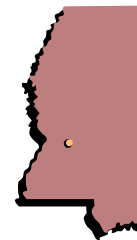


**Southern Region Program Leadership Network
Community Development Committee
2008 State Report
Mississippi**



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

Mississippi State University

2. Program Description and Staffing Plan:

Program Description: The Enterprise and Community Resource Development (E&CRD) program represents a valuable part of the mission of the Mississippi State University Extension Service. Its efforts are designed to address and respond to the critical set of opportunities and challenges impacting communities in the state. It does so by generating and/or delivering timely information, outreach education, technical assistance, and applied research that can help promote the long-term viability of communities across the landscape of our state. An important aspect of its work is exploring strategies that add value to the important agricultural base of Mississippi communities. At the same time, the E&CRD program provides key insights on a variety of other complementary economic development strategies that can boost the economic vitality of these communities.

Vibrant Mississippi communities depend on strong and diversified local economies, as well as other key components, many that are part of the mission of the E&CRD program. These elements include:

- Access to data information that communities can tap to gain valuable insights on the current/projected economic, demographic, education, and workforce shifts impacting their local areas;
- Delivery of comprehensive local government training programs that enhance the public policy activities of county and municipal government officials;
- In-depth assessments of the benefits and costs associated with current and proposed community services and infrastructure enhancements—insights the help improve the wise use of local fiscal/financial resources;
- Strengthening and expanding the pool of local leaders who are willing to take an active part in guiding the strategic blueprint for their localities.

A talented pool of Extension specialists, some housed in the Agricultural Economics Department (who are part of the Community Resource Development Program) and others in the Center for Governmental Training and Technology (CGT), serve as the core faculty involved in the important work associated with the E&CRD program. These individuals work in tandem with Extension educators located in counties across the state (and the entire Southern region of the United States) in the delivery of community and economic development programs and activities that align with the expressed needs of local leaders, local governments, business representatives, community-minded agencies/organizations, and citizens. Adding value to the work of the E&CRD program are the activities of the Southern Rural Development Center, a USDA-supported entity located at Mississippi State University that helps introduce Extension specialists to new information and educational resources to support their outreach education activities in the E&CRD state program.

Staffing:

Agricultural Economics Department Community Development Staff:

- Dr. Alan Barefield, Associate Extension Professor
Alan works with Extension specialists and agents to develop and implement programs to better serve the residents of Mississippi. Alan also serves as Associate Director of the Southern Rural Development Center housed at Mississippi State University where he is responsible for coordinating the Rural Community College Initiative Effort in Mississippi, North Carolina, and Texas.
- Bonnie Carew, Extension Instructor/Rural Health Program Leader
Bonnie oversees the Mississippi Rural Health Corps, a joint endeavor of MSU Extension Service and the state's 15 community and junior colleges. The purpose of the venture is to improve rural health through the education of Mississippi residents and the training of health care professionals in rural practice. Additionally, she directs the Smart Aging: Healthy Futures program that seeks to help rural communities foster the healthy aging of their senior populations. As well, she serves on the Board of Directors of the Mississippi Rural Health Association. Bonnie holds masters' degrees in business administration and health education and is currently pursuing a PhD in Public Policy and Administration at Mississippi State University.
- Dr. Garen Evans, Assistant Extension Professor
Garen provides technical expertise to help community leaders and specialists identify and evaluate socio-economic development alternatives. He designs and implements economic and fiscal impact models, and provides guidance for interpretation of potential impacts arising from economic change and policy decisions.
- Dr. Albert E. Myles, Extension Professor
Al provides educational programs on the sources, uses, and interpretation of economic data, works with community leaders on job retention and expansion strategies, develops retail trade studies and seminars about the impact of out-shopping and identifies growth areas and strategies for improving declining sectors.
- Ann Sansing, Extension Associate III
Ann provides educational leadership to Public Water System Board Management Training Program working in conjunction with the Mississippi Rural Water Association and other sponsoring partners in the state.

