

Stronger Economies Together

Strategies for Building New Economic Opportunities

Stronger Economies Together (SET) represents an exciting initiative launched in 2009 by USDA Rural Development in collaboration with the nation's Regional Rural Development Centers (RRDCs) and their land-grant university partners. The purpose of SET is to strengthen the capacity of communities/counties in rural America to work together in developing and implementing an economic development blueprint that strategically builds on the current and emerging economic strengths of their region.

Here are some of the important elements of the *Stronger Economies Together* program:

- Phase I pilot efforts are in place in 23 multi-county regions located in nine states: Arkansas, Arizona, Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, New Mexico, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia.
- SET is expanding to 11 new states in 2011 as part of Phase II – Alabama, Colorado, Indiana, Michigan, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New York, Texas, Utah, Vermont, and Washington.
- State Partner Teams are bringing the talents and resources of key state and federal agencies, land-grant university Extension programs, and other organizations together to provide training and technical assistance to each of the regional teams.
- Thirty-five (35) hours of SET training will be delivered to each region, a process that is guiding the development of practical and viable regional economic development strategies. Much of this training involves actual hands-on work on the regional plan by team members.
- Economic analyses will be tailored to help capture the region's current or emerging clusters and comparative economic advantages.
- Technical assistance is provided to the regions over a period of several months upon completion of the SET training.
- Experiences and insights will be shared among the regions and the State Partner Teams.
- New states and/or regions are slated to be added to the SET initiative in late 2011 as part of Phase III.

If you want to learn more about this exciting regional effort, contact the following:

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Outline of the Training Program

Module One: A Snapshot of the SET Program

(Time: 1 hour)

- What is SET?
- What it Offers to a Regional Team
- Who's Who? State Partners and Trainers
- Preview of the Training Program

Module Two: Regional Economic Development 101

(Time: 4 hours)

- Exploring a Changing World: Some Major Trends
- Determining the Implications of These Trends
- Comparing Local and Regional Economic Development
- Looking at Regional Development
- Pinpointing What Should Your Region Do?

Module Three: Building a Strong Regional Team

(Time: 3 hours)

- Determining elements of a sound team
- Developing a call to action
- Inviting broad participation
- Creating a succession plan
- Exploring habits of highly effective regional teams

Module Four: Your Regional Vision & Goals

(Time: 4 hours)

- Defining Your Vision
- Determining the Features of a Vision Statement
- Developing a Vision Statement
- Focusing on Regional Goals

Module Five: Exploring Regional Assets & Barriers

(Time: 4 hours)

- Examining asset-based regional development
- Discovering assets that exist locally
- Pinpointing barriers to achieving regional goals
- Reviewing and adjusting regional goals as needed

Module Six: Examining Current Demographic Features of Your Region

(Time: 5 hours)

- Local and regional demographic data: A look at past, present and future features of the region's population
- Key national and global trends
- Features of the regional labor force
- What features/trends mean for your regional economic development goals

Module Seven: Exploring the Region's Economic Foundation & Development Opportunities

(Time: 7 hours)

- Investigating the economic base of the region: Current economic drivers
- Understanding regional comparative advantages
- Determining your regional economic development advantages: Some key tools
- Exploring Value-Added Strategies

Module Eight: Planning for Success

(Time: 4 hours)

- Refining the Goal
- Identifying the ABC's of Success
- Selecting Strategies
- Planning for Action

Module Nine: Measuring for Success

(Time: 3 hours)

- Exploring the Value of Measuring
- Deciding What to Measure
- Using Measures to Promote Success
- Tracking Appropriate Measures
- Creating a Regional Plan for Measuring Success

