



Northeast Regional
Center for Rural
Development



2016 Annual Report

The Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development

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The mission of the Northeast Regional Center is to enhance the capacity of Land Grant Universities to foster regional prosperity and rural development.

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The Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development receives core funds from USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture, the Northeastern Regional Association of State Agricultural Experiment Station Directors and the Pennsylvania State University, College of Agricultural Sciences.

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**United States
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Major Regional Projects

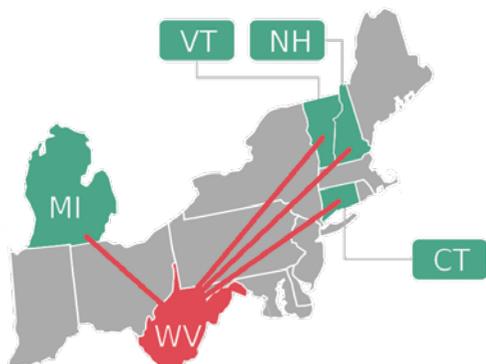
Two projects wrapped up this year, culminating in early impacts and a promise of more to come.

Interstate Extension Collaboration Grants

The Center’s competitive small grants program funded two teams to expand the breadth and depth of their rural development outreach programming and engaged scholarship by collaborating across state lines. The teams—comprising 15 team members from seven states—reported improved programming, greater capacity in their states, and knowledge-sharing between community development professionals.

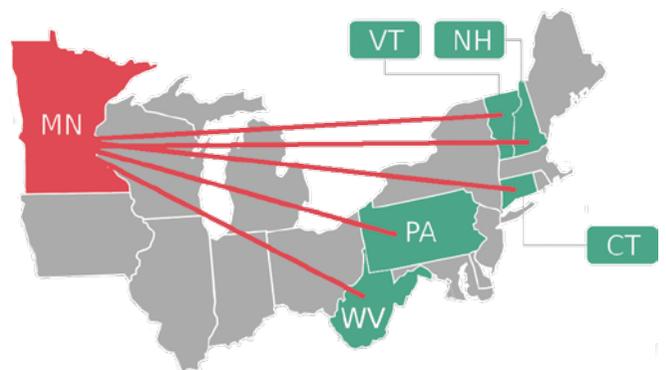
First Impressions (FI) Program

- UNH innovation: developing a new mobile app for FI data collection.
- Evaluated four communities so far (two in Michigan, two in Connecticut). Information will be shared back with communities, and is expected to result in community enhancements.
- Held NACDEP pre-conference workshop attended by ~18 people.
- Shared scholarship at additional conferences (National Extension Tourism Conference, Southern New England American Planning Association Conference), and posted their slides online. MI team member conducted internal training as well.
- Hosted four introductory webinars which are archived on NERCRD website.



Emergency Economic Impact Analysis/ Futures (EEIA) Workshop

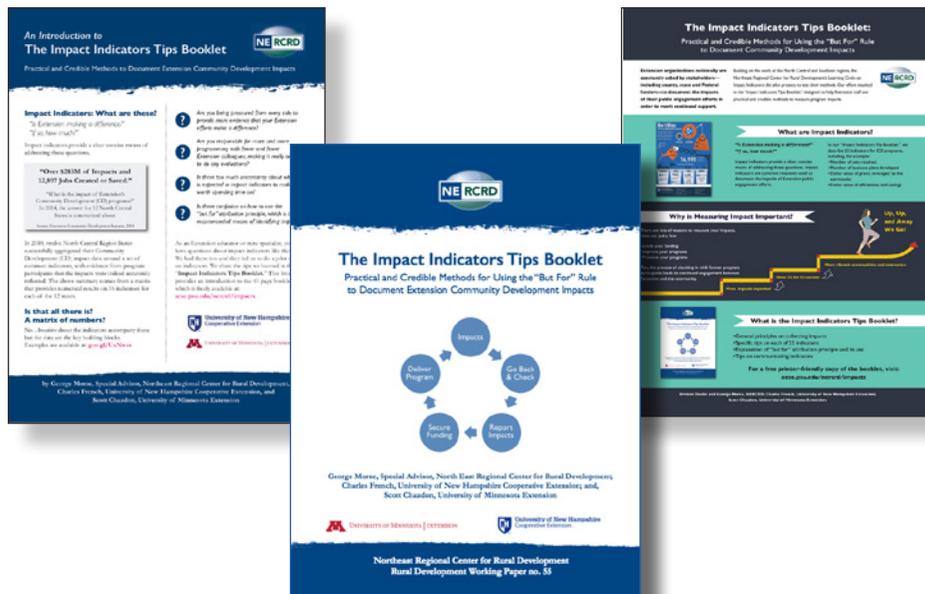
- NH EEIA team members held two workshops in NH and will be releasing reports in the near future.
- VT EEIA team members implemented a workshop with five Vermont high-schools during which several teachers and 30 students worked with local community partners to investigate appropriate economic development strategies in their community.
- The group presented a NACDEP pre-conference workshop (attended by ~18), as well as a regular session and a poster.



