WESTERN RURAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER
2017 Annual Report
Helping rural communities to prosper, thrive economically, and become self-sustaining.
The Western Rural Development Center (WRDC) is one of four regional centers funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) to strengthen the capacity of local citizens to guide the future of their rural communities. Each Center links the research and Extension capacity of regional land-grant universities with local decision-makers to address a wide range of rural development issues. The Western Rural Development Center is hosted by Utah State University and receives support from Utah State University Extension and the Utah Agricultural Experiment Station. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of Agriculture or other funders. The Western Rural Development Center does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, or veteran status. This material is based upon work that is supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under award number 2017-51150-27127. SBIR OTTA material is based upon work that is supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under award number 2016-70022-25565.
I have deep roots in rural America. I grew up on a farm in a small and isolated rural community where the nearest doctor was over 50 miles away. After leaving the farm, I have spent my entire professional career seeking to understand rural America and suggesting programs and policies to address the problems and concerns of rural residents. I often tell people that I have the best job in the world. I get to spend my time in beautiful rural places and interact with leaders and other residents of rural America as we work together on issues that I care deeply about. The rural people I work with are extremely talented and capable. It is a pleasure to share ideas and learn from them.

After a lifetime of study and observation, I am fully aware of the severity of the concerns and problems faced by rural residents. Most significant are the economic problems resulting from declining employment in the industries that have traditionally been the major employers of rural workers such as manufacturing and the resource-based industries of agriculture, logging, and mining. The subsequent unemployment and stagnant wages have resulted in severe social problems such as high levels of substance abuse. These economic problems are complex and there are no easy solutions.

Yet, I am very optimistic about the future of rural America. It is apparent to me that opportunities currently exist in rural America that were not available to previous rural residents. Specifically, recent developments in information and communication technology have opened doors that were previously closed. Residents of rural America can now be connected to consumers and markets anywhere in the world. Addressing rural concerns means taking advantage of new opportunities rather than attempting to rebuild their economies on industries that have been in decline for decades.

I am very pleased with the accomplishments of the Western Rural Development Center (WRDC) during the past year, and I am excited about our current programs. I am convinced these programs will bring benefits to rural communities and their residents, and the details of these programs are outlined in the pages that follow.

Everything we do at the WRDC is dependent on working cooperatively with our partners. I very much appreciate the support of our many partners from federal, state and local government, the private sector, and nonprofits. We are especially indebted to the capable assistance of Brent Elrod, our National Program Leader at the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA); Ken White, the Chair of our Board and the VP of Extension at our host institution, Utah State University; and our Board of Directors. Much of the success we enjoy at the WRDC is a direct consequence of the capable work of Assistant Director Betsy Newman and Staff Assistant Deanna Thompson. Both are most capable and do incredible work. In addition, they are a pleasure to be around, and make my time at the office very enjoyable.
The U.S. Government Interagency Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity Report, published by the United States Department of Agriculture, identified the following call to actions to increase prosperity in rural America:

1. Achieving e-Connectivity for Rural America
2. Improving Quality of Life
3. Supporting a Rural Workforce
4. Harnessing Technological Innovation
5. Developing the Rural Economy

The Western Rural Development Center’s current projects and activities support four of the five call to actions identified by the Interagency Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity. The SBIR Outreach and Technical Training, the Area Sector Analysis Process for Communities, and the Rural Workforce Development Research and Extension Programs support call to actions three, four, and five. The book, “Rural Housing and Economic Development,” serves to address call to action number two.

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2017 PROJECTS ADDRESSING TASK FORCE CALL TO ACTIONS:

- BOOK ON RURAL HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
- AREA SECTOR ANALYSIS PROCESS
- SMALL BUSINESS INNOVATION RESEARCH OUTREACH AND TECHNICAL TRAINING
- RURAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH AND EXTENSION PROGRAMS
MISSION & GOALS

MISSION
The Western Rural Development Center 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 Western Rural Development Center works as a regional catalyst to strengthen rural communities by sharing scientific discovery and application of sustainable practices with researchers, Extension educators, and community development practitioners via conferences, trainings, workshops, and publications. The overarching goal is to help rural communities prosper, thrive economically, and become self-sustaining.

In order to more effectively address these issues and the emerging concerns facing the residents of the rural West, the Western Rural Development Center (WRDC) focuses its efforts on three priority areas. These priority areas were developed following the regional roundtables we held throughout the West in 2008. The three priority areas are:

1. People-Based Development
2. Place-Based Development
3. Sustainable Natural Resource Development

REGIONAL FOCUS NATIONAL IMPACT
This report highlights some of our activities and accomplishments from 2017. View past accomplishments in our previous years’ reports on the website.

