



Items of Interest



A Letter from the Director: Happy Holidays from the Southern Rural Development Center

I want to share holiday greetings on behalf of the Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC). With the hustle and bustle of the holiday season, it is easy to get so busy that we forget to recognize all that we are thankful for in this world. The South is a wonderfully diverse region, and if we take the time to look around this time of year, it is readily apparent. This can be a great strength, if we come together intentionally, not in spite of our differences but rather because of them, and if we celebrate what everyone brings to the table. The SRDC seeks to embrace and nurture this potential by helping to build capacity across the Land-Grant System to enhance the quality of life in rural communities. Through engagement with our wide network of partners collaborating across boundaries, we can turn hope for a brighter future into reality.

In Peace,
John J. Green, Director

Webinars:

Date Changes:
Webinar to be held
Winter/Spring 2025:
Who Will Fill My Shoes:
Succession Planning for
Land Owners and Family
Businesses

Dates of Webinar (5-Part Series):

- **Module 1: January 22**
- **Module 3: January 29***
- **Module 2: February 5***
- **Module 4: February 12**
- **Module 5: February 19**

*Please note modules 2 & 3 presentation dates have been interchanged and will be presented on the dates indicated above.

Time of Webinars:

**2:00PM ET/1:00 PM CT/12:00 PM
MT/11:00 AM PT**

To register for the webinars,
please visit:
https://msudafvm.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2aRrKSK3aF7ad76

*For disability accommodation,
please contact Roseanne
Scammahorn at
r.scammahorn@msstate.edu or
662-325-5885.*

Southern Rural Sociological Association (SRSA): Call for 2025 Award Nominations and Outstanding Student and Professional Paper Awards

SRSA Awards for Teaching, Research, Extension, and Public Service

Nominations are currently being sought for the 2025 Awards. The awards for Excellence in Teaching, Excellence in Research, and Excellence in Extension/Outreach recognize SRSA members, while the award for Excellence in Public Service may be presented to a SRSA member or non-member. For questions or concerns contact: Awards Committee Chair/SRSA President-Elect Russ Garner russ.garner@communitiesu.org. [Award submission portal](#)

Outstanding Student and Professional Paper Awards

Graduate and undergraduate students are encouraged to submit their work for the Outstanding Student Paper Award (\$). Professional members are encouraged to submit their work to the Professional Paper Award. Upload an abstract and completed paper via the [award submission portal here](#) for full consideration.

Requirements for both awards categories can be found here:

https://www.southernruralsociology.org/files/ugd/ee2f24_68e7cf617c58430aa9a35dca17d949b1.pdf

Award nominations and Papers must be submitted by January 21, 2025.

Date Changes: Webinar to be held Winter/Spring 2025: Who Will Fill My Shoes: Succession Planning for Land Owners and Family Businesses

Dates of Webinar (5-Part Series):

- **Module 1: January 22**
- **Module 3: January 29***
- **Module 2: February 5***
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Not knowing where to start in succession planning is often paralyzing. In *Who Will Fill My Shoes: Succession Planning for Land Owners, Farmers, Forest Owners, and Family Businesses*, participants will learn about the following components of succession planning:

- **M1: Communication and Conflict in Succession**
- **M2: Key Players in Succession: Who Should Be Involved?**
- **M3: Legal and Business Structures**
- **M4: Road mapping and Goals in Succession: Who, When and How to Transfer?**
- **M5: Meeting Planning and Coordination for Succession**

Succession planning encompasses many emotional and financial aspects of a family and a business, making decisions and moving forward more difficult. This research-based curriculum with integrated and comprehensive handouts will give participants the confidence they need to learn strategies for moving succession forward with their property or business. Both soft and hard skills are covered in the materials and will empower owners to develop and implement their succession plan.

For disability accommodation, please contact Roseanne Scammahorn at r.scammahorn@msstate.edu or 662-325-5885.

Regional Spotlight

Entrepreneurship as a Pathway to Economic Mobility



Jon Jacobson, Urban Regional Extension Agent, community partners, and participants from this summer's cohort.

A four-way partnership between Alabama Extension at Alabama A&M University, ELI Thrive, The Salvation Army, and Operation Hope has created 82 small businesses.