Center for Governmental Training & Technology Staff

- P.C. (Mac) McLaurin, Jr. - Leader and & Extension Professor of Local Government
- Sumner D. Davis, III - Governmental Training Specialist & Extension Instructor
- Joseph N. Fratesi - Governmental Training Specialist & Extension Instructor
- R. Thomas Ball - Governmental Training Officer
- Ben Carver - Governmental Training Officer
- Janet P. Baird – Government Training Officer

3. Program Highlights for 2007-08:

Successes realized in the E&CRD Program over the course of the past year are highlighted in this section of the report and are captured under the major programmatic components of this program. Impacts emanated from any of these initiatives are noted wherever feasible.

- ***Design and Deliver Educational Programs for Local Government Officials:*** Among the 150 educational programs designed and delivered to some 13,000 elected and appointed county and municipal officials was a four-day 2008 Governor's Homeland Security Conference.

Over the course of the conference, 12 educational sessions were featured—each educational session offering concurrent seminar tracks in the areas of public health, animal health, and terrorism/weapons of mass destruction prevention—a total of 31 specialized seminars and 5 special workshops. Complementing these educational sessions were 3 meal functions with high-level, subject matter-appropriate keynote speakers, 1 special educational program in general assembly format, and 1 special incident command (management) system educational workshop for senior elected and appointed officials. Completing the conference emphasis on the status of public health concerns and homeland security were a technology room with computers programmed to allow conference participants to supplement the seminar/workshop instruction and contact their home offices, an exhibit hall of homeland security products and services, and an outdoor area for specialized exhibits and demonstrations.

Impacts: 975 local, state, and federal officials, elected and appointed, received extensive information and intensive training regarding the current status of the major public health concerns related to homeland security and the management of emergency situations and events.

- ***Diversify and Strengthen the Economies and Infrastructure of Mississippi Communities:*** Several activities, designed to examine the launching of innovative economic development strategies or that seek to explore avenues for strengthening or expanding existing businesses, were completed over the past year. They include:
 - *The 2008 Miss-Lou Regional Tourism Summit:* This educational program was designed to focus on the importance that tourism has on eastern Louisiana and southwestern Mississippi with the expectation that a regional tourism association could emerge from the effort. The summit, spearheaded by the Mississippi State University Extension Service and Louisiana State University AgCenter, targeted the region that is affectionately known as the “Miss-Lou.” This region boasts a natural, rural setting that is rich in history, beauty, and attractions. Community leaders and residents alike are looking for new ways to diversify the area's traditionally agricultural-based economy. This summit highlighted how tourism-based initiatives can stimulate new economic activity in rural communities like those found throughout the Miss-Lou.
 - *The 2008 Alabama-Mississippi Tourism Summit:* This educational program focused on the western Alabama and eastern Mississippi region to facilitate the spread of knowledge of the benefits that tourism can offer the rural areas of the two states.

- *Community Development Clubs:* In many rural communities, community development clubs are an excellent training ground for emerging leaders. E&CRD faculty assisted in the operation of these clubs by evaluating their operations and eligibility for an award sponsored by the Chevron Corporation.
- *Rural Water System Assistance:* As part of an ongoing effort funded by the Mississippi Department of Health and the State Revolving Fund Board, E&CRD faculty provides two distinct programs to assist the small rural and municipal water systems of the state. First, the Peer Review Program provides an analysis of a water system's technical, managerial, and financial capacity performed by water system operators with significant expertise in these areas. Second, the Water Board Management Training Program coordinates and conducts leadership, technical, and managerial training for system boards for rural water associations and small municipalities in the state. Furthermore, the E&CRD faculty have expanded and enhanced the Water Board Management Training curriculum to more readily address the needs of municipal water systems in the state. This initiative results from an expansion of the number and type of municipal systems that the state legislature now requires to undergo training. In addition, E&CRD has developed a true working partnership with the Mississippi Department of Health to coordinate several major water system operator training activities across the state and to implement a water system operator recertification incentive program.