WRDC.USU.EDU/ANNUAL-REPORTS
In 2017, the Western Rural Development Center and our director, Don Albrecht, were honored with not one but two awards for our work with rural communities in the West. How exciting is that?! We were deeply moved to have been considered for these awards and very grateful to the many people who worked tirelessly with us to provide assistance and tools to communities throughout the region, and to further build the community development capacity of Extension in the West.

**WESTERN PLANNER OF THE YEAR - DON ALBRECHT**

Don Albrecht, WRDC Director, was named Planner of the Year by The Western Planner, the journal for western planning since 1979, for his work in community and economic development throughout the West. This award honors individuals who have the fortitude, skill, and humor necessary to be recognized advocates on behalf of planning in the West.

His nomination stated, “For several years Don Albrecht has headed the Western Rural Development Center’s (WRDC) ‘Area Sector Analysis Process’ model (ASAP), an economic development process developed by Albrecht with a regional team from Utah, New Mexico, Nevada, Montana, and Idaho that is being implemented in counties across the western United States. The ASAP model integrates community desires into economic development, a critical step in the planning process that is often left out of economic development efforts but that is increasingly critical for relocating businesses and new startups.”

To learn more about ASAP activities throughout the West, read Albrecht’s journal article in The Western Planner. For details about The Western Planner and their Award Descriptions and Criteria, visit their website. Details for both are listed below.


The Western Planner Awards: https://www.westernplanner.org/awards/
NADO INNOVATION AWARD
Utah’s Six County Association of Governments/Economic Development District based in central Utah received a 2017 Innovation Award from the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) for the Six County Area Sector Analysis Process. Congratulations!

The Western Rural Development Center and Utah State University Extension partnered with Six County Association of Governments to deliver the WRDC’s Area Sector Analysis Process (ASAP) to the six counties (Juab, Millard, Piute, Sanpete, Sevier, and Wayne) comprising this association.

SIX COUNTY ASAP PARTNERS

To learn more about the 2017 NADO Innovation Awards, visit the website: https://www.nado.org/congratulations-to-the-2017-nado-innovation-award-winners/

2017 NADO INNOVATION AWARD WINNERS
Pictured left to right: Rick Blackwell, Piute County Commissioner; Darin Bushman, Piute County Commissioner; Scott Barney, Millard County Economic Development Director; Jody Gale, Utah State University Extension; Nan Anderson, Governor’s Office of Economic Development; Malcolm Nash, Sevier County Economic Development Director; Don Albrecht, Western Rural Development Center; Marion Bentley, Utah State University Extension; Russ Cowley, Executive Director of Six County Association of Governments; Kevin Christensen, Sanpete County Economic Development Director; Adus Dorsey, Wayne County Economic Development Director; and Brent Boswell, Juab County Economic Development Director.
The Western Rural Development Center’s Area Sector Analysis Process (ASAP) team is continuing to serve communities throughout the western U.S. The Area Sector Analysis Process was designed by Extension Specialists and Agents for Extension to use in collaboration with community leaders in targeted, sustainable, economic development.

ASAP ASSISTS COMMUNITIES BY IDENTIFYING:

1. Community goals and priorities for economic development
2. Community assets that will help achieve the community’s goals and priorities
3. Industry needs and factors important for locating their operations in a community
4. Businesses that are consistent with the community’s goals and priorities

ASAP COMMUNITIES
ASAP has been successfully applied to multiple communities across the region in Arizona, California, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Nevada, and Utah. During the past year, ASAP has been implemented in Beaver, Juab, Millard, Piute, San Juan, Sanpete, and Sevier Counties in Utah; White Pine County, Nevada; and Valley County, Idaho. Additionally, several new communities in Arizona, Idaho, and Utah will be launching ASAP in 2018.

ASAP SUPPORTS USDA TASK FORCE CALL TO ACTIONS:

1. SUPPORTING A RURAL WORKFORCE
2. DEVELOPING THE RURAL ECONOMY
THE ASAP TEAM

Don Albrecht
Western Rural Development Center

Marion Bentley
Utah State University Extension

Buddy Borden
University of Nevada Cooperative Extension

Thomas Harris
University of Nevada-Reno

Paul Jakus
Utah State University

Malieka Landis
University of Nevada-Reno

Paul Lewin
University of Idaho Extension

Phil Watson
University of Idaho

THE ASAP TEAM IS GROWING!

We welcome our new ASAP team members:

Mark Apel
University of Arizona Extension

Ashley Bickel
University of Arizona Extension

Dari Duval
University of Arizona Extension

LEARN MORE ABOUT ASAP!