Impact Indicators Learning Circle

The Center's efforts to evaluate the community, regional, and economic development (CRED) programs in the region included the formation of a 19-member Learning Circle for the Northeast CRED Impact Indicators led by Special Projects Advisor, George Morse.

- Five CRED programs were analyzed as part of the pilot effort: Business Retention and Expansion (Morse/Minnesota), Profile Visioning (French/NH), Strengthen Your Facilitation Skills (Haskell/Maine), Public and Private Value of Maine Libraries (Morse and Haskell/Maine), Hancock County Business Conference (McConnon/Maine).
- The group's learnings were distilled and compiled into a major output: "The Impact Indicators Tips Booklet," a 38-page document written by George Morse, Charles French, and Scott Chazdon that explores practical and credible methods for using the "but for" rule to document Extension Community Development Impacts. It is available online.
- An abridged version of the booklet was distributed at NACDEP's annual meeting.
- A poster summarizing key findings and advertising the booklet was presented at the NACDEP annual meeting in June. The poster won a ribbon.



Members of the Learning Circle:

- Laura Brown, University of Connecticut Extension
- Kristen Devlin, NERCRD
- Charlie French, University of New Hampshire Extension
- Stephan Goetz, NERCRD
- Jane Haskell, University of Maine Extension
- James McConnon, University of Maine
- George Morse, NERCRD and University of Maine
- Heidi Mouillesseaux-Kunzman, Cornell University
- Allison Nichols, West Virginia University
- Mary Peabody, University of Vermont
- Walt Whitmer, Penn State Extension

Master Learners:

- Tim Borich, Iowa State University
- Scott Chazdon, University of Minnesota Extension
- Mary Leuci, University of Missouri
- Scott Loveridge, NCRCD
- Rachel Welborn, SRDC

Guests of Learning Circle:

- Don Albrecht, WRDC
- Paul Lachapelle, Montana State University
- Rebecca Sero, Washington State University Extension

Other Center Activities

The Center launched a rural innovation research grant program, conducted several economic impact analyses, and expanded its communication efforts.

Center-Funded Projects Explore Drivers of Rural Innovation

The Northeast Center's "Drivers of Rural Innovation and Implications for Community and Regional Economic Development" award program was established in 2016 to support data access and research in rural business innovation and economic development. Participants will access USDA's Rural Establishment Innovation Survey, which provides a new and rich array of data on innovative practices and technologies that will allow researchers to address questions about the ways in which business innovation is happening in rural areas, and both its dependence and impact on rural communities and regional economies. Three grant proposals were selected to receive funding:

