FY 2012 Plan of Work

Overview

Background
The Western Rural Development Center will collaborate with western land-grant university faculty and its other public and private sector partners to launch efforts to strengthen and increase research, program development, trainings, and services in each of its priority areas.

Mission
The WRDC collaborates with western land-grant universities and public and private sector partners to promote excellence in research, education, and extension for the prosperity of western rural communities.

Goals
The WRDC strengthens rural communities by sharing scientific discovery and application of sustainable practices with rural citizens via conferences, trainings, Web 2.0, and publications. The Center aims to help rural communities prosper, thrive economically, and become self-sustaining.

Priority Areas
The Western Rural Development Center works to strengthen rural communities in the West by focusing its efforts within three priority areas that were identified during its regional strategic planning process in 2009.

These priority areas are:

1. Enhance Human Capacity through People-Based Rural Development
2. Create Vibrant Rural Economies through Place-Based Rural Development
3. Sustainable Natural Resource Development to Promote Job Creation

PRIORITY ONE:
People-Based Rural Development

The Western Rural Development Center will continue to work with the region's land-grant institutions and its partners in people-based rural development to enhance human capacity. The Western Extension Directors have tasked the WRDC with building their employees' capacity through regional professional development workshops and trainings. Below are the activities the WRDC will initiative and/or continue in support of this priority area.

1. **Addressing the Rural Development Concerns of the West**

   The "Addressing the Rural Development Concerns of the West" Western Extension Research Activity is open to Western Extension specialists, researchers, and educators who are interested in multi-disciplinary, multi-state research and publication opportunities.

   a. In FY 2012 the WRDC will coordinate this group to publish a series of peer reviewed regional briefs on topics relevant to the committee members current research and activities. Topics may include:

      i. Broadband Telecommunications Infrastructure Market Penetration in the West (Harris, NV)

      ii. The Economic Impact of Renewable Energy Development in the West (Coupal, WY)

      iii. Assessing, Managing, and Mitigating Impacts of Economic Decline (Bentley, UT)

      iv. The Benefits of Fiscal Economic Impact Modeling for Small & Rural Communities (Borden, NV)

      v. The Importance of Capturing Local Retail Sales (Patrick, NM)

2. **Convening of the Western Community Development Extension Specialists**

   The Western Community Development Extension Specialists (CDES) are separated by vast geographical distances and have few opportunities to meet with their regional colleagues to share ideas and discuss regional approaches to rural community development. In 2010, the WRDC received the approval of the Western Extension Directors Association to initiate an annual Convening of Western Community Development Extension Specialists.

a. The Western Rural Development Center will coordinate the 2012 meeting of the Western Community Development Extension Professionals to coincide with the National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals (NACDEP) annual conference being held in Park City, Utah in May 2012.

3. Enhancing Rural Capacity – eXtension Community of Practice

The eXtension Community of Practice, Enhancing Rural Capacity, was created by the Regional Rural Development Centers and is comprised of a team of Cooperative Extension faculty, staff, practitioners, and researchers dedicated to creating a comprehensive virtual learning environment focused on building and sustaining vibrant rural communities.

a. The WRDC's Don Albrecht and Betsy Newman serve on the leadership team and will continue to support and guide the efforts of this Community of Practice.

b. Betsy was identified as the Community's marketing and communications specialist and will continue working with the group to develop the materials and promote the Community of Practice and its events.

4. Building Extension's Public Value and Taking it Social Workshop

Cooperative Extension and its programs and research are well known to Extension employees and older audiences; however, Cooperative Extension is not "top of mind" with the general public and younger audiences when it comes to getting answers to their questions. Furthermore, as federal, state, and county budgets are stretched further than in the past it becomes increasingly important for Cooperative Extension employees to effectively communicate the public value of their work.

a. The Center will develop and host a one and a half day workshop in Salt Lake City, Utah, for Extension researchers, educators, and communicators featuring the "Building Extension's Public Value" curriculum by University of Minnesota's Laura Kalambokidis. Included in the workshop will be:
    i. An introduction by eXtension on the importance of communicating Extension's public value;

    ii. An overview of one western cooperative extension communications team to inform the public about their services value;
    iii. And a special session on using social media to build public value by Michele Payne-Knoper, Cause Matters, Inc.

b. The workshop budget will be developed to ensure participant registration fees cover all workshop-related expenses including WRDC staff time. The workshop will only take place if the minimum number of registrations is received to cover all costs.

5. Rural Connections

Rural Connections is a magazine published twice each year by the WRDC to inform the nation on the research and activities relating to the issues affecting the rural West. The magazine provides publication opportunities for researchers, faculty, Extension researchers and educators, practitioners, and professionals from throughout the region and nation. *Rural Connections* is intended to appeal to a broad audience and to showcase activities at the land-grant institutions and beyond along with those with a public-private sector collaboration.

a. The WRDC will publish two issues in FY 2012 and possibly three as Stanford University's Rural West Initiative has asked the Center to publish a special issue from its Rural West Conference being held in Ogden, Utah later this year. The number of issues published will be determined by the availability of funds.

