

# Colorado Rural Development Roundtable



## Summary of Colorado Rural Development Roundtable

Denver, Colorado

April 8, 2009

### Those in Attendance:

Don Albrecht – Western Rural Development Center  
Sheldon Jones – Farm Foundation  
Clarke Becker – Colorado Rural Development Council  
Jan Carroll – Colorado State University Extension  
April Dahlager – USDA Rural Development  
Stephan Davies – Agriculture and Resource Economics, Colorado State University  
Lacy Davis – Farm Credit of Southern Colorado  
Cheri Ford – U.S. Forest Service  
Mike Harrington –WAAESD  
Jeff Jahnke –Colorado State Forest Service  
Susan Kirkpatrick –Colorado Department of Local Affairs  
Nathan Moreng – Colorado State University Extension  
Joel Plath – Colorado State University Extension  
JoAnn Powell – Colorado State University Extension  
Florine Raitano – Rural Development Specialist, LLC  
Tim Reeser – Cenergy  
Dolores Sanchez-Maes – USDA Rural Development  
Cathy Shull – Progressive 15  
Deborah Young – Colorado State University Extension

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

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

1. Strong sense of community – people care for one another
2. Extensive and diverse natural resources that people have a sense of stewardship toward
3. People have an attitude of independence, self-reliance and entrepreneurship
4. Generational ties to home – a place of roots
5. Rural areas provide extensive services – food, water, energy, amenities etc. that make life possible and enjoyable

## 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):

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

1. Improve human and social capital
2. Improve economic capital
3. Improve environmental capital

## 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. Improve human and social capital
  - a. Specific challenges faced by rural areas in Colorado
    - i. Diversity – There is a need to improve our understanding of ethnic and cultural diversity. Similarly, there is a need for people of different age groups to understand one another.
    - ii. Leadership – There is concern that the younger generation is not involved in community leadership.
    - iii. Social inequality – The gap between the wealthy and poor is extensive. Workers in several affluent resort communities are unable to afford to live in the community. Affordable housing is a significant concern. Equitable access to health care, broadband and education are concerns.

- b. Strategies/initiatives that should be launched
      - i. Diversity - Programs have been developed and need to be made available to help communities increase their understanding and appreciation of diversity.
      - ii. Leadership - Leadership development programs are needed, which includes programs to improve community collaboration.
      - iii. Social inequality - Perhaps the center could play the role of researching and articulating these social inequality concerns.
- 2. Improve economic capital
  - a. Specific challenges faced by rural areas in Colorado
    - i. There is a need for more and better jobs in rural Colorado.
    - ii. Renewable energy has the potential of creating many jobs in rural Colorado in the future.
  - b. Strategies/initiatives that should be launched
    - i. More and better jobs - Emphasis should be placed on “growing your own” businesses by fostering entrepreneurial development. Many people have a desire to do things on their own, and to a greater extent than ever before, there are opportunities for rural entrepreneurs. Programs need to be implemented to help people know where to start and what to do. Programs such as e-commerce could have a great impact if they were to reach a large audience.
    - ii. Renewable energy - Basic research is needed to answer questions about the viability and scale of various renewable energy sources. Then individuals and communities can make informed decisions about investments.
- 3. Improve environmental capital
  - a. Specific challenges faced by rural areas in Colorado
    - i. Water is a major concern.
    - ii. Among other environmental problems that were discussed include the pine beetle infestation and the spread of tamarisk.
  - b. Strategies/initiatives that should be launched
    - i. Water - The discussion emphasized examining the entire watershed and learning to survive in a disturbance environment. The WRDC and Land Grant Universities can perform a valuable role through educational programs that help the public understand water issues and programs to improve water conservation.
    - ii. Other environmental problems - Education programs are greatly needed to help people understand these critical environmental issues and make it possible for management programs to be carried out with public support.

#### **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. Demographic studies of the extent and components of ethnic population change, the changing age structure of the population and inequality levels.
  - b. Studies of the involvement levels in community leadership of persons from different age and ethnicity categories.
  - c. Studies to help individuals and communities understand the feasibility of and appropriate development scales for various forms of renewable energy.
  
2. Extension/Outreach Needs
  - a. Diversity programs to help communities understand and cope with ethnic and age diversity
  - b. Leadership development programs, which include programs to increase community collaboration
  - c. Entrepreneurial development programs such as e-commerce
  - d. Extend findings from renewable energy studies
  - e. Educational programs to improve awareness of natural resource issues and to improve resource conservation
  
3. Potential Partners for WRDC and Land Grant Universities
  - a. Federal land management and other federal agencies
  - b. Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC)
  - c. Councils of government and local government – NACo
  - d. State government agencies
  - e. Private industry
  - f. Community colleges