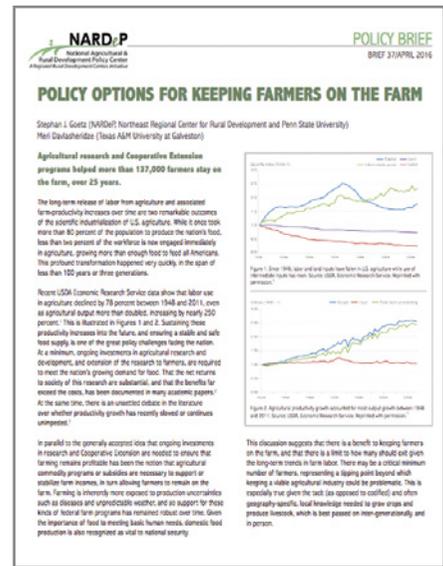
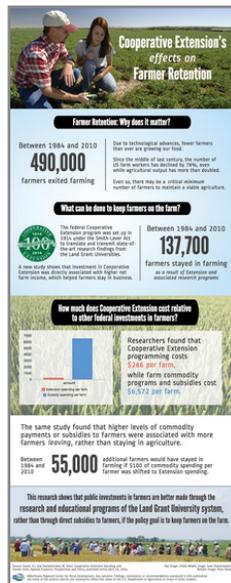
- **Alessandra Faggian**, The Ohio State University, will explore the impacts of knowledge-management strategies on firm-level innovation in the US. She will focus on "which sources firms target for information about new opportunities or new ways of doing things," and the "integration of technologies that facilitate data-driven decision-making and the dissemination of knowledge among employees, suppliers, and customers." **Kathryn R. Dotzel**, a graduate student, also will contribute to this work.
- **Roberto Gallardo**, Mississippi State University, and **Brian Whitacre**, Oklahoma State University, will explore the determinants of innovation, in part by constructing an "'innovation index' that will help to distinguish between more and less innovative businesses." They also will explore the "economic outcomes associated with innovative businesses."
- **Timothy Slaper**, Indiana University, and his team will link the Rural Establishment Innovation Survey data to the socio-economic data found in the Indiana Business Research Center's Innovation Index 2.0 to "learn the predictors and characteristics of-entrepreneurship in rural areas." Team members include Professors **David Audretsch** and **Barry Rubin** and Graduate Students **Venkata Nadella**, **Chantalle LaFontant** and **Apexa Mamtora**.

This grant program will culminate in a conference scheduled for May 2017 as part of the Center's long-standing What Works conference series (see page 15). It will be held in partnership with Create WV and several organizations. In addition to featuring presentations from the three funded projects, the conference will provide other participants the opportunity to share their own work in rural business innovation. The program is funded through a grant from the USDA Economic Research Service.

Economic Impact Analyses

The Center conducted numerous economic impact analyses to document the effects of various Extension programs.

One Center-sponsored study found that agricultural research and Cooperative Extension programs helped more than 137,000 farmers stay on the farm between 1984 and 2010. In addition to publication in *Applied Economics Perspectives and Policy*, we shared these findings via a press release, a policy brief, and an infographic.



The importance of these findings was widely recognized, as evidenced by the many news organizations that featured the work, including:

- Kglobal
- ECOP Monday Minute
- Ag Insider
- Feedstuffs
- Penn State Research blog
- C-FARE lists
- USDA Radio
- AgIsAmerica Twitter feed



ECOP Monday Minute Blog **kglobal**

Economic Impact Analyses (continued)

A number of impact studies were conducted on behalf of Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences. These contributed towards helping State legislators understand the profound economic impact of Penn State's Extension Service and Agricultural Experiment Station on the state's farmers and citizens:

- Adam, T., T. Kelsey, and S.J. Goetz (2016). "Potential Economic Impact of Expanding Penn State Extension's Field Crop Programs," Working Paper, NERCRD, Penn State, University Park, PA, 6pp.
- Berger, A., T. Kelsey, and S.J. Goetz (2016). "The Financial Impact of Penn State Extension's Dairy Programs in Pennsylvania," Working Paper, NERCRD, Penn State, University Park, PA, 9pp.
- Griffie, D., L. James, S.J. Goetz, B. Balotti, Y. Shr, M. Corbin and T. Kelsey (2016). "Outcomes and Economic Benefits of the Dining with Diabetes Community-Based Lifestyle Modification Program in Pennsylvania," Working Paper, NERCRD and Penn State, University Park, PA, 27pp.
- Kelsey, T. and S.J. Goetz (2016). "Potential Economic Impacts in Centre County of Zero Funding for Agricultural Research and Extension Programs," Working Paper, NERCRD and Penn State University, University Park, PA.
- Kelsey, T. and S.J. Goetz (2016). "Potential Economic Impacts of Zero Funding for Agricultural Research and Extension Programs Extend Far Beyond the University," Working Paper, NERCRD and Penn State, University Park, PA.

Communications

Center staff continue to engage existing stakeholders and reach out to potential stakeholders through our newsletter, website, and social media.

The newsletter is issued on a bi-monthly basis and five issues featuring 35 new content items were distributed electronically to 1,100 subscribers. The news content is archived on our website, where it is accessible to all website visitors. In 2016, visitors engaged with the website on more than ten thousand occasions. About two-thirds of those visits came from new users.