PRIORITY TWO:
Place-Based Rural Development

The Western Rural Development Center will continue to work with the region's land-grant institutions and its partners in place-based rural development to create vibrant communities. Below are the activities the WRDC will initiate and/or continue in support of this priority area.

1. **Regional Rural Development Policy Research Center**

   The objective of the Policy Research Centers is to provide relatively quick response for policy makers and others relative to the major concerns facing rural areas in the United States.

   a. The Regional Rural Development Centers have been awarded one of five Policy Research Center grants funded by USDA's Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI).

   b. The four RRDC Directors will manage the Regional Rural Development Policy Research Center with input provided by an Advisory Council comprised of faculty, researchers, and professionals from each region of the U.S.

   c. The policy center will utilize the RRDC's national network of top researchers to conduct research on a variety of rural issues and concerns.

   d. The Western Rural Development Center will oversee the policy research center's publication series of policy briefs.

2. **Regional and National Broadband Education and Adoption Initiatives**

   In today's global economy, it is vital that workers have access to skills that allow them to utilize modern information and communication technology. Cooperative Extension is poised to develop and deliver broadband education and adoption training to rural residents.

   a. Numerous Extension professionals throughout the country were independently developing education and training curricula to provide the residents of rural communities with the necessary skills to fully adopt and utilize these new technologies for new business and job creation.

   b. The Regional Rural Development Centers are working to coordinate Cooperative Extension's future curriculum development and training

implementation to avoid redundancy and capitalize on the knowledge and expertise of Extension educators nationwide. This effort was launched in December 2011 with a meeting of Extension professionals coordinated by Don Albrecht and Bo Beaulieu (SRDC).

c. The Western Rural Development Center will coordinate curriculum development programs in the West, and when the curriculum is more completely developed, will provide train-the-trainer workshops for the region's Extension educators.

3. Community Business Matching Model

The Community Business Matching Model has been developed and implemented by western Extension researchers and received significant seed funding from the Western Rural Development Center. While Most economic development programs fail to recognize the interdependence between industry demands and the preferences and assets of the community to develop a holistic, sustainable community economic development strategy, the Community Business Matching (CBM) program has been developed to bridge this gap by providing a framework for communities to use to prioritize their development goals and identify the assets they have to help them achieve their goals. The CBM model fits these goals and assets to business profiles in order to assist in development decisions that reflect the desires of community members.

a. During FY 2012, the Western Rural Development Center will once again coordinate the development team's annual meeting.

    i. In FY 2011, CBM was used to effectively to bring significant job growth to Anaconda, Montana, and Laughlin, Nevada.

4. SET Regional Economic Development Opportunities – Phase III

The Western Rural Development Center in collaboration with the other three Regional Rural Development Centers were awarded phase-three funding by USDA Rural Development to further develop and deliver a national community and economic development curriculum based on regional development. The curriculum is known as Strengthening Economies Together (SET).

a. In the West, Nevada was awarded Phase III funding and during FY 2012 the WRDC will be coordinating their efforts to launch SET by working closely with staff from both Nevada's USDA Rural Development and Cooperative Extension.

5. **ReadyCommunity – Building Disaster-Resilient Places**

   The Western Rural Development Center in collaboration with the other three Regional Rural Development Centers received funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to develop a community-based, disaster preparedness curriculum for underserved populations. A companion to FEMA's Comprehensive Preparedness Guide 101, ReadyCommunity provides a process to help guide the work of local communities in planning for a disaster.

   a. The WRDC's Don Albrecht and Betsy Newman serve on the national curriculum team and will continue in this capacity during FY 2012.

   b. During FY 2011 the curriculum team presented the curriculum to the Extension Facilitators from each of the four pilot communities. Based on their recommendations, the curriculum is being revised. At the same time, the Extension Facilitators are delivering it to their communities.

   c. The WRDC plans to coordinate a facilitator training for Western Extension Educators once the curriculum is finalized. This may not occur until FY 2013.

PRIORITY THREE:
Sustainable Natural Resource Development

The Western Rural Development Center will continue to work with the region's land-grant institutions and its partners in sustainable natural resource development to promote job creation. Below are the activities the WRDC will initiate and/or continue in support of this priority area.

1. **2013 National Climate Assessment Report**

   The National Climate Assessment is conducted under the auspices of the Global Change Research Act of 1990. The GCRA requires a report to the President and Congress every four years. The National climate assessments act as status reports about climate change science and impacts.

   a. The Western Rural Development Center's Director, Don Albrecht, has been invited to participate in the development of the Rural Impacts section of the 2013 Assessment and will devote time during FY 2012 to this work.

   b. The U.S. Global Change Research Program hosted an initial meeting of the assessment team in Charleston, South Carolina, and Don participated in this gathering.
      i. The staff at the U.S. Global Change Research Program extended this invitation to Don based largely on the June 2012 issue of *Rural Connections* on Climate Change in the West.

