

Southern Rural Development Center

The Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC), created under the authority of the Rural Development Act of 1972 as one of four Regional Rural Development Centers, aims to strengthen the capacity of the South's 30 Land-Grant Institutions to address critical contemporary development issues impacting the well-being of communities.



2025 Priorities and Plan of Work

Priority 1. Enhance Core Capacities:

- Integrate research, education, and outreach to promote collaborative development across institutional and state boundaries;
- Support research and Extension professionals addressing rural issues, including cross-sector collaborations and improvement in community development curricula, particularly for those working in agriculture and natural resources;
- Integrate research and Extension through support for the Southern Region Professional Leadership Network and professional organizations; and
- Coordinate and analyze community development indicators and research outputs.

Priority 2. Develop Pathways to Community Vitality:

- Coordinate multi-state research and education on local and regional food systems and domestic markets;
- Support coordination, research, and training on family land challenges and tangled title issues through multi-state initiatives;
- Expand national and regional digital education and skills initiatives in workforce development, cybersecurity in agriculture, and artificial intelligence;
- Develop curricula for coaching workshops to build collaborative capacity; and
- Engage in life-course and rural health research and emphasize mentorship and training.

Priority 3. Build Strategic Partnerships:

- Mentor emerging leaders, including college students and early-career professionals, through regional rural programs and forums; and
- Conduct research on connections between farming, ranching, and forestry development and community vitality utilizing data analysis, facilitated discussions, and stakeholder engagement, including outreach to agrifood and forestry producers and their associations.

Priority 4. Mobilize Resources Around Emerging Opportunities:

- Provide training and technical assistance for grantsmanship and capacity building with Land-Grant Institutions, regional development authorities, and nonprofit entities;
- Analyze data to inform Extension programming that supports rural economies tied to the outdoor recreation sector; and
- Research and develop curricula addressing community vitality in response to population change and extreme weather.

SRDC Website: <http://srdc.msstate.edu/>



The SRDC is hosted at Mississippi State University.



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