Farms that Welcome Visitors

The 2024 National Agritourism Survey is now collecting responses, and you are invited to participate! All agricultural operations that welcome visitors – whether for on-farm education, direct sales, entertainment, recreation, special events, and more – are invited to complete the survey. Your insights are crucial if you have or offer any of the following on your farm: a farmstand, a petting zoo, education or rent event space, pick-your-own, farm stays, or other on-farm experiences.

By participating in this survey, you will help pinpoint the types of support farmers like you require – whether it is business assistance, developing networks, applying for grants, or navigating zoning and liability issues. The goal is to help build the resources needed, improve access to critical information and opportunities, and shape policy decisions that impact industry.

This survey is part of a collaborative project led by Penn State with the University of Vermont, Oklahoma State University, the University of Maine, Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development, and other partners across the country. The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Your insights are invaluable to all collaborators and sincerely appreciate your willingness to participate.

To participate in the survey, please visit: [National Agritourism Support System Survey](#). If you have any questions about the survey, please contact Claudia Schmidt, Penn State Extension, at cschmidt@psu.edu.

Webinars:

Regional Spotlight

Kentucky State University: Expungement Success Story



Expungement-101, Starting a New Chapter, is a grant funded program led by Irma Johnson, a state specialist for Family Assets and Community Engagement, with the Community Resource and Development Office at Kentucky State University. It assists individuals with non-violent criminal records to understand the process of expungement, provides legal and financial support in paying fees associated with sealing those records, offers workshops to enhance stable employment, and provides other entrepreneurial opportunities for success.

Over 85% of the 1.65 million Kentuckians with a criminal record are eligible for expungement of their Class D or misdemeanor offenses, but most cannot afford to pay the expungement fees and attorney costs. Expungement protects your privacy and can allow participants the opportunity to take advantage of job, school, housing, voting rights, and other opportunities once closed because of an old, minor arrest or conviction being part of an individual's public record. Due to the expenses associated with expungement, including attorney fees as high as \$2500 and expungement fees averaging around \$600, many Kentuckians with criminal records cannot afford to pay the expenses associated with the expungement process. This project is funded by a grant from the Kentucky Bar Foundation and covers all expungement fees and attorney fees, so eligible participants can have two misdemeanors, or one felony charge expunged from their records at no cost to them.

Expungement-101 features a 60-minute expungement clinic led by an attorney from the Department of Public Advocacy along with seven attorneys, two paralegals from the Kentucky Innocence Project, and a representative from the Kentucky Department of Corrections. This partnership is important because participants not only learn about the expungement process but also the state statutes that must be followed in the process.

A total of seventy-nine participants from nine Kentucky counties participated in two expungement clinics in the fall of 2023 and the spring of 2024. After the 60-minute presentation with an open question-and-answer session, participants had a one-on-one meeting with an attorney to determine eligibility for the next step in the expungement process. While participants waited for their expungement eligibility to be determined, they were encouraged to select two or more workshops to attend from the following list: Basic Workplace Employability Skills, Entrepreneurial Opportunities, Negotiation and Conflict Resolution, Introductory Business Communication, Goal Setting and Attitude, Leadership and Ethics, Renting vs. Buying a Home, and Basic Personal Finances. Ten applicants signed up for at least two workshops.

Forty-six of the seventy-nine participants were eligible for expungements, and seven were eligible for a full dismissal of charges. The average expungement usually takes three to six months to complete in Kentucky, with more complicated cases taking as long as a year to process due to court hearings and attorney schedules.

Expungement-101, Starting a New Chapter changed the lives of over fifty-three individuals. Special thanks to the Kentucky Bar Foundation.

Staff Spotlight: Irma Johnson, State Specialist for Family Assets & Community Engagement, Kentucky State University



Irma Johnson is the state specialist for family assets and community engagement in the office of Community Resource and Development at Kentucky State University (KYSU). She provides educational resources for extension personnel, teachers, farmers, and students from KYSU and the regional extension network. The programming includes a comprehensive financial literacy education and estate planning program designed to help inform the financial decisions and generational success that supports the overall community base. She also conducts regional training on heirs' property issues in the commonwealth and hosts expungement clinics, home ownership workshops, and civic engagement programs. As a part-time realtor for over twenty years, she has knowledge of the financial benefits associated with home ownership, resolving title issues, and managing personal assets.

She is currently the principal investigator for two grants: *Expungement-101, Starting a New Chapter* funded by the Kentucky Bar Foundation, and *Navigating Kentucky's Heirs Property Training on a Regional Level* funded by Alcorn State University. Irma Johnson has served Kentucky's families and children in many roles over the last thirty years as a public-school teacher, a regional stewardship director, a realtor, the director of the Center of Excellence for the Study of Kentucky African Americans (CESKAA), and a member of over ten non-profit boards in the Frankfort community.

Grant Connections

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

WASHINGTON, April 4, 2024

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development Under Secretary Dr. Basil Gooden today 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. USDA is particularly interested in applications that will advance Biden-Harris Administration priorities to:

- Reduce climate pollution and increase resilience to the impacts of climate change through economic support to rural communities.
- Ensure all rural residents have equitable access to Rural Development (RD) programs and benefits from RD-funded projects; and
- Help rural communities recover economically through more and better market opportunities and through improved infrastructure.

To learn more, read the full [STAKEHOLDER ANNOUNCEMENT](#).

Job Opportunities

Associate Director, Alabama Cooperative Extension System, Auburn University

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES) is seeking an outstanding leader for the position of Associate Director. This is a full-time administrative position based in Auburn, Alabama. The appointment can be considered, as appropriate, as a tenure-track position for the selected candidate. The incumbent will provide statewide leadership, in collaboration with the Associate Director of Alabama A&M University, to county Extension offices in Alabama to facilitate coordinated operations among seven Extension Districts, personnel development, enhanced extramural support, and strategic partnerships. The Associate Director reports to the Director of ACES on the Auburn University campus. The Director is organizationally responsible for all facets of the system, while the Associate Director is responsible programmatically for day-to-day operational functions of county operations.

Required qualifications include an earned doctorate from an accredited institution in a field related to programs within ACES or related and academic credentials commensurate with Professor rank. **Applications may be accepted until the position is filled. However, to receive full consideration, applications should be received by March 31, 2024.** Please contact Dr. Becky Barlow, Search Committee Chair, Associate Dean and Assistant Director for Agriculture, Forestry, and Natural Resources, rjb0003@aces.edu with questions. To learn more and apply, visit <https://www.auemployment.com/postings/43857>.

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.

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

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

June 26: AGING & Climate, [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

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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