

DRAFT

Southern Region Community Development Educator Certification Program

Background

Land-grant universities in the Southern region of the United States have expanded their commitment and investment in Extension community development outreach programs in recent years. This has included an expansion of educational programs addressing a variety of community development-related topics, as well as an intensified investment in Extension personnel who are engaged in the design, delivery, and evaluation of such programs. More often than not, the individuals selected or recruited to serve in these new roles do not have extensive formal training in community development or related fields of study.

Five years ago, the Southern Rural Development Center -- a regional center whose mission is designed to advance the community development work of the region's 29 land-grant institutions -- began working with a team of faculty in the region to organize and deliver an introductory course on community development. The intent was to provide formal training to new Extension educators who were engaged, or planning to become more actively involved, in community development educational outreach activities. The course proved to be a major success and with the help of a host of faculty from across the South, an additional set of in-depth training courses were developed and offered in the region. With the full endorsement of the state Extension leaders in the South, in-service training programs for Extension educators in the community development arena are being continued and constantly expanded.

Certification: Why Is It Needed?

Despite the increasing interest being devoted to community development programming by state Extension leaders in the South, the tight fiscal situation present in most states seriously limits the ability of these administrators to hire Extension educators with formal degrees in community development or in fields that offer the theoretical and practical grounding to function effectively in this area of work. However, as Extension educators in other programmatic areas are accorded the opportunity to shift their work to community development, it is important to formally recognize the investment they have made in building and expanding their knowledge of community development via the Southern Rural Development Center's array of training programs, or through other recognized training activities by organizations, agencies or educational institutions across the country. By completing the Community Development Educator Certification Program, Extension representatives have a credential that helps legitimize the

community-based efforts being undertaken by them in their home states and/or counties/parishes.

Requirements for Securing Certification

The Community Development Educator Certificate is closely aligned with the requirements associated with a completing a "minor" degree at many institutions of higher learning. It involves completion of a cluster of training courses that would be equivalent to 18 credit hours of college work. It also entails formal documentation of job-related experiences or activities associated with Extension community development programming.

The following outlines the course requirements:

Table 1. Suggested Course Requirements for the Southern Region Community Development Educator Certificate

Core Courses (required by all applicants)	Credit Hours
Southern Region Community Development Institute (or comparable introductory course to community development)	3
Cluster A: Economic Development and Community Services/Infrastructure (6 hours required from among this list)	
Business Retention and Expansion	
Value-Added Entrepreneurship	
Economic Impact Analysis	
Business Skills Training	
E-Commerce for Small Businesses	
Rural Health Institute	
Tourism for Small Towns	
Cluster B: Civic Engagement and Community Decision Making Tools (6 hours required from among this list)	
Community Leadership Development	
Public Issues Deliberation	

Conflict Mediation/Managing Public Conflict	
Improving Board and Organizational Effectiveness	
Smart Growth Strategies	
Vision to Action: Take Charge Too	
Cluster C: Other Community Development-Relevant Electives (3 credit hours)	
Open to other courses or training programs that the applicant has participated in that address other relevant community development topics not listed in Clusters A or B. Formal submission of the course agenda and support materials is required.	

As noted in Table 1, an introductory course on community development is required (such as the Southern Region Community Development Institute, the University of Missouri Community Development Academy, or undergraduate/graduate Introduction to Community and Economic Development). Next, the individual must complete 6 credit hours of coursework in two major clusters. *Cluster A* focuses on economic development and local infrastructure/services strategies, while *Cluster B* addresses the variety of tools for building the capacity of rural communities to examine and take action on issues of priority concern to these localities, including the strengthening of the civic health of these communities. The courses listed under each cluster represent programs that are available through the Southern Rural Development Center or its sister regional centers. Courses offered by other recognized entities, which address similar topics, might be acceptable if the applicant provides sufficient documentation of such coursework. The final cluster (*Cluster C*) offers the applicant the opportunity to document other community development-relevant courses or training activities that he/she may have completed. This could include coursework/training on workforce development, small farm programs, sustainable agriculture, and so forth.

Work Relevant Experiences in Community Development

An important companion piece to the completion of formal courses or training in community development is the documentation of job-related experiences or activities in this field of work (see Table 2). Persons wishing to secure the Community Development Educator Certification are required to submit evidence that they have completed activities in at least three of the following areas:

Table 2. Work-Relevant Experiences Needed for Community Development Educator Certification

Community Development Relevant Activities	Place a checkmark by each activity completed
One-year of experience as a community development educator (at least 51% of job devoted to this area of work) OR Two years of experience as a community development educator (25-49% of job related to this area of work)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Membership in a nationally recognized professional organization that focuses on CD-related activities (i.e. CDS, RSS, AAEA)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Author of curriculum being used to support Extension Community Development programming	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lead presenter at three or more national or regional conferences/workshops that addressed community development-related topic(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Coordinated and conducted CD-related workshops a minimum of four (4) times at the state or county/parish levels	<input type="checkbox"/>
At least one Served as a member of a state or national committee dedicated to community development work	<input type="checkbox"/>

Recertification Process

In order to help Extension community development educators remain abreast of new programs and strategies associated with this area of work, persons who are certified Community Development Educators must accumulate 6 credit hours of training or coursework every four (4) years. These courses can be in any community development-related area, such as economic development, workforce development, leadership development/civic engagement, local government training, community services, community decision making tools, etc.

Review of Certification/Recertification Materials

The Association of Southern Region Extension Directors and the Association of 1890 Extension Administrators are responsible for appointing five (5) Extension representatives to serve on the Community Development Educator Certification Review Team. The Southern Rural Development Center Director or Associate

Director serves in an ex officio capacity on this team. The Southern Region Extension Community Development Program Leaders are invited to submit names of review team candidates for consideration by the Extension Directors/Administrators.

The Certification Review Team is responsible for examining each applicant's portfolio and awards certification/recertification to those that meet or exceed all requirements. The Community Development Educator Certificate is formally awarded by the Southern Rural Development Center located at Mississippi State University.

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