

Southern Rural Development Center

One of four Regional Rural Development Centers established under the Rural Development Act of 1972, the Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC) seeks to strengthen the capacity of the region's 30 Land-Grant Institutions to address rural development issues impacting the well-being of people and communities in the South.



Priority Area 1: Enhance Core Capacities

Goal: Strengthen leadership, mentoring, research, and Extension coordination across the Southern Region to build informed and collaborative networks for community vitality, particularly for those working in agriculture and natural resources.

Leadership Development

- Improve the availability and utilization of research-based knowledge.
- Support opportunities for collaboration across organizational and state lines.

Research & Extension

- Facilitate collaboration between and within Extension professionals and researchers to align community challenges with evidence-based solutions.
- Support regional efforts to identify and address cross-institutional research that strengthens regional capacity and informs policy and practice.

Program Enhancement

- Maintain and expand community development training to include micro-credentials for professional development.
- Partner with other Regional Rural Development Centers on the Stat Baseline Household Survey to collect and analyze regional data that informs programming.

Priority Area 2: Develop Pathways to Community Vitality

Goal: Foster resilient community development by addressing demographic change, digital capital, land ownership, and intergenerational collaboration.

Research & Extension

- Continue and expand research on aging and population change to inform community vitality efforts.
- Advance workforce development including digital skills and literacy in collaboration with community/tech colleges to close technology access gaps across rural and urban communities.
- Broaden heirs' property and tangled title research, outreach, and educational initiatives to include lessons from small towns, suburbs, and urban areas.
- Engage stakeholders such as community residents, nonprofit organizations, and local governments in community planning and development efforts.

Capacity Building & Multigenerational Solutions

- Renew and deliver programs focused on entrepreneurship, marketing, networking, workforce development, and multigenerational partnerships.

- Enhance work on local and regional food systems, helping to strengthen and expand the collaborative network of researchers and Extension professionals.

Priority Area 3: Build Strategic Partnerships

Goal: Expand SRDC's network of partnerships to enhance leadership, research, and programming to address regional challenges.

Collaboration

- Strengthen collaborations with network partners to streamline efforts across shared goals and continue participation in regional capacity-building initiatives.
- Advance community resource indicators to educate Land-Grant administrators and community leaders.

Leadership Development

- Support programs (e.g., Southern Region Program Leadership Network, SR PLN) to cultivate emerging leaders
- Enhance capacity building through structured mentoring of new and emerging leaders to work together across institutions.
- Incorporate leadership into training modules that connect scholars and professionals across regions.
- Pursue research question exchange between Extension professionals and researchers.

Regional Planning

- Leverage the SR PLN subgroup outputs to create a *regional comprehensive plan of work/research* reflecting shared needs and opportunities.

Priority Area 4: Mobilize Resources Around Emerging Opportunities

Goal: Position SRDC to respond proactively to emerging regional and national opportunities through strategic partnerships, resource mobilization, and data-informed action.

Resource Mobilization

- Mobilize and diversify funding sources to support innovative projects and emerging opportunities.
- Partner with other organizations and agencies to expand the role of community development in disaster resilience work.

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

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