Visit our website for more information about the Area Sector Analysis Process.

WRDC.USU.EDU/PROGRAMS/ASAP

LAUNCHING IN 2018

We are launching ASAP in several new communities in Arizona, Idaho, and Utah.

Want to learn more about ASAP and how it can benefit your Extension program or community? Contact us at wrdc@usu.edu.

KEEP UP TO DATE ON ASAP BY VISITING THE WEBSITE:

WRDC.USU.EDU/PROGRAMS/ASAP
The Western Rural Development Center, in collaboration with the Western Extension Directors Association and Western Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors, has assembled a team of western researchers and Extension faculty to address rural workforce development issues in the Western U.S. Of particular concern and interest is rural workforce development among veteran farmers.

The Rural Workforce Development (RWD) Program brings together a team of those in the western region already working on these issues to analyze data of existing programs and unmet needs, identify what may be needed to better address these needs, and then develop a plan to conduct additional research and/or develop replicable outreach programs.

The program team hopes to identify cross-over potential with the Western Governors’ Association Workforce Development Initiative and the USDA-wide effort to support veteran farmers.

The RWD program team met face-to-face in January 2018 for their inaugural meeting at the WRDC offices on the Utah State University campus in Logan, Utah. They have identified several areas of rural workforce development to research during the coming months, and the first area the team is focusing on is the freelance economy and how it may benefit rural communities.
The freelance economy, the first area the RWD team is focusing on, has gained favor among creatives and others whose jobs allow them to work remotely.

Freelancers and remote-working employees enjoy the many benefits of living in rural areas, such as natural amenities for enjoyment and recreation along with a lower cost of living. The biggest challenge rural communities encounter when trying to attract freelancers and remote-working employees is the lack of broadband internet.

A freelance economy relies on workers being able to quickly and consistently connect to the internet in order to collaborate with clients and coworkers, download and upload work projects, operate an online business or marketplace, conduct financial transactions, and managing various social media channels such as YouTube, Patreon, Instagram, and others that are important components of a successful business.
In 2016, the Western Rural Development Center led a national collaboration with the USDA-NIFA Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Program to develop and deliver online training modules about the SBIR grant proposal and submission process to increase awareness and understanding of the USDA’s SBIR Grant Program. The Small Business Innovation Research Outreach Training and Technical Assistance (SBIR OTTA) specifically targeted Cooperative Extension specialists and agents to prepare them to better assist potential SBIR grant applicants with navigating the proposal writing and submission process.

FUNDING RENEWED

The efforts we made in 2016 were well-received and sparked interest in targeting training efforts in those states with a lower number of SBIR proposal submissions and awards. In 2017, we were awarded a renewal by USDA-NIFA-SBIR to deliver face-to-face trainings to eight, underserved states. during the summer of 2018.

STATES RECEIVING SBIR OUTREACH AND TECHNICAL TRAINING

The SBIR-NIFA staff identified eight states with historically low SBIR proposal submissions and awards to focus our training efforts on in 2018. The eight states that will be receiving face-to-face SBIR OTTA are: Illinois, Ohio, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Alabama, Georgia, Nevada, and Utah.
SBIR TRAINING OBJECTIVES

1. Assemble a team of Extension professionals from the eight, underserved states identified by the USDA-NIFA-SBIR staff as having produced a lower number of proposals and awards;
2. Collaborate with *Dawnbreaker to customize SBIR proposal training materials for an Extension audience;
3. Promote and deliver the SBIR face-to-face trainings in the eight underserved states specifically targeting qualified women-owned and minority-owned businesses;
4. Promote the availability of these new SBIR training materials to Extension;
5. Develop evaluation tools to determine the effectiveness of the face-to-face trainings;
6. Analyze the data and evaluate it for any needed improvements prior to the 2019 funding cycle.

*Dawnbreaker is a company contracted by Federal agencies to “advance national technology innovation initiatives of Federal agencies and small, advanced technology firms.”

STAY INFORMED ON THE SBIR OTTA BY VISITING THE WEBSITE:
WRDC.USU.EDU/SBIR
“Rural Housing and Economic Development”
Edited by Don Albrecht, Scott Loveridge, Stephan Goetz, and Rachel Welborn. This book consists of 14 chapters written by experts and scholars from throughout the country on a range of issues such as housing on reservations, rental housing, mobile homes, and housing in energy boomtowns. The book describes how a house is much more than a place to live. It is part of building a stable life and livelihood, plays a role in mental and physical health. Access to adequate housing is vital to the economic health and development of communities. Rural areas across the U.S. face substantial disadvantages related to housing when compared with urban areas. Published by Routledge Press, the book is available via online outlets: Amazon and Routledge.

