

Community Economic Development

Cooperative Extension’s community and economic development programs make rural and urban cities healthy, vital and more livable. These programs address critical issues such as small business development and job creation, housing access, workforce development, digital skills training, business and family financial management, access to housing and health care and developing strong community leaders and civic decision-making. While Extension works across communities of all sizes, the nation’s rural areas are especially in need of community and economic development assistance from Land-grant Universities to reduce population decline and losses of farmers and farmland. Additionally, rural areas are increasingly vulnerable to complex threats such as natural disasters, including drought, flooding, and wildfires. Managing natural resources in rural America is important to maintaining a sustainable food supply, protecting water resources, mitigating the impacts of increased climate variability and improving the personal health and safety of our citizens. Despite these challenges, Extension community development programs remain the least funded and **most** dramatically understaffed across the county. To be successful in obtaining the goals of a Land-grant system roadmap, we must increase the investment in community and economic development programming.

Outcome Goals & Impacts:

- Foster strong growth in small businesses, local economies and residential quality of life by helping rural communities address the trends associated with population loss as well as in-migration.
- Preserve farmland, increase pathways for beginning farmers and ranchers, and enhance opportunities for rural agricultural businesses.
- Increase the vitality of rural communities by providing research-based information that helps them to be more resilient through more informed public policy decisions, economic and business development, public health and environmental quality.
- Improve essential services, especially by enhancing digital skills for more than 100,000 rural residents annually, and cooperating with other agencies to expand access to the 30% of U.S. households that currently have no or limited access to the internet.
- Enhance the ability of rural communities to address natural disasters and reduce disaster-related losses by educating property owners about protecting their property and emergency preparedness.
- Create more livable communities and improve the quality of life in rural America.
- Increase community vitality through research-based Extension strategies that consider local people and places' varying needs



Extension & Research Opportunities:

- **Agricultural Resilience:** Analyze and potentially prevent the loss of farmers and farmland, through science-based technical assistance. Our vast economic databases, can identify land use trends and opportunities for positive programming.
- **Small Business Development and Job Creation:** Support small business development and local entrepreneurship through local business training and counseling.
- **Access to Essential Services:** Facilitate community access to applications and know-how to optimize the use of broadband.
- **Community Leadership:** Empower rural communities and their leaders with training and skill development in public decision making, civic engagement, leadership and conflict resolution.
- **Community Policy-Making:** Provide access to and understanding how to use research-based data sets (U.S. Census, housing, economic and job sends, workforce development and other major sources of information such economic and occupational data found in IMPLAN).
- **Youth Pathways to Careers:** Provide rural youth with opportunities to discover future occupations in agriculture, technology and entrepreneurship which allow them to remain in rural America.

Risk of Not Acting:

Without action, rural America will continue to lose population, farmers, businesses, and workers, as well as farmland, threatening the nation’s long-term supply of food, clothing, and shelter, reducing tacit knowledge about food production. Furthermore, communities across the rural-urban continuum will face instability and the risk of reduced capacity to respond to natural calamities and emergencies, including new pandemics, vector-borne diseases, and a changing environment. Through attention to community and economic development, a more resilient future is possible.