In 2014, the Center's Technical Advisory Committee recommended that staff begin utilizing social media to attract new stakeholders (e.g., recent graduates in CRED fields). Former Center Scholar Erica Hildabridle established Facebook and Twitter accounts in 2015. This year, Center staff made a concerted effort to engage more fully with these channels, and as a result increased the number of Twitter posts by 10 percent and Facebook posts by 250 percent. Our number of followers has steadily increased since we launched these platforms. Currently, 53 people or organizations are following the Center on Twitter and 295 are following on Facebook (which is above average, according to [one media expert](#) who states that the vast majority of Facebook pages average 250 followers).

Staff Announcements

Samantha Sheckler rejoined the Center to fill the position formerly held by Stacie Vance.

We are pleased to announce that Samantha Sheckler rejoined the Northeast Center in July 2016 as the Project Manager for both the Local Foods Resource Mapping (LFRM) Project and the Agricultural Marketing and Technical Assistance (AMSTA) Project. In this role, she is responsible for maintaining each project's website, databases, and records; coordinating meetings; processing invoices; and providing general support to the Center's Business Manager. This is not Samantha's first experience with the Center, as she served previously as a part-time Administrative Support Assistant from 2012-2013. She left for a full-time opportunity in Penn State's Department of Agricultural Economics, Sociology and Education, where for three years she coordinated the M.E. Johns Seminar Series and provided support to several faculty members.



Samantha's position was formerly held by Stacie Vance, who left in April to pursue an opportunity in Penn State's World Campus. We wish Stacie the best of luck in her new position!

Updates on External Grants

Bringing Research and Communities Together to Advance a Regional Food Systems Project (USDA/NIFA)

- In addition to organizing a highly successful national end-of-project conference for the EFSNE project in 2015, this grant allowed team members to organize community events aimed at extending the project's scholarship into five of the project communities.

Linking Health Care Reform and Economic Development in the Agriculture Sector (VT)

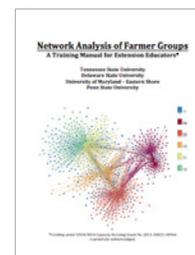
- Researchers and Extension professionals are exploring how health insurance decisions affect farm and ranch families. Activities include interviewing farmers, hosting webinars, analyzing policy impacts, and developing tools for professionals who work with farm families.

AMS Grant Writing Workshops and Technical Assistance (USDA AMS and NIFA)

- Phase II of this unprecedented collaboration between the RRDCs, USDA AMS and NIFA and the State Extension system includes re-delivering trainings in states identified by USDA as highest priority. Project personnel also updated the curriculum to address changes to the grant programs that the workshops target.

Enhancing the Viability of Underserved Small Farms and Rural Communities using Insights from Emerging Network Science: A Multi-Dimensional, Integrated Approach (TSU)

- This project team has produced a substantial training manual for Extension Educators who wish to conduct their own network analyses of farmer groups. Once finalized, it will be made available online.



Enhancing Food Security in the Northeast through Regional Food Systems (USDA NIFA)

- Now in its final year, the Center's signature food system project team is very busy analyzing the data collected over the previous five years, planning a special journal issue, and developing outreach documents aimed at synthesizing findings for a lay audience.

Assessing the Supplier Role of Selected Fresh Produce Value Chains in the United States (USDA ARS)

- This project embeds economies of scale concepts into experimental models to identify the optimal locations for distribution facilities such that small and mid-sized farms can access retail, institutional, and commercial markets. Project team members have been refining the model and disaggregating annual production data to accomplish project goals.

AMS Local Food Resource Mapping Project (USDA AMS and NIFA)

- This complex project is well under way with a team of collaborators having planned and implemented focus groups in six states (NC, KY, MI, AR, AL, AZ). The team is also in the process of sub-contracting with MarketMaker to supply the essential mapping functions of the project for now and for the future.

Drivers of Rural Innovation and Implications for Community and Regional Economic Development (USDA)

- See page 6 for a complete description of this project's activities.

Funding Snapshot

As a regional research hub, the Center leads or supports several funded projects.

We pursue funding opportunities in four focal areas:

<p>Community Capacity Building</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge networks in Community Development • Rural mental health issues • Healthy rural populations 	<p>Regional Economic Development</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural innovation • Entrepreneurship 	<p>Local and Regional Food Systems</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional food systems • Agricultural entrepreneurship • Agricultural policy 	<p>Balanced Use of Natural Resources</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural land-use issues • Energy development • Water resources
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Our projects often span more than one focal area:



In 2016, the Center managed 10 grants totalling \$7.5 million.

