

**Southern Region Program Leadership Network  
Community Development Committee  
2008 State Report  
Louisiana**



**1. Report Submitted by** *(please provide full contact information):*

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**2. Program Description and Staffing Plan:**

The community rural development (CRD) program at the LSU Agricultural Center is coordinated through the LSUAgCenter's Delta Rural Development Center located at Oak Grove, LA. Three agents work full-time in CRD while two work only part-time with the CRD team. The team also includes faculty on campus. The program is primarily operating in northeast Louisiana and in persistent poverty areas of the Louisiana delta.

The CRD program has four priority areas of work: (1) rural entrepreneurship; (2) leadership; (3) rural tourism and (4) agricultural enterprise development. In entrepreneurship, the CRD team was recently trained by Dr. Rae Montgomery to use the e-commerce curriculum Access E-commerce. Leadership training takes place using a variety of programs, including Leadership Plenty and modules in board training on conflict resolution, high performance boards and parliamentary procedures. Educational conferences are used to encourage development of several regional tourism organizations (Delta 65, Inc., Miss-Lou Rural Tourism Association). Conferences are also used to develop agricultural business opportunities surrounding bio-fuel development.

**3. Program Highlights for 2007:**

**Established and distributed the first CRD newsletter for the Delta Rural Development Center.** The DRDC newsletter reaches approximately 1,200 clients in rural Louisiana including municipalities, non-profits, agricultural producers, etc. The newsletter communicates the educational programs offered at the DRDC by CRD agents.

**Established an Rural Entrepreneurship program in e-commerce called "E-Business: Build or Buy?"** Agents were trained by Dr. Rae Montgomery and the LSU AgCenter purchased the Access E-Commerce curriculum to launch the program in the fall of 2008. Southern University faculty at the Southwest Center for Rural Initiatives were also trained and will teach at workshops in the fall of 2008.

**Established the Louisiana Center for Rural Initiatives** by receiving a three year approval from the LSU board of supervisors for center operations and outreach work at the Delta Rural Development Center. CRD agents will delivery educational programs in four priority areas of entrepreneurship, leadership, rural tourism and agricultural enterprise development.

**Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI) Summit-** The Delta Rural Development Center was the host site for this Summit, October 30 – November 1, 2007. Stakeholders, administrators, educators and elected officials met to explore the opportunities to bring higher education to the Delta region. Working collaboratively with Dr. Barbara Jones, Dean of Instruction and Lauri Anderson, Outreach Coordinator, Delta Community College, an enhancement grant was submitted for \$150,000 (November 2007) for a dual enrollment project in Madison, Franklin and Tensas parishes. The Tensas site will be the LSU AgCenter office. This grant is the second phase of the original grant received for \$48,000 from the Board of Regents to bring dual enrollment (college credit earned while in high school) opportunities to the Delta Rural Development Center in West Carroll Parish.

**Miss-Lou Rural Tourism Association (MLRTA) - 16 parishes and 17 counties:**

This association emerged as a result of the 2006 and 2007 Miss-Lou Regional Tourism Summits. Approximately 100 individuals from a three state area attended both of these three day conferences.

**Louisiana Delta 65 Inc:** This 501 (c)3 organization formed in December 2005 after community leaders met over a period of 12 months to discuss promoting rural tourism as an economic development strategy in East Carroll, West Carroll, Madison, Tensas and Concordia parishes. The group continues to meet monthly and collaborates with numerous groups including the Louisiana North Coalition and the Miss-Lou Rural Tourism Association.

**Delta Outdoors and Wildlife Association:** The 501 (c)6 organization formed in November 2002 as a result of the AgCenter's educational initiative first known as *Bucks & Ducks* that became *Discover Northeast Louisiana Outdoors*. It involves the 12 parish region of Ouachita, Morehouse, Richland, West Carroll, East Carroll, Madison, Tensas, Franklin, Caldwell, LaSalle, Catahoula and Concordia parishes. This organization continues to meet on a regular basis.

**Agricultural Enterprise Development**

Assisted in the establishment of 10 new farm businesses. One-hundred percent of these businesses developed business plans.

**AgOutlook Conference** - Some 200 attendees from around the state participated in this conference, February 25 – 27, 2008 at the Holiday Inn Hotel and Suites Conference Center in Monroe. This event focused on renewable energy and its connection to agriculture. The themes of the 2008 AgOutlook conference included alternative energy perspectives and opportunities for forestry products, biodiesel, ethanol and community rural development.

#### **4. Plans/New Directions for 2008:**

##### Entrepreneurship:

Conduct a pilot program of a series of 4 E-business workshops (12 hours training each) in the Fall 2008 in Oak Grove, Ruston, New Roads and Winnsboro; teach additional trainings in the Spring 2009; goal is to reach 100 entrepreneurs in 12 months

##### Leadership:

Develop leadership curriculum for Lead Louisiana I & II (beginner and intermediate leadership courses), teach 4 Lead Louisiana I courses (12 hours of training) – Tensas, Catahoula, Concordia and Richland parishes from January- April 2009.

Agri-tourism Workshop: The CRD team and LDAF plan to host an agri-tourism seminar in the Spring 2009.

2009 Miss-Lou Regional Tourism Summit: Planning for the upcoming Summit will begin in September 2008. Tentative plans are to host the Summit in Avoyelles or Washington Parish.

#### **5. Collaborative Activities and Funding Sources:**

Most highlighted programs listed above are collaborative activities. Funding sources are listed in program descriptions. Entrepreneurship and leadership programming will be funded by a \$55,000 grant, Delta Initiative Grant.

Among the previous, current and proposed funding sources are Rural Community College Initiative, Board of Regents Grant, and Legislative Grant for Leadership, Ag-tourism, and Entrepreneurship classes. Work with Mississippi State University Extension agents in the regional Miss-Lou Rural Tourism Summit and on-going programs continues. Work with professionals, educators, and extension agents from numerous states is on-going in the responsibilities related to Community Development Society International, National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals, and National Extension Tourism.

Partnership among Louisiana Economic Development, Southern University, Small Business Development Centers and the LSU AgCenter established to launch rural entrepreneurship program in e-commerce.

Partnered with USDA and Heifer International and other Land-Grant Institutions to provide training on marketing and business development for agricultural producers

#### **6. Additional Information:**