Impacts: Taken as a whole, these programs positively impact the vast majority of the state's 1,400 water systems and their customers through more efficient and effective system operation, management, and strategic direction.

- *Provide Economic Impact Analyses:* Local governments, local agencies, health sector firms, businesses, and other entities often seek science-based information from the E&CRD Program on the potential or actual economic impact associated with the provision of various programs, facilities and services in the community.
 - *Linking Communities to Healthcare in the Mississippi Delta: The HealthConnect Program.* *HealthConnect* is an Extension program developed at the Mississippi State University Extension Service in 2004. Based on the successful National Rural Health Works program, *HealthConnect* provides support to local communities with development of health resource directories, economic impact analyses, household and provider surveys, and gap analyses. These are combined with leadership and strategic planning to help health administrators and community leaders improve access and utilization of healthcare



Impacts: In 2007, *HealthConnect*-branded activities included: (1) partnerships with the Mississippi Department of Health, Mississippi Primary Health Care Association, and the Delta Health Alliance; (2) more than \$500,000 of funding support; (3) development of a Health Spending Impact Model (HSIM); (4) academic presentations; and (5) numerous surveys, analyses and reports and other documents.

HealthConnect Accomplishments:

- Analysis of Health Care Coverage in the Laird Hospital Market Area.
- Health Care Provider Survey for Neshoba and Newton Counties.
- County Resource Directories for five rural MS counties.
- Development and analysis of health care surveys in
 - Neshoba and Newton Counties (400 responses).
 - 16 counties in the Mississippi Delta (6000 responses).
- Health Care Survey Summary Report – Delta Health Initiative
- Analysis of healthcare-related productivity.
- Economic impact analysis of health care in six rural MS counties and two rural health care service providers
- Strategic Planning for Hospitals:
 - Balanced Scorecard for Marks Hospital – Quitman County
 - Initial design and development of an Oracle database to support implementation of current and future strategic planning

- ***Expand Community Leadership Development Opportunities:*** Local communities need a constant flow of well-trained leaders who are able to tackle the complex set of challenges facing their community.

- *The FORUM, Oktibbeha County's Leadership Development Program:* The E&CRD Program has developed and managed this important program over the past four years with the fifth class scheduled to begin in August 2008. This initiative is aimed at enhancing the leadership potential of emerging and experienced leaders in the Starkville and Oktibbeha County community. During the program, members are highly engaged in community outreach through team service projects, committee assignments, and civic organization involvement. All 14 sessions, sponsored by a host of local businesses and organizations, are designed to offer a comprehensive, interactive experience for the participants that encourages maximum dialogue and discussion. While foundational leadership training serves as a basis for The Forum, sessions covering community development, economic development, and government are incorporated for a complete and balanced training that stimulates dynamic, outside-the-box thinking and community action. Individual research projects combined with community team projects engage participants outside of class that promotes sustainable community involvement. Due to the success of The Forum, several communities across Mississippi have asked the Extension Service to help initiate similar leadership programs in their area.



Impacts: The program has graduated 70 community leaders since its inception in September 2004.

- *LeadershipPlenty Training:* Mississippi State University Extension Service’s E&CRD Program continues to initiate and facilitate *LeadershipPlenty* programs across the state. This program is designed to equip residents with the skills and knowledge needed to improve their lives and communities through approximately 30 hours of training.

Impacts: Community leaders in Sharkey, Issaquena, Hinds, Rankin and Madison Counties have developed leadership and community level strategic planning skills to implement grassroots plans to effectively address the community issue of cardiovascular disease and stroke prevention. This was done through a partnership with the Mississippi State Department of Health Office of Preventive Health, the University Medical Center, the Jackson Heart Study, and the locally-based Certified Health Advisors Networks (CHANs).