2. **Consortium for Renewable Energy in the West**

   The Western Extension Directors and Western Agricultural Experiment Station Directors created the Consortium for Renewable Energy in the West (CREW) to encourage collaboration on energy development related research, Extension, education, and policy development.

   a. During CREW's FY 2011 annual meeting, three expert groups were formed and members of the Consortium are now organized into these groups. They are: 1) wind energy, 2) conservation and efficiency, and 3) socioeconomic issues associated with renewable energy development.

   b. Each of CREW's three groups is moving forward with research and extension programs.

   c. During FY 2012, CREW's three groups will be hold independent meetings each organized by the group's leadership.

d. The leadership for each group will submit a written summary of the meeting and submit it to the Western Rural Development Center. The Center will then share the reports with the entire Consortium.

e. The Western Rural Development Center will coordinate the meeting FY 2012 meeting for the socioeconomic group (see #3 below).

3. Exploring Energy Efficiency and Alternatives Toolkit: A Training for Extension Educators

The Exploring Energy Efficiency and Alternatives (E^3A) Toolkit was developed by CREW members Sarah Hamlen (Montana State University) and Milton Geiger (University of Wyoming). It was developed as a self-guided curriculum to make energy discussions with constituents easy for Extension faculty well versed in energy education, as well as those with limited energy experience.

a. The WRDC will coordinate a two-day, face-to-face training for Western Extension Educators on the use and application of the toolkit.

4. Socioeconomic Impacts of Renewable Energy Development in the West Conference

The Western Rural Development Center has been introduced to Leann Oliver, Senior Advisor for Clean Energy and Rural Development, Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, Department of Energy, and she has expressed interest in meeting with CREW's socioeconomic group. The Center proposes taking this one step further and hosting a small regional conference with Ms. Oliver as the keynote speaker.

a. The conference will bring together faculty and researchers working in the social sciences to review, discuss, and analyze the socioeconomic impacts of renewable energy development in the Western U.S. This includes researchers from the Economic Research Service of USDA.

b. The WRDC will issue a Call for Presenters. Using a peer review process, the WRDC will select the conference presenters, develop the agenda, and coordinate all aspects of the conference.

c. Additionally, the WRDC will publish the conference papers within six months of the event.

Regional Support and Capacity-Building Activities

The Western Rural Development Center will continue its involvement in activities that support the increased capacity of the region's land-grant institutions as it pertains to rural community development. The Center will also continue its efforts of engaging and informing the public on the myriad of issues affecting the Western U.S.

1. **Board of Directors**

   The Western Rural Development Center appreciates the support and guidance provided by its Board of Directors and looks forward to continued engagement with them.

   a. The Center will continue to host quarterly conference calls with the Board of Directors, and an annual face-to-face meeting.

   b. The Center will begin sending the Board a brief, monthly email updating them on the Center's activities.

2. **Regional Rural Development Centers**

   The WRDC staff will continue to host monthly conference calls with the staff at its sister centers.

   a. The WRDC staff will continue collaborating with the RRDC staff on joint projects including SET, ReadyCommunity, Foundations of Practice, the rrdc.info website, and quarterly meetings in Washington D.C.

3. **Regional Land-Grant Institutions**

   The WRDC staff will continue to engage the region's land-grant institutions via workshops, conferences, monthly newsletter, *Rural Connections*, and social media channels.

   a. New in FY 2012, the WRDC is showcasing each of the West's Cooperative Extension Services on its website.

   b. In response to a request from the Western Extension Directors, the Center will create and maintain a web-based list of Extension Professionals by area of expertise. This will be housed on the WRDC website and updated annually.

4. **Regional State and Local Governments**

   The WRDC will continue to collaborate with regional state and local governments.

a. In FY 2012 the WRDC will continue its work with the State of Utah's Office of Economic Development on its broadband initiative, and will fully embrace other opportunities when they present themselves.

5. National Associations and Networks

The WRDC's staff will continue to attend professional development conferences, and to represent the region on local, regional, and national committees.

a. Don Albrecht is actively engaged with the Rural Sociological Society, NACDEP, and Society and Natural Resources. He serves as a peer reviewer for *Choices*, the journal of Rural Social Sciences, Social Forces and Sociological Spectrum, and is on the editorial board of Stanford's Rural West Initiative.

b. Betsy Newman serves as an Extension Disaster Education (EDEN) delegate and a member of EDEN's Social Media Team. She is an active member of the Rural Wealth Creation and Livelihoods Community of Practice, and the National Association of Communications Excellence in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Family and Human Sciences.

c. Trish Kingsford serves as a committee chair for Utah State University's Classified Employees Association.

6. Partnership Development

The WRDC staff will continue to build partnerships to effect positive change for the rural West.