Since 2022, the Birmingham Community Incubator (BCI) has graduated eight cohorts of participants from traditionally underserved communities. Eighty black females and two black males have graduated from the eight-week program that helps them transform ideas, hobbies, and side hustles into legally recognized small businesses. The BCI is now being used as a model for statewide impact through entrepreneurship education. Graduates of the program are now a part of the BCI Directory, serving as mentors and coaches for aspiring entrepreneurs before they are accepted into the BCI program. Enter the Upward Alabama Project, a USDA-funded capacity project designed to address the barriers, challenges, and service gaps perpetuating economic inequities in Birmingham, Huntsville, Mobile, and Montgomery, AL.

The landscape of economic opportunity is starkly defined by the harsh reality that only about 5.2 percent of impoverished individuals will achieve a high status of wealth during their lifetime. This statistic underscores an urgent need for innovative solutions to combat poverty and foster economic mobility. The World Bank has long emphasized that the most effective route out of poverty is through steady employment and rising wages, making the quest for sustainable job creation critical. Alabama

Extension at Alabama A&M University is tackling the barriers to economic mobility and workforce participation statistics through a collaborative approach.

The initial phase has focused on gathering data from targeted communities to identify the barriers, challenges, and service gaps perpetuating economic inequities. This foundational research informs the development of our Go-Getter Entrepreneurship pathway, which aims to empower individuals through entrepreneurship education.

As participants engage in the Go-Getter program, they will gain the knowledge and tools necessary for financial independence and contribute to a more vibrant local economy. The program's collaborative nature allows community partners to play a vital role in supporting cohort participants, creating a network of resources that can lead to lasting change.

In communities where economic mobility can often feel out of reach, the Upward Alabama Project stands as a beacon of hope. By harnessing the power of entrepreneurship and providing holistic resources, we are paving the way for a brighter future for all Alabamians. As we work together to identify and dismantle the barriers to economic success, we can create a culture of empowerment that enhances individual lives and strengthens our communities.

Job Opportunities

Current Job Opportunities at the Community and Economic Development Unit of Prairie View A&M University Extension

The Community and Economic Development Department (CED) at Prairie View A&M University in Texas is dedicated to supporting limited resource families and individuals in achieving a higher standard of living through various means, such as small business development, youth entrepreneurship, community program involvement, home ownership, government assistance programs, non-profit assistance, and workforce development. Our team of professionals is ready to offer consultation and technical assistance to entrepreneurs and community organizations who wish to start or expand their operations. To learn more about the CED at PVAMU please visit <https://www.pvamu.edu/cafnr/extension/community-and-economic-development/>.

CED Extension Agent positions are available in the following counties: Atacosa, Chambers, and others. To learn more about these and other positions visit the Prairie View A&M University job postings web page: https://tamus.wd1.myworkdayjobs.com/en-US/PVAMU_External?q=CED

Conferences, Workshops, Trainings

Spring 2025 Rural Grocery Transition Specialist Course

Virtual: January 27 – April 27, 2025

Helping rural grocers navigate business transitions is vital for maintaining the essential services and community benefits they provide. The Kansas State University Rural Grocery Transition Specialist program trains resource professionals to better support rural grocery stores through these transitions. Registration is now open for the 2025 course, running from January 27 to April 27. This program is designed for Extension professionals, economic developers, and other resource providers who work with rural grocers and promote the vitality of rural communities.

Registration closes on January 20, 2025.

[LEARN MORE AND REGISTER](#)

2025 Southern Rural Sociological Association (SRSA) Conference

In-Person: February 2-3, 2025, The Westin Irving Convention Center at Las Colinas, Irving, Texas

[LEARN MORE AND REGISTER](#)

2025 Extension Leadership Conference (ELC)

In-Person: February 19-20, 2025, Savannah, Georgia

[LEARN MORE AND REGISTER](#)

2025 Public Issues Leadership Development Conference (PILD)

In-Person: April 7-8, 2025, Arlington, Virginia

Save the date and the location of the 2025 PILD Conference.

[LEARN MORE AND REGISTER](#)

2025 National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals (NACDEP) Conference

In-Person: June 9-12, 2025, Charleston, West Virginia

Join the West Virginia State University Extension Service and West Virginia Extension Service in Charleston for the 2025 NACDEP Conference: Country Roads, Connecting the Farm to the Country. More details to come.

2025 Community Development Society (CDS) Conference

In-Person: July 6-9, 2025, Geneva, New York

The conference theme is *Innovative Pathways to Thriving Communities: People, Technology, and Place-based Collaboration*.

[LEARN MORE AND SUBMIT AN ABSTRACT](#)

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