	Bringing Research and Communities Together to Advance a Regional Food Systems Project (USDA/NIFA)	\$43,606
	Linking Health Care Reform and Economic Development in the Agriculture Sector (VT)	\$6,866
	The Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development - 2014 (USDA/NIFA)	\$237,284
	AMS Grant Writing Workshops and Technical Assistance (USDA AMS and NIFA)	\$900,000
	Enhancing the Viability of Underserved Small Farms and Rural Communities using Insights from Emerging Network Science: A Multi-Dimensional, Integrated Approach (TSU)	\$52,623
	Enhancing Food Security in the Northeast through Regional Food Systems (USDA NIFA)	\$4,999,985
	The Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development - 2015 (USDA/NIFA)	\$237,680
	Assessing the Supplier Role of Selected Fresh Produce Value Chains in the United States (USDA ARS)	\$44,788
	AMS Local Food Resource Mapping Project (USDA AMS and NIFA)	\$800,000
	Drivers of Rural Innovation and Implications for Community and Regional Economic Development (USDA)	\$130,000

Publications, Presentations, and Meetings

Peer-reviewed research:

- Fan, Q., S.J. Goetz and J. Liang (2016, in press). "The Interactive Effects of Human Capital and Quality of Life on Economic Growth," *Applied Economics*.
- Ge, Houtian, J. Nolan, R. Gray and S.J. Goetz (in press). "Supply Chain Complexity and Risk Mitigation: the Case of Wheat Handling in Western Canada," *International Journal of Production Economics*.
- Goetz, S.J. (2016, in press). "The Roles of Agricultural Economists in Food Systems Research," *Review of Agricultural and Environmental Economics*.
- Goetz, S.J. and M. Davlasheridze (2016, available online). "State Cooperative Extension Spending and Farmer Exits," *Applied Economic Perspectives and Policy*. doi:10.1093/aep/ppw007.
- Li, M., S.J. Goetz, M. Partridge and D. Fleming (2016). "Location Determinants of High Growth Firms," *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*
- Liang, J. and S.J. Goetz (2016). "Self-Employment and Trade Shock Mitigation," *Small Business Economics*, 46: 45-56.
- Reimer, A., Y. Han, S.J. Goetz, S. Loveridge and D. Albrecht (2016, available on-line). "Word Networks in US Rural Policy Discourse," *Applied Economic Perspectives and Policy*, 24pp.

Presentations (in chronological order):

- Goetz, S.J. "Economic Complexity and Regional Resilience." Presented at the 2016 Conference of the Australian Agricultural and Resource Economics Society, Canberra, Australia, February 3, 2016.*
- Han, Y. "Modeling the Spatial Food Supply Network based on Geography, Distance, and Competition." Presented at the 2016 SRSA Conference, Washington, DC, April 1, 2016.
- Ge, H. "Optimal Locations of Fresh Produce Supplier Hubs in the United States." Presented at the 2016 SRSA Conference, Washington, DC, April 2, 2016.
- Goetz, S.J. "Applications of Network Science in Food Systems Research." Presented at the Spring 2016 Applied Economics Seminar at Ohio State University, April 22, 2016.*
- Goetz, S.J. "Embedding Economies of Scale Concepts in Models of Optimal Locations of Fresh Produce Assembly Hubs." Regional, Urban and Spatial Economics (RUSE) Workshop, Southwest University of Finance and Economics, Chengdu, China, May 30-June 5, 2016.*
- Goetz, S.J. "Grants, Collaborations and Impact Statements." Presented at the Joint Summer Meeting of NERA and NEED, Pittsburgh, PA, June 21, 2016.
- McDavid, C. and S.J. Goetz. "A Research Update on the LFRM." Presented at the Food Distribution Research Society annual conference, New Orleans, LA, September 30-October 4, 2016.
- Li, M. "Poverty Determinants I" and "Poverty Determinants II." Presented as part of Purdue University/ERS Rural Poverty Forum of the Regional Science Association International, Annual Conference. November 9-12, 2016.*
- Goetz, S.J., Y. Han and D. Fleming, "Economic Resilience, Diversity and Complexity in the U.S.," presented at Motu Economic and Public Policy Research, Wellington, New Zealand, December 15, 2016.*

*fully or partially paid for with non-federal funds.