- ***Smart Aging: Healthy Futures*** The *Smart Aging: Healthy Futures* project has been developed by Mississippi State University Extension Service to help communities foster healthy aging of their senior populations. Funded by the United States Department of Agriculture, CSREES, the project is being conducted in Oktibbeha, Clay, Copiah, and Lincoln Counties. In Copiah and Lincoln counties, work is being done with our partner, Copiah-Lincoln Community College. The three objectives of the project are: 1) to identify specific community resources and deficits relative to supporting the health and health care needs of a community’s rural senior population, 2) to engage communities in grassroots efforts to improve the health and health care accessibility of their rural senior populations, and 3) to initiate various health promotion activities and educational programs targeting rural aging populations within communities and their families and support systems.

The project elements consisted of “First Impression” visits, focus groups, and individual interviews which created a snapshot view of positive and negative attributes within the four counties that impact healthy aging. The results were presented at forums in the individual counties. Senior Health and Health Care Resource Directories by county were developed and distributed. Forums on healthy aging were held with senior citizens and resource organizations along with a senior health fair. Participants at the forums formed community action groups focusing on the top three projects listed in their counties to improve the health and health care of their senior population.

Impacts: Thus far, two senior citizens centers (Starkville and Crystal Springs) have been established as a direct result of the program. Twenty-five Healthy Future Volunteers have been trained and are delivering health messages to seniors in the four county region. In only two months’ time, over 170 seniors have participated in the Volunteer-led sessions. Over 5,500 Senior Health and Health Care Resource Directories have been distributed, and over 8,000 “Messages of the Month” have been delivered in the four county region.

- ***Work in Partnership with the Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC) at MS State University on Community and Economic Development Products/Resources:*** The E&CRD works with the SRDC in the development and educational and statistical resources that can support the community and economic development activities of local, state, regional and federal leaders, organizations, agencies, and others.
 - *Revisions of the “Ca\$hing in on Business Opportunities” Curriculum:* As one of the most successful products ever published by the SRDC, the “Ca\$hing in on Business

Opportunities” curriculum was in serious need of an update. Under the leadership of the Center and E&CRD faculty, an excellent team of land-grant faculty from across the nation was assembled to tackle the challenge of reviewing and revising the more than 20 modules of this comprehensive curriculum. The bulk of the revisions are complete and an updated version of the document will be released in 2008. Virtually all of the modules are relevant to the needs of entrepreneurs, small firms and home-based businesses in Mississippi and other regions of the nation.

- *Southern Region Data Information Toolkit:* The E&CRD program, in concert with the Southern Rural Development Center, has continued to expand a comprehensive demographic and economic data system relevant to the information needs of local leaders and organizations. A new Mid South Delta Data Library has been developed, one that provides local leaders and organizations with access to over 60 data variables on their respective counties. It will be of particular interest to those who are engaged in economic and community development planning activities in the Mississippi Delta region.
- *Rural America Tour - Visiting the Mid South Delta Region:* The SRDC and MS State University co-sponsored and assisted with an important regional tour hosted by the Farm Foundation in the Mississippi Delta region. Conducted over a three-day period, the tour provided opportunities for approximately 40 policymakers, representatives of community development organizations, NGO leaders, production agriculture, agribusiness leaders, university faculty, and state and national media to interact with individuals and organizations on the front line of rural economic development. The participants visited rural communities in Tennessee, Arkansas and Mississippi, and saw firsthand the hard work and ingenuity that local people were using in their quest to address the social, economic and environmental/natural resource challenges facing rural areas located in the Delta region.

4. Plans/New Directions for 2008-09:

Center for Governmental Training and Technology (CGT):



CGT is actively involved in a variety of important local government education programs, technical assistance activities, and the development of specialized publications that help increase the capacity of local government officials (county and municipal) to formulate and implement effective public policy and efficiently deliver services to their citizenry. The work of this Center accounts for approximately 75 percent of the educational programs available to county and municipal governments in the state. Its efforts for 2008-09 will include the following:

- *Deliver Educational Programs:* Deliver annually some 150 educational programs to 22 major groups of county and municipal officials to provide current information on their offices--duties and responsibilities, applicable laws and regulations, job performance measurement, etc., to aid the formulation, adoption, and implementation of effective public policy and the efficient delivery of services to the citizenry. Combined attendance at these educational programs exceeds 13,000 officials annually.

- *Provide Certification Programs:* Provide six (five legislatively-mandated) certification or training programs for local government officials through which some 5,500 municipal clerks, county purchase clerks, county receiving clerks, county inventory control clerks, municipal election officials, county tax assessors, and county tax appraisers, and county emergency management personnel achieve or renew official certification in their positions.
- *Offer Training on New/Emerging Issues:* Provide leadership training to county and municipal officials the address new or emerging local government activities or responsibilities.
- *Keep the Public Informed:* Provide information to the public concerning the organization and operation of local and state government and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in a democracy.
- *Work With State Agencies:* Cooperate and coordinate with appropriate state agencies (Office of the State Auditor, Office of the Attorney General, State Tax Commission, Mississippi Ethics Commission, Office of the Secretary of State, Division of State-Aid Roads, Department of Public Safety, Mississippi Emergency Management Agency, Planning and Development Districts, etc.) in the planning and delivery of education and training programs for county and municipal officials.
- *Provide Technical Assistance:* Deliver technical assistance to county and municipal officials in areas related to local government management--budget and finance, personnel administration, community services and facilities, environmental activities, information technology, etc.

Community Resource Development Program/Agricultural Economics Department:

The Community Resource Development component of the E&CRD program are involved in a variety of important efforts that address the comprehensive needs of communities across the state. Their principal activities include:

- *Diversify the Economy of Mississippi Communities:* Exploring a host of strategies that can help create new jobs is a top priority in communities across the state. The E&CRD unit works closely with communities on a multi-pronged approach to strengthening and sustaining their economic bases. These include business retention and expansion programs, entrepreneurship education, e-commerce strategies that are relevant to the needs of small-medium size firms, business recruitment/attraction studies, and identifying and reducing economic leakages.
- *Conduct Business Feasibility Studies:* Several current and potential business owners seek the help and guidance of the E&CRD program to determine the feasibility of launching a variety of business enterprises. Such feasibility studies equip business owners with the set of important facts they need to guide their business start-up or expansion plans.

- *Provide Economic Impact Analyses:* Local governments, local agencies, health sector firms, and other entities often seek science-based information on the potential or actual economic impact associated with the provision of various programs, facilities and services in the community. This is a high value activity provided by the E&CRD program in that it provides local government leaders, agency representatives, and other local organizations with guidance on the most effective and efficient use of their financial/fiscal resources.
- *Expand Community Leadership Development Opportunities:* To survive, local communities need a constant flow of well-trained leaders who are able to tackle the complex set of challenges facing their community. Responding to the community leadership development needs of communities is a key part of the work of the E&CRD program. Such efforts are an important part of ensuring that important investments are being made in the current, emerging, and future generation of community leaders in the state.
- *Improve Disaster Response and Management Activities:* The devastation associated with Hurricanes Katrina and Rita offered an important reminder of how individuals, families and communities must be positioned to respond to major disasters and emergencies. The E&CRD program is working on efforts to enhance the disaster response capability of communities across the state. One of the key efforts currently underway is to inventory existing Rural Water Systems to determine their risk of being impacted by natural or technological disasters.
- *Work in Partnership with the Southern Rural Development Center at MS State University on Community and Economic Development Products/Resources:* With its physical location on the MS State University campus, the Southern Rural Development Center represents an important resource that is working in collaboration with E&CRD faculty in the development of important economic/community development programs. In addition, the SRDC and E&CRD faculty have helped build important databases that offer local leaders and community-based organizations with ready access to a variety of economic, education, demographic, and social data that can help paint a picture of the important shifts taking place in various MS counties.
- *Smart Aging – Health Futures –* Designed to be self-sustaining projects with community ownership at its core, CD professionals will continue to provide technical assistance as needed for launched groups. Additionally, given the success of the pilot project, funding to expand this program will be sought.