



Items of Interest

NCHEMS and Ascendium Partner to Strengthen Rural Development Through Cooperative Extension



NCHEMS is awarding grants to organizations actively working on projects that align with one of the three framework elements: Connected Convener, Teaching and Learning, and Applied Analysis. These partnerships will support innovative, community-based solutions to connect more residents in rural areas with the resources they need to thrive.

The Southern Regional Development Center, housed at Mississippi State University, was selected for its project, National Extension Community Development Foundations of Practice. This project will equip Extension Community Development practitioners with core competency training to enhance their capacity to lead and engage community stakeholders in community and economic development efforts nationwide.

To learn more about SRDC's project and how NCHEMS and Ascendium seek to strengthen rural development through Cooperative Extension, please visit <https://nchems.org/nchems-and-ascendium-partner-to-strengthen-rural-development-through-cooperative-extension/>

The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems ([NCHEMS](#)) has announced the five organizations and projects it will be supporting this year which includes the **Southern Rural Development Center**.

NCHEMS was awarded a multi-year grant from the Ascendium Education Group to support this work. With this support, a conceptual framework was developed to assess and enhance the role of Extension in community, economic, and workforce development. To continue building on this work,

Webinars:

Upcoming INRPHA Webinar:

Associations between Behavior-Opportunity Gaps and Dementia Risk: Leveraging Data from a Large Longitudinal Study of Aging

**Friday, May 9, 2025
at 12 noon - 1 pm (Central)**

Presenter: Olivia E. Atherton, PhD, Department of Psychology, University of California Riverside

Register to receive the Zoom Link:

<https://msstateextension.zoom.us/joining/register/tsLhcXEATiDvNIQ0p1jPQ>

For accommodations, please contact John Green at jjg8@msstate.edu or 662-325-0595.

Atherton's research was funded in part by the Interdisciplinary Network on Rural Population Health and Aging (NIA grant R24-AG065159) and is currently funded by an R21 from the National Institute on Aging (R21AG088948).

This webinar is being offered by the Interdisciplinary Network on Rural Population Health and Aging (NIA grant 1R24AG089064-01).

Groundbreaking Survey Conducted Across Three Major U.S. Regions Sheds Light on Household and Community Well-Being

Three Regional Rural Development Centers (RRDC) — the [North Central Regional Center for Rural Development](#), the [Southern Rural Development Center](#), and the [Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development](#) — have published open access data from their groundbreaking, multi-region Baseline Survey 2024. This valuable data establishes an important baseline for future research and can inform policy decisions, community development strategies, and targeted interventions to address regional challenges and opportunities.

Learn more and access links to data at <https://bit.ly/4k9NBGr>

Later this year, the Western Rural Development Center will conduct the same survey. When completed, the Baseline Survey 2024 open-access data will be available for the entire United States!

Upcoming webinar on multi-region household surveys:

Join us May 9, 2025, at 2:00 pm (CT)/3:00 pm (ET) to explore key findings from the NCR-Stat, SR-Stat, and NER-Stat Baseline 2024 survey data with the survey's developers.


Information and registration: <https://bit.ly/425plsa>




Regional Pulse: Insights from the 2024 Multi-Region Household Surveys


Join us for a presentation on the groundbreaking 2024 baseline household surveys conducted across three major U.S. regions that cover essential topics related to household, business, and community well-being. This webinar will explore key findings from the NCR-Stat, NER-Stat, and SR-Stat surveys — comprehensive open access data initiatives developed by the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development in collaboration with the Southern Rural Development Center and Auburn University.

Presenters:

- Maria I. Marshall, Director, North Central Regional Center for Rural Development (NCRCRD); Professor & James and Lois Ackerman Endowed Chair in Agricultural Economics, Purdue University
- Zuzana Bednarik, Research and Extension Specialist, NCRCRD, Purdue University
- John J. Green, Director, Southern Rural Development Center; Professor, Dept. of Agricultural Economics, Mississippi State University






**NORTH CENTRAL
REGIONAL CENTER
FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

*Purdue University is an
Equal Opportunity/
Equal Access University.*



WEBINAR • MAY 9, 2025 • 3:00 PM (ET)

REGISTER: <https://bit.ly/425plsa>

Insights on Agritourism Among US Producers: Evidence from the 2024 National Agritourism Producer Survey

This report presents findings from the 2024 National Agritourism Producer Survey. The survey questionnaire was developed by researchers from Penn State, the University of Maine, the University of Vermont, and Oklahoma State University. This survey is part of a larger project aimed at defining and enhancing the agritourism support system in the United States. The primary objective of conducting this survey was to identify areas where targeted interventions and programs can support agritourism development across the country. To access the report, please visit:

<https://nercrd.psu.edu/pubs/findings-from-the-2024-national-agritourism-producer-survey/>



SRDC Repository Readership Snapshot Update

In March 2025, the Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC) Repository collection had a total of **226 downloads from 34 different institutions in 20 different countries.**

The repository is hosted on Mississippi State University Library's platform, Scholars Junction, which allows users to explore published content from the SRDC and its partners. [View the SRDC's repository.](#)

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Growing Opportunities for Farmers at the Black Belt Marketing and Innovation Center



Kristin Woods of Tuskegee University Extension demonstrates to tour participants how the inline washing conveyor operates and answers questions.

