

# PROMOTING ECONOMIC VITALITY

Vibrant, resilient rural economies support a productive, competitive agricultural sector and help position the U.S. as a global economic leader. The RRDCs conduct research to identify successful development strategies and deliver innovative programs and are a trusted source of economic and community development data, decision tools, education, and guidance.

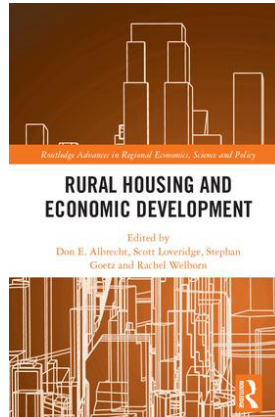


[www.rrdc.info](http://www.rrdc.info)

## Economic Development Research

The RRDCs partner on research projects aimed at helping policy makers better understand and address rural America's economic development problems. Examples of results from these efforts include:

- Book: [Rural Housing and Economic Development](#) (Taylor & Francis, 2017)
- Book: Building Rural Community Resilience Through Innovation and Entrepreneurship (forthcoming, edited by Dr. Charlie French, UNH, who received support from NERCRD for this project)
- [Strengthening Economic Resilience in Appalachia](#) — A technical report and guidebook for practitioners, published by the Appalachian Regional Commission
- [Innovation Issues](#): A series of research briefs based on studies conducted using the USDA's Rural Establishment Innovation Survey



**CREATE BRIDGES** is a pilot program centered on strengthening retail, accommodations, tourism, and entertainment industries which have been notably impacted by COVID-19 and often make up a large portion of the

jobs and businesses that drive rural economies.  
<http://srdc.msstate.edu/createbridges/index.html>

## Rural Workforce Development

- Rural Online Initiative—The RRDC in the West led a Rural Workforce Development Initiative Team in collaboration with Utah State University Extension and two of Utah's county commissioners to secure funding for a three-year pilot program leveraging Extension's well-established infrastructure to serve Utahns in rural communities as they develop skills needed in the growing freelance/independent contractor economy. The pilot program will begin in communities with the highest unemployment rates through public meetings and assessments of local needs/assets; skill-based workshops, one-on-one mentoring, webinars, and other training tools. The program also plans to bring together individuals with complementary skills to increase their earning potential, and offer incentives for businesses contracting with Utah freelancers.  
[https://extension.usu.edu/news\\_sections/impacts/roi](https://extension.usu.edu/news_sections/impacts/roi)
- Ascendium recently funded a collaboration between the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) and the RRDCs to support rural postsecondary education and workforce training. This project will build the capacity for rural communities to address workforce challenges by building and testing a Rural Workforce Engagement Model (RWEM) to be implemented by Cooperative Extension in two (TBD) pilot regions. Ultimately, this work will lead to the facilitation of community-led design of rural career pathways that will meet local workforce needs and the needs of rural people that have limited resources and/ non-traditional learners.

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## Stronger Economies Together (SET)



A seven-year partnership between the RRDCs and USDA Rural Development resulted in over 100 rural regional collaborations. Guiding rural counties through a process of co-creating strategies rather than competing resulted in their ability to leverage \$200 for every \$1 of USDA RD resources invested.

## Rural Broadband Access

### National Digital Education Extension Team

is diligent in fostering rural broadband access and use through four working groups (policy, access, and adoption/utilization).

Recent efforts include the 4-H Tech Changemaker initiative which raises up youth leaders to aid in advancing digital skills in rural communities and collaborating on the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) sponsored conference “Broadband’s Role in Rural Economic Development: Exploring the Intersection between Community and Agricultural Broadband Needs,” which received grant support from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture.



## Tourism and Outdoor Recreation

Vital to many rural places is the importance of tourism and outdoor recreation which can serve as an important economic diversification strategy for rural communities, contributing to their long-term economic well-being. The RRDCs have partnered with the National Extension Tourism (NET) network, which serves as a vehicle for members of Cooperative Extension Service, Sea Grant, and partner organizations to collaborate and share tourism-related research, education, and outreach programming across the U.S.



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Regional Rural Development Centers: [www.rrdc.info](http://www.rrdc.info)