

California Rural Development Roundtable



Summary of California Rural Development Roundtable

Davis, California

September 17, 2009

Those in Attendance:

Don Albrecht – Western Rural Development Center

Sheldon Jones – Farm Foundation

David Campbell – UC Davis - Extension

Mike Chapel – USDA Forest Service

Sandy Denn – Family Farm Alliance

Gail Feenstra – UC Davis – SAREP

Holly George – UC Cooperative Extension

David Harry – UC Davis – Center for Health and Technology

Glenda Humiston – California USDA Rural Development

Mary Kaems – California Assembly

Joan Keegan – Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Trish Kelly – Applied Development Economics

Don Kryszakowski – CS Chico – Economic Development

Penny Leff – UC Small Farm Program – Agritourism

Jonathan London – UC Davis – Center for Regional Change

Jeff Loux – UC Davis Extension

Kathy Moxon – Redwood Coast Rural Action

Joanne Neft – Placer County Foothill Farmers Market

Elisa Noble – California Farm Bureau

Sofia Parino – Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment

Brandon Sanders – Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Robert Wiener – California Coalition for Rural Housing

Session One: What do we value about the rural areas of California?

Participants were asked to list their three to four most important positive features about California's rural areas. Their responses were:

1. Natural beauty, resources and open landscapes that provide recreational, spiritual and cultural opportunities.

2. Unique communities that are close knit, diverse, innovative, resilient, and friendly. Residents wear many hats and care about each other.
3. Abundant natural resources providing biodiversity, ecosystem services, capacity for production of food, fiber, fisheries, wood products and renewable energy, and other economic opportunities.
4. Regional collaboration and benefits associated with bringing multiple communities together exist, including the opportunity to influence local politics.

Session Two: Priorities for Strengthening the Future of Rural Areas

Participants were asked: As you ponder the future of your state’s rural areas, which of the following general rural development topics would you (personally) identify as being of highest priority to promoting the long-term survival and strength of these areas? That is, what **THREE** broad areas listed below would you select as being of “highest priority” for the future of rural counties and communities in your state?

- Economic Development
- Economic/Social Inequality and Poverty
- Education and Workforce Development
- Health and Nutrition
- Housing
- Information and Communication Technologies
- Leadership, Citizen Participation and Rural Public Policy
- Population Change/Migration Patterns
- Public Land Use and Management
- Public Services/Public Infrastructure
- Renewable Energy Development
- Rural and Entrepreneurial Development
- Rural-Urban Interface and Growth Management
- Water, Biodiversity and other Natural Resources
- Other areas not listed above (please list):

Then the group narrowed down the individual responses into the following three priorities:

1. Leadership, citizen participation, civic education, the capacity to influence policy and the future (bridge the urban/suburban/rural divide).
2. Availability of and access to quality education, healthcare, nutrition, housing, jobs, and adequate public infrastructure to all segments of the population.
3. Tools and resources to facilitate sustainable economic and workforce development, entrepreneurial activities and stewardship, and use of public and private natural resources.

Session Three: Digging Deeper into the Three Priority Areas

Next participants were asked to take these three priority areas they identified during Session Two and identify challenges and strategies/initiatives that could be launched to address the challenges. Their responses were:

1. Leadership, citizen participation, civic education, the capacity to influence policy and the future (bridge the urban/suburban/rural divide)
 - a. Why is this a major issue?
 - i. Few people know how to run a meeting
 - ii. People are unfamiliar with the language used in government
 - iii. Fragmentation or duplication of government makes involvement difficult
 - iv. Capacity of organizations is not robust enough
 - v. Lack of scientific literacy
 - vi. Lack of political literacy
 - vii. Lack of political power because of lack of numbers
 - viii. Diversity of voices in policy is lacking
 - ix. Basic distrust of government because of apathy and frustration
 - x. We lack mutually agreed upon values for natural resources and ecosystem services
 - xi. Lack of coordination across jurisdictions
 - b. Strategies/initiatives to address this issue
 - i. Build the capacity of organizations and local governments
 - ii. Focus on mutually agreed upon principles
 - iii. Consolidated rural training consortium
 - iv. Engage in basic civic education
 - v. Share information, intentions, transparency and concerns – share best practices
 - vi. Help plan for leadership succession – use interns
 - vii. Universities need to provide information and translate into language people can understand
 - viii. Get everybody linked to the global world
 - ix. Reinvent the public hearing process – implement processes that work
 - x. Take personal responsibility for effecting change
2. Availability of and access to quality education, healthcare, nutrition, housing, jobs, and adequate public infrastructure to all segments of the population.
 - a. Why is this a major issue?
 - i. It is self-evident that many rural residents lack these things.
 - b. Strategies/initiatives to address the issue
 - i. Follow-up opportunities to blend various sources of public and private financing

- ii. Provide opportunities for low income groups to housing – create a statewide housing trust fund. Implement statewide mandatory inclusionary housing.
 - iii. Implement transfer of development rights
 - iv. Buy local/source local/employ local
 - v. Provide incentives to attract professionals
 - vi. Find ways to provide adequate public infrastructure – opportunities for exceptions to protocols – one size does not fit all
 - vii. Find effective means of funding for services and infrastructure that occurs from natural growth such as land value recapture
 - viii. Encourage green jobs – tie to buy-local efforts
 - ix. Grow new jobs – use CDFA and fairgrounds for incubators
 - x. Develop health department approved kitchens at county fairgrounds
3. Tools and resources to facilitate sustainable economic and workforce development, entrepreneurial activities and stewardship, and use of public and private natural resources.
- a. Why is this a problem?
 - i. It is evident that economic and workforce development levels are inadequate
 - ii. The most promising source of new economic activity is through entrepreneurial activities
 - iii. Economic development must entail the stewardship of natural resources
 - b. Strategies/initiatives to address the issue
 - i. Develop a rural innovation clearinghouse
 - ii. Be creative to match different sources of public and private funding
 - iii. Find a way to streamline the regulatory gridlock
 - iv. Recognize that litigation is not the only way to form policy
 - v. Find a way to use binding arbitration
 - vi. Link work force development to resource-related jobs
 - vii. Facilitate exchange or interdisciplinary crossover training
 - viii. Develop industry cluster initiatives

Session Four: Research and Extension Needs and Potential Partners

Finally, participants were asked to identify what they felt are the most critical roles that should be played by your state’s land-grant universities in relation to the THREE priority areas identified in Session Two and discussed in Session Three. Their responses were:

- 1. Research Needs
 - a. Do comparative studies
 - b. Provide a better understanding of rural power structures and how they shape policy and development processes
 - c. Provide a better understanding of environmental justice and inequities
 - d. Provide an assessment of rural economic development models

2. Extension and outreach needs
 - a. Implement industry cluster process in rural areas, and recognize that this is part art and part science. To be effective communities need help from the university.
 - b. WRDC can work with partners to develop a listserv and run a western clearinghouse
 - c. Develop tools for grassroots collaboration
 - d. See where resources exist and employ them across state lines

3. Potential partners
 - a. State legislature
 - b. Other universities and K-12 schools
 - c. Redwood Coast Rural Action
 - d. Farmers' Markets
 - e. Local governments
 - f. Farm Bureau
 - g. Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment
 - h. Sierra Nevada Conservancy
 - i. California Coalition for Rural Housing
 - j. Family Farm Alliance
 - k. Federal agencies including USDA RD and land management agencies
 - l. Applied Development Economics