Tuskegee University's [Black Belt Marketing and Innovation Center \(BBMIC\)](#) in Selma, Alabama has undergone extensive transformation in recent years to become a produce research facility, aggregation center, and processing incubator for the Dallas County region. After a break during pandemic years, the facility began processing again in 2024. Processing helps local farmers, as well as buyers in retail and wholesale markets provide important outlets for small- and medium-scale farmers to sell their products and reach consumers. The BBMIC is fully equipped with an inline washing conveyor, sorting tables, grading tables, pea shellers, greens spinner, and vacuum packaging equipment. But the most critical need fulfilled by the BBMIC for farmers may be its cold storage capacity, since cold storage is vital for

extending the shelf life of saleable product and reducing waste. The BBMIC is one of only a few facilities in the state that provides the equipment and training necessary to increase economic opportunities for agricultural producers who face barriers to accessing markets. This increases the availability of fresh produce for Black Belt families, who can access BBMIC-processed produce via wholesale distribution, direct home delivery to the elderly, two food banks, three farmers markets, and one church.

The BBMIC prioritizes education and research to benefit small-scale, underserved farmers in the Alabama Black Belt. As a result, the farmers, community members, and interns who engage in processing fruits and vegetables receive training on related topics, including good manufacturing practices and general food safety and hygiene for food handling. The BBMIC also serves as an event space for gatherings such as the 2nd Annual Black Belt Food Systems Alliance Meeting held in December, where farmers had an opportunity to connect with available resources for scaling up their farms and discuss their vision for a strong Black Belt food system that is financially viable for producers. In 2024, 271 individuals attended 63 events at the Center. Tuskegee University's BBMIC has the potential to become a major research, education, and Extension hub, and is engaged in ongoing initiatives and infrastructure improvements to achieve this vision. You can read more about the work of the BBMIC at <https://conservegroup.wordpress.com/2025/03/31/growing-opportunities-for-farmers-at-the-black-belt-marketing-and-innovation-center/>.

Job Opportunities

Black Belt Food Corridor Coordinator, Tuskegee University

The Black Belt Food Corridor Coordinator is a full-time role focused on enhancing economic opportunities for local farmers and small businesses in Alabama's Black Belt. The coordinator will promote farm-fresh ingredients and sustainable farming practices while facilitating connections between farmers, processors, and consumers, thereby increasing access to nutritious local products. Based at the Black Belt Marketing Innovation Center in Selma, the Coordinator will engage in research, education, and extension activities, manage equipment, conduct tours, and implement social media strategies. The role includes collaborating with various stakeholders, supervising students and interns, organizing workshops, and evaluating program impacts. A bachelor's degree in relevant fields and two years of experience in food processing are required. Ideal candidates will possess industry certifications related to food safety and sustainable practices, alongside strong problem-solving and teamwork skills.

Access the job posting at <https://tuskegee.peopleadmin.com/postings/2728>

Extension Program Associate-Economic Analyst, University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture

The [University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture](https://uasys.wd5.myworkdayjobs.com/en-US/UASYS/details/Program-Associate---Economic-Analysis_R0058437) seeks to hire an Extension Program Associate-Economic Analysis. This position is responsible for collecting, organizing, analyzing, and presenting social and economic data to assess economic value, impacts, and opportunities in Arkansas and other regions. To learn more or apply, visit https://uasys.wd5.myworkdayjobs.com/en-US/UASYS/details/Program-Associate---Economic-Analysis_R0058437.

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.

CED Extension Agent positions are still currently available. To learn more about the available positions [visit the Prairie View A&M University job postings web page](#).

Conferences, Workshops, Trainings

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

In-Person: June 9-12, 2025, The Embassy Suites, 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.

[REGISTER FOR THE CONFERENCE](#)

2025 Community Development Society (CDS) Conference

In-Person: July 6-9, 2025, Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Geneva, New York

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

[REGISTER FOR THE CONFERENCE](#)

2025 Rural Sociological Society (RSS) Annual Meeting

In-Person: July 30 – August 2, 2025, Hilton Salt Lake City Center, Salt Lake City, Utah

Theme: *Nourishing the Future of Rural Sociology: Using Sociological Insights and Interventions to Secure Our Legacy*.

[VIEW ANNUAL MEETING INFORMATION](#)

2025 Epsilon Sigma Phi (ESP) National Conference

In-Person: October 6-9, 2025, Sheraton Fort Worth Downtown, Fort Worth, Texas

[ACCESS CONFERENCE INFORMATION](#)

2025 NETtra Conference

In-person: October 7-10, 2025, Mill Falls at the Lake Resort, Meredith, New Hampshire

Tourism is all about making connections – between people, places, cultures, and time. The 2025 NETtra Conference will connect two organizations comprised of tourism researchers, educators, and practitioners in a first-time collaboration between the [Northeast Chapter of the Travel and Tourism Research Association](#) (NETTRA) and the [National Extension Tourism \(NET\) Network](#), hosted by the University of New Hampshire.

[ACCESS CONFERENCE INFORMATION](#)

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