Outreach publications (economic impact analyses, press releases, etc.):

- Adam, T., T. Kelsey, and S.J. Goetz (2016). "Potential Economic Impact of Expanding Penn State Extension's Field Crop Programs," Working Paper, NERCRD, Penn State, University Park, PA, 6pp.
- Berger, A., T. Kelsey, and S.J. Goetz (2016). "The Financial Impact of Penn State Extension's Dairy Programs in Pennsylvania," Working Paper, NERCRD, Penn State, University Park, PA, 9pp.
- Goetz, S.J. and M. Davlasheridze (2016, available online). Policy Brief: Policy Options for Keeping Farmers on the Farm. Published by National Agricultural and Rural Development Policy (NARDeP) Center, April 2016.
- Goetz, S.J. and M. Davlahseridze (2016, available online). Infographic: Cooperative Extension's Effects on Farmer Retention. Published on the NERCRD website.
- Goetz, S.J., D. Fleming, and Y. Han. "What Makes One Economy More Resilient Than Another?" Published in The Conversation on March 7, 2016.
- Griffie, D., L. James, S.J. Goetz, B. Balotti, Y. Shr, M. Corbin and T. Kelsey (2016). "Outcomes and Economic Benefits of the Dining with Diabetes Community-Based Lifestyle Modification Program in Pennsylvania," Working Paper, NERCRD and Penn State, University Park, PA, 27pp.
- Kelsey, T. and S.J. Goetz (2016). "Potential Economic Impacts in Centre County of Zero Funding for Agricultural Research and Extension Programs," Working Paper, NERCRD and Penn State, University Park, PA.
- Kelsey, T. and S.J. Goetz (2016). "Potential Economic Impacts of Zero Funding for Agricultural Research and Extension Programs Extend Far Beyond the University," Working Paper, NERCRD and Penn State, University Park, PA.
- Morse, G., C. French, and S. Chazdon. "[The Impact Indicators Tip Booklet: Practical and Credible Methods for Using the 'But For' Rule to Document Extension Community Development Impacts.](#)" Published in the NERCRD Rural Development Working Paper series, No. 55, July 2016.
- Swayne, M. "[Education and Industrial Variety Power High-Growth Companies Nationwide,](#)" press release issued via Penn State News, January 14, 2016.
- Swayne, M. "[Land Grant University Programs Helped Keep Farmers on the Farm,](#)" press release issued via Penn State News, April 19, 2016.

Meetings, workshops, conferences, etc. attended (travel)

- AARES conference participation plus invited presentations on Determinants of Economic Resilience at Victoria Universities Regional Research Network (VURRN), University of Melbourne, National Center for Social and Economic Modeling NATSEM), University of Canberra and Murray Darling Water Basin Authority, Australia, Jan. 21-Feb. 6, 2016*
- RRDC Directors' meeting, including USDA Secretary Vilsack's Rural Poverty Summit, Washington, DC, Feb. 23-25, 2016
- SRSA annual conference, Washington, DC, Mar. 31-Apr. 2, 2016*
- Ohio State University Spring Lecture series, Seminar on Network Applications in Food Systems Research (invited), Apr. 21-22, 2016*
- RRDC Directors' meeting, Washington, DC, May 10-12, 2016

(Continued on next page.)

Meetings, workshops, conferences, etc. attended (travel), continued

- Regional, Urban and Spatial Economics (RUSE) Workshop, Southwest University of Finance and Economics, Chengdu, China, May 30-Jun 5, 2016*
- Center for Rural Pennsylvania Board meeting, Harrisburg, PA (via conference call), Jun. 13, 2016
- NERA/NEED Joint Summer meeting, Pittsburgh, PA, Jun. 20-22, 2016
- NACDEP annual meeting, Burlington, VT, Jun. 25-29, 2016
- RRDC Directors' meeting, Washington, DC, Aug. 8-10, 2016
- Center for Rural Pennsylvania Summer Board meeting, Johnstown, PA, Aug. 15-16, 2016*
- LFRM Focus Group, Foothills Region, NC, Sep. 11-12, 2016
- The White House, USDA and HUD Workshop on Research and University Engagement in Promise Zones, Washington, DC, Sep. 22-23, 2016
- Food Distribution Research Society (FDRS) annual conference, presented a research update on the LFRM project, New Orleans, LA, Sep. 30-Oct. 4, 2016
- NERCRD Annual BOD/TAC meeting, Bedford Springs, PA, Oct. 13-14, 2016
- LFRM Focus Group, Jackson, MS, Oct. 18-20, 2016
- RSAI Annual Conference, presented a paper on poverty determinants in Purdue University/ERS Rural Poverty Forum, Nov. 9-12, 2016* (2)
- RRDC Directors' meeting, Washington, DC, Nov. 16-18, 2016
- Center for Rural Pennsylvania Board Meeting, State College, PA, Nov. 29, 2016
- ANZRSIAI Regional Science Meeting, Melbourne, Australia, December 5-7, 2016*

*fully or partially paid for with non-federal funds.

The Regional Rural Development Centers: Connecting the Nationwide Network of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities

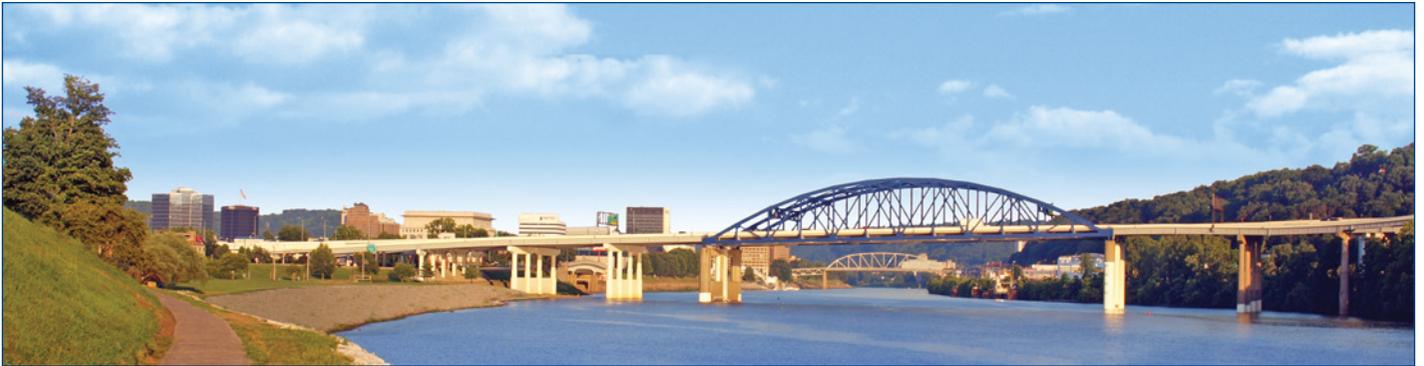
The Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development is one of four USDA-funded Regional Development Centers (RRDCs). The RRDCs are a trusted source of economic and community development data, decision tools, education, and guidance in our nation's rural communities.

The RRDCs link research with outreach in the areas of rural economic development. Each Center serves a region of the U.S. and uses its regional network of land-grant universities to conduct research and develop Extension education and outreach programs for the benefit of communities.

Looking Ahead

What Works in Rural Business Innovation and Economic Development Workshop

The Northeast Center is pleased to announce a new conference in its acclaimed What Works workshop series. Scheduled for May 15-17, 2017, the conference theme is Rural Business Innovation and Economic Development, and the event will be held in conjunction with the annual conferences of Create West Virginia and Universal Design Today, at the Civic Center in Charleston, WV. The rural innovation-focused triple-header conference seeks to answer the question, How do we (re)create buildings, communities, learning places, programs and products to better meet needs of 21st Century people? For more information, visit nercrd.psu.edu, or email Kristen Devlin at krd111@psu.edu.



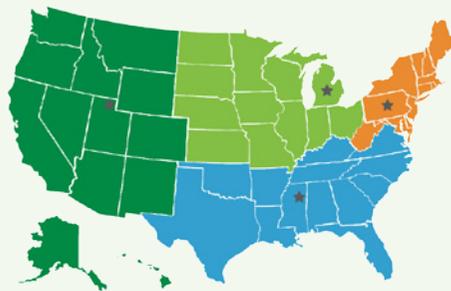
Eugene A. Carter Memorial Bridge in Charleston, WV. Image: Jdc120763, via Wikimedia Commons

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