“Local Adaptation to Climate Change”
Edited by Paul Lachapelle and Don Albrecht. This book will consist of 17 chapters written by experts from throughout the country on successful programs regarding local adaptation to climate change. The book will be released in 2018.

Housing is crucial to people’s quality of life and wellbeing, and plays a vital role in community economic development. Americans in rural areas are:

- Often spending a higher percentage of income for housing than urban/suburban dwellers
- Seven times more likely to live in a mobile home, which loses value
- Often priced out of the housing market in tourist amenity communities
- Vulnerable to impacts of boom and bust cycles and lagging behind in times of economic recovery

JOURNAL ARTICLES


MAGAZINE

*Rural Connections*, the magazine of the Western Rural Development Center, is published to inform the nation on timely research and activities by the West’s land-grant institutions and regional/national agencies as it relates to rural development issues in the region. Contributors include researchers, faculty, Extension researchers, specialists, and agents, practitioners, and professionals from throughout the West with occasional contributions from outside the region.

FALL 2017 ISSUE

- Rural Resilience: Addressing community health outcomes with NEAR Sciences
- Small-Scale Agriculture and the New Natural Resource Economy
- Externships in Community Sustainability through Cooperative Extension
- Building Extension through Collaborative Biofuels Research
- Determined to Become a Homeowner
- Western Results of Extension Sustainability

SPRING 2017 ISSUE

- Rural Community Preparedness for Disasters Affecting Animals, Agriculture, and Food
- When Disaster Strikes, Extension Responds
- Planning for the Prosperity of the Rural West
- The Dry Farming Collaborative
- Shifting Water Use Patterns in Response to the Conversion of Irrigated Agriculture Lands
- Interlocking Cross Laminated Timber
- Death by a Thousand Cuts
- Coastal Climate Change in Southeast Alaska
- Exploring Transit Feasibility in Park County, Wyoming
- Our Climate is Doing What?
- Solar and Wind Assessments for Pivots (SWAP)
- Community Rebranding
- Hired U.S. and California Farm Workers are Aging and Settling

View and download past issues!
wrdc.usu.edu/htm/rural-connections
FUNDS AND LEVERAGING

The Western Rural Development Center receives its core funding from the USDA’s National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and leveraged these funds in 2017 to secure additional funding from the institutions and agencies listed below.

2017-18 LEVERAGED FUNDS:

- Utah State University Extension
- Utah Agricultural Experiment Station
- USDA NIFA AFRI - Area Sector Analysis Process
- USDA NIFA SBIR - Outreach Training and Technical Assistance

The overarching goal of the Western Rural Development Center is to help rural communities prosper, thrive economically, and become self-sustaining.
The Western Rural Development Center staff works to increase the prosperity of western rural communities by collaboratively working with the land-grant colleges and universities throughout the region to build Extension’s community development capacity through promoting and supporting excellence in research, education, and Extension outreach activities.

1862 INSTITUTIONS
American Samoa Community College
Colorado State University
Montana State University
New Mexico State University
Northern Marianas College
Oregon State University
University of Alaska
University of Arizona
University of California
University of Guam
University of Hawaii
University of Idaho
University of Nevada
University of Wyoming
Utah State University
Washington State University

1994 INSTITUTIONS
Blackfoot Community College
Chief Dull Knife College
Dine College
Fort Belknap College
Fort Peck Community College
Institute of American Indian Arts
Little Big Horn College
Navajo Technical College
Northwest Indian College
Salish Kootenai College
Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute
Stone Child College
Tohono O’Odham Community College
MISSION
The Western Rural Development Center 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.

SNAPSHOT OF THE REGION
13 WESTERN STATES AND 4 U.S. PACIFIC TERRITORIES

29 Western Land-Grant Institutions
1,873,253 Square Miles
75,187,681 2014 Population (estimate)

BREAKDOWN OF THE WEST’S POPULATION

49% MALE 37,494,437
50% FEMALE 37,693,437
24% UNDER 18YRS 18,043,219
The Western Rural Development Center is one of four USDA-funded Regional Rural Development Centers. The Centers work within their respective regions and collectively on national projects.

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Western Rural Development Center
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The Regional Rural Development Centers are a trusted source of economic and community development data, decision tools, education, and guidance in our nation’s rural communities.

Together the Centers form a one-stop shop to connect to the nationwide network of land-grant college and university researchers, educators, and practitioners to provide sound information and hands-on, community-level training. The trainings help rural communities make science-based decisions about their community and economic development investments.

DATA
DECISION TOOLS
EDUCATION
GUIDANCE