

Hawaii Rural Development Roundtable



Summary of Hawaii Rural Development Roundtable

Kihei, Hawaii

January 7, 2009

Those in Attendance:

Don Albrecht – Western Rural Development Center
Sheldon Jones – Farm Foundation
Linda Cox – University of Hawaii Extension
Alexa Bassinger – Maui Economic Development Board
Tom Mason – Maui County Extension
Vance Christensen – USDA Farm Services Agency
Faith Umetsu – USDA Farm Services Agency
Steven Chiang – University of Hawaii – Agribusiness Incubator
David Fisher – Small Business Development Council

Session one: What do we value about the rural areas of Hawaii?

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

1. Unique natural environment and climate – the unspoiled ecosystem
2. Rural values that emphasize commitment to family and community
3. Relaxed life style
4. Excellent opportunities for ecotourism

Session Two: Priority Concerns:

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. Education and Workforce Development
2. Natural and Environmental Resources Management
3. Community Defined Sustainable Development

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. Education and Workforce Development
 - a. Specific challenges faced by rural areas in Hawaii:
 - i. Access – a state comprised of islands presents significant geographic barriers
 - ii. Low-quality public schools
 - iii. Lack of vocational training opportunities on some islands
 - iv. Lack of home rule – There are no local school boards. All decisions are made by a state school board, with little knowledge of local circumstances
 - v. No Child Left Behind Legislation requires teachers to teach to a test developed far away, which limits the opportunities to teach about local culture and history.
 - b. Strategies /initiatives that should be launched:
 - i. Greater use of technology and distance education. They could use help with content
 - ii. Provide entrepreneurial exposure – especially K-12 to empower young people
 - iii. Allow home rule

2. Natural and Environmental Resources Management
 - a. Specific challenges faced by rural areas in Hawaii:
 - i. Major problems with invasive species on islands with a very unique and very fragile environment
 - ii. 72% of the species that have become extinct in the United States are from Hawaii
 - iii. Agricultural land preservation. Agriculture is declining on the islands and agricultural lands are being converted to higher uses. This is part of a larger problem of the loss of open space to development
 - iv. Water shortages. Heavy rain falls on the windward side of the islands, but most of it quickly runs down steep hillsides to the ocean. Obtaining adequate fresh water for domestic and agricultural uses is a major concern
 - v. Near shore pollution
 - b. Strategies/initiatives that should be launched:
 - i. Provide science-based information on these issues
 - ii. Create a master plan for development that protects critical resources
3. Community Defined Sustainable Economic Development
 - a. Specific challenges faced by rural areas in Hawaii:
 - i. The Hawaii economy is very dependent on tourism. Many of the jobs in the tourism sector are low quality. Agricultural employment has been declining.
 - ii. Most food and fuel have to be shipped in which contributes to a very high cost of living.
 - b. Strategies/initiatives that should be launched:
 - i. Diversify economy by providing incentives to attract industries that do not detract from the environment
 - ii. Through entrepreneurial development, develop homegrown industries that tie into the global economy. High tech industries seem especially desirable.

Session Four: 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. Accurate information on educational attainment levels and an understanding of the relationship between education, employment and income.

- b. Science-based information on natural and environmental resource issues.
2. Extension/Outreach Needs
- a. Entrepreneurial development programs, especially K-12 programs.
 - b. E-commerce and Internet mastery programs.
 - c. Content for distance education programs.
 - d. Articulate natural and environmental resource concerns and develop programs that encourage conservation.
3. Potential Partners for WRDC and Land Grant Universities
- a. Federal agencies
 - b. State government agencies
 - c. Local city and county governments
 - d. Private industry
 - e. Community colleges