CIVIC CAPACITY BUILDING IN COVID-19 RECOVERY PLANNING IN RURAL AMERICA
REGIONAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT CENTERS

Advancing the Economic Health of Rural America

The Western Rural Development Center (WRDC) compiles this magazine with submissions from university faculty, researchers, agencies, and organizations from throughout the Western region and nation. We make every attempt to provide valuable and informative items of interest to our stakeholders. The views and opinions expressed by these agencies/organizations are not necessarily those of the WRDC. The WRDC is not responsible for the content of these submitted materials or their respective websites and their inclusion in the magazine does not imply WRDC endorsement of that agency/organization/program.

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“The message emerging from these articles is that we use this opportunity to change our communities in ways that make them more resilient moving forward. Wouldn’t it be great if we didn’t just survive these difficult times, but rather emerged even better than before?”

Don E. Albrecht, WRDC Executive Director
Introduction

By Don E. Albrecht
Executive Director, Western Rural Development Center

Our country is in the midst of at least three significant crises, each of which is having major impacts on individuals and communities. They include:

1. **The COVID-19 pandemic.** At the time of this writing, more than 34 million people have tested positive worldwide, and at least 1 million people have died. In the United States alone, more than 7 million people have tested positive, with over 200,000 deaths.

2. **A climate crisis** that is having growing impacts throughout the world. These impacts are especially evident in the western United States with increasingly severe weather events and destructive wildfires.

3. **Racial unrest.** Throughout our nation’s history, minority people have experienced significant discrimination. Continuing unfair treatment is resulting in anger and frustration, which recently exploded in demonstrations and protests throughout the country.

The Western Rural Development Center continues to work with our partners to address these and other concerns. One way we do this is by sharing scientifically sound information intended to help individuals and policymakers make wise choices. In this issue of Rural Connections, we continue this tradition by sharing articles that address each crisis mentioned above.

Four articles are included on the COVID-19 pandemic. First, my colleagues and I have written about how rural communities can benefit economically, in the long run, from the coronavirus pandemic. This can be achieved by first taking advantage of the desire of millions to live in rural areas, a desire that has increased because rural areas have been relatively safe from COVID-19. Second, by using modern information and communication technology, many individuals can now live where they wish, rather than where their job is located.

In the second article, Jessica Schad, Jennifer Givens, and Connor Wengreen present results of a statewide survey of Utah residents on their perceptions of how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted their health and economic security. Third, Extension specialists from Washington State University describe how their Policy, Systems, and Environmental Framework is a useful approach for resilient adaptations by aligning the shared goals of different organizations and agencies. This framework can be used to help communities recover from the current pandemic. Finally, Extension professionals and their colleagues from Colorado argue that in our recovery planning for rural America that we not return to the status quo. Rather, that we make the dynamic transformations necessary to emerge even better.

As for the climate crisis, Paul Lachapelle describes how climate change is perhaps the greatest threat humanity has ever faced. In an effort to address this threat, the National Extension Climate Initiative (NECI) has been organized. Among the goals of NECI is to improve climate literacy and expand collaborative efforts to link professionals working on climate issues.

Lastly, Extension professionals from the University of Idaho describe ways to have dialogue on racial and ethnicity issues with a racially homogenous audience. These skills are needed to improve racial understanding in many western communities that lack racial diversity.

The message emerging from these articles is that we use this opportunity to change our communities in ways that make them more resilient moving forward. Wouldn’t it be great if we didn’t just survive these difficult times, but rather emerged even better than before? I look forward to working with our partners as we strive together to achieve this goal. ✪
The COVID-19 pandemic has had tremendous health, economic, and social impacts on virtually everyone. Beginning in March 2020, schools and businesses closed and everyone that could began working from home. Despite tremendous and ongoing economic impacts, the pandemic may open the door of opportunity for rural communities to reap economic development benefits. Two factors may enhance that opportunity: (1) the safety of distance, and (2) opportunities made available by modern information and communication technology.

Safety of Distance
As COVID-19 spread throughout the world beginning in the spring of 2020, about our only defense was to stay at home and away from other people. Many of the communities that were hardest hit by the virus were large and crowded cities where social distancing was difficult. New York City, for example, is dependent on mass transit and people work and live in close proximity to one another. These circumstances provide a fertile breeding ground for the virus. In contrast, hundreds of rural communities throughout the country have small populations that are widely dispersed which make it much easier to social distance.
The data in the table below compares U.S. counties along the rural/urban continuum. This continuum was developed by the Economic Research Service of USDA. Continuum scores range from 1 to 9. As scores increase, counties become progressively more rural and isolated. Categories 1-3 are metropolitan, while categories 4 through 9 are nonmetropolitan. The most metropolitan counties in Category 1 are the 432 counties in metro areas that have a population of 1 million or more. A majority of the U.S. population lives in Category 1 counties. At the opposite extreme, Category 9 counties are the 423 counties that are completely rural, with the largest community having a population of less than 2,500, and that are not adjacent to a metro area. (For a more complete description of each category, please see Albrecht, 2019).

This table shows that as of September 1, 2020 rural residents were less likely to test positive for and die from COVID-19 than urban residents. Per capita deaths are shown graphically. The residents of Category 1 counties comprise 56% of the total U.S. population, but had 64% of the known positive COVID-19 cases and 72% of deaths from the disease. In contrast, COVID-19 was much less prevalent in rural areas where hundreds of counties have had few if any cases. In the 423 Category 9 counties, there had been only 315 total COVID-19 deaths as of September 1. Most of the cases and deaths occurred in only a handful of counties. This means that in the majority of Category 9 counties, COVID-19 was almost nonexistent. Similarly, in Category 8 counties, most of the cases and deaths occurred in only a few counties, while the vast majority of counties had few if any cases. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many of the people who were working from home came to the realization that their home could be anywhere, including communities where their chance for exposure to this and future diseases is much smaller.

### Opportunities of Modern Information and Communication Technology

Historically, most of the better paying jobs in the U.S. were located in urban areas. This is because urban communities have the advantage of being near markets and customers. In rural areas, incomes have always been lower, and poverty and unemployment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COVID-19 by Rural-Urban Continuum, September 1, 2020</th>
<th>Most Urban</th>
<th>Most Rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Population</strong></td>
<td>182,406,377</td>
<td>8,094,292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percent of Total</strong></td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Counties</strong></td>
<td>432</td>
<td>14,634,916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Population Per County</strong></td>
<td>422,237</td>
<td>593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Covid - 19 Cases</strong></td>
<td>3,660,246</td>
<td>232,284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percent of Total</strong></td>
<td>61</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cases per Million</strong></td>
<td>20,066</td>
<td>13,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Covid - 19 Deaths</strong></td>
<td>117,722</td>
<td>695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percent of Total</strong></td>
<td>68</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deaths per Million</strong></td>
<td>645.4</td>
<td>289.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percent of Cases Resulting in Death</strