

Land-Grant Community and Economic Development Capacity in the Northeast



Stephen Alessi • Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development • spa15@psu.edu



Background

The 12-state Northeast Region is often believed to have a lower capacity within the Land-Grant University and Extension system for Community and Economic Development programming. The Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development (NERCRD) wanted to better understand these capacity limits, especially as they relate to NERCRD's priority areas, which include:

- Community and Economic Development, Resilience and Innovation;
- Tourism and Outdoor Recreation; and,
- Food Systems, Nutrition Security and Agriculture.

The purpose of this research is to identify program gaps within the region so that NERCRD can help convene a project team to collaborate on addressing these gaps. The goal is to develop programming that can benefit the Extension programs in the region that have the largest impact on rural communities and the challenges they are facing today. After gaining a better understanding of the research and programming capacity of the region, we can also better understand where NERCRD's assistance is most needed.

Methods

In Phase 1 of this research, information was collected from the websites of twelve 1862 and three 1890 Universities within the Northeast region, focusing on personnel with either Faculty, Educator, or Extension Specialist appointments. These personnel were then divided into six program areas based on the description of their work found on the websites. The program areas were identified as :

- Community and Economic Development
- Natural Resources/Forestry/Climate/Energy
- Agritourism/Tourism
- Ag Business Management/Ag Economics
- Food Systems
- Community Health and Well Being

During this phase, we identified 187 people working as faculty or educators in these program areas. Next, we shared this information with Extension and program leadership to verify its accuracy. We have received verification from eight Universities so far, and based on their updates, we now have identified 386 total faculty and educators in the region. We are currently working with the remaining universities to complete this verification process.

Key Findings

- A total of 386 people (123 faculty and 263 educators) were identified as working in program areas that currently align with NERCRD's priorities.
- Most of the Northeast's capacity related to NERCRD priorities lies in the program areas of **Community Health and Well Being, Natural Resources and Climate Studies, and Agricultural Economics and Business Management.**
- **Tourism and Agritourism** currently have the **smallest capacity** in the region
- Northeast personnel are working on many different program areas that have potential cross-cutting impacts on rural development, including: **Housing and Community Planning, Broadband Access, Digital Skills and Food System Resilience.**

	Community and Economic Development		Natural Resources/Forestry/Climate/Energy		Agritourism/Tourism		Ag Business Management/Ag Economics		Food Systems		Community Health and Well Being		Total
	Faculty	Educators	Faculty	Educators	Faculty	Educators	Faculty	Educators	Faculty	Educators	Faculty	Educators	
U. New Hampshire	1	9	5	13	1			2	2	1			34
U. Maine	2	3	3				7	1	1		2		19
U. Vermont	3	1	2	2	1		4	3	4	1	1	11	33
U. Connecticut		5	5	6		2	3			1		6	28
U. Massachusetts		2	10	5			5		2			1	25
U. Rhode Island		1		2			1		2	3			9
Rutgers			2				4			2	1	2	11
Cornell		13	2	20	1	1	6	15	2	7	2	12	81
Penn State	4	12		10	1		10	5	1	1	2	10	56
U. Maryland		5	1	8				5	2		1	18	40
West Virginia State		4										2	6
West Virginia University	2	1			1		3					11	18
U. Delaware		1		2			1	1		1	3	12	21
U. Maryland Eastern Shore					1		2						3
Delaware State University							1					1	2
Total	12	57	30	68	6	3	47	32	16	17	12	86	386

Discussion & Next Steps

These findings suggest that, given the diverse programming areas present in the region, there is an opportunity to collaborate on cross-cutting issues that impact rural communities. These include Housing and Community Planning, Broadband Access, Digital Skills (Workforce and Personal Development), and Food System resilience.

The formation of regional program teams to work on these complex issues can help bring diverse ideas to achieve comprehensive solutions. Using the widespread housing shortage as an example, members from Community Development; Food, Families and Health; and Community Planning, could all contribute meaningfully to informing a regional Extension response to the current housing situation.

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