

**2011-2012**

## **CED State Report Template**

**University: Arkansas**

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**Title: Interim Asst. Director CED/Director - Public Policy Center**

**Please briefly discuss:**

**1. Staffing changes (levels, new allocation system, staffing patterns, etc.)**

Staffing within Arkansas' CED program has been limited by the financial difficulties of the times. The Arkansas Legislature has required agencies to demonstrate efforts to reduce expenses. One way Arkansas Extension has used to meet these Legislative expectations is to hold vacant positions open. CED has held two staff positions vacant for six months. We were recently given the ok to post the position vacancies for new hires. The unit should be fully staffed by mid September 2012.

**2. Financial Changes (budget cuts / growth, new funding opportunities, new partners, etc.)**

Budgets have remained flat for the past two years. New funding has been the product of development support and project engagement in issues of Energy and Water Planning; Disaster Planning and Recovery; Regional and Community Asset Mapping and Strategic Planning (including the multistate Stronger Economies Together project); Small Business Development and Support (especially in the area of government contracting); County based Planning and Government Finance; Community Engagement and Stakeholder Involvement in Stormwater Management; and Water Conservation and Quality Education.

**3. Notable programming successes and their impact**

The Arkansas Procurement Assistance Center continues to provide small and minority businesses with opportunities to succeed in the business of working with government entities at all levels. The program has an average contract success value exceeding ninety million dollars annually over the past six years.

Breakthrough Solutions is a regional asset mapping and community planning effort that brings together an extraordinary group of resources in support of interested communities. The city of Harrison, AR produced a plan for their declining downtown area. Included were pedestrian and bike friendly streets and easy access to attractive new and existing downtown businesses. Since the program, the city has added thirty-two new businesses and is still growing.

FEMA has supported multistate research and the development of educational and training materials on disaster preparedness in disadvantaged communities. The ReadyCommunity curriculum is a result of this work. It is currently being piloted in 5 states and will be rolled out nationally in the fall of 2013.

CED has taken the lead in organizing efforts to distribute information on drought response. The Arkansas Drought Resource Center blog has almost 6000 state, national and international hits to date since its launch in the middle of July.

#### 4. New initiatives proposed

A voter education effort focused on identified county locations with historically low percentage voter turnout.

A first time voter and community civic engagement program focused toward engaging older teens.

Stakeholder engagement plans and tools for statewide planning efforts –planning efforts include: water, energy, solid waste management.

#### 5. Opportunities for collaboration

Sharing

- tools and methodologies for planning and engagement at local and state levels
- CRED indicators
- disaster preparation and response tools
- experiences and barriers
- targeted educational opportunities
- information on audiences
- issues/topics
- product development, including that for social media, Smart phone and iPad apps related to issues of community.

We need measurable outcomes related to rural broadband access. Success stories and other tools to better leverage support for economical access in rural communities are important components of getting support at all levels.

#### 6. General Comments:

Thanks to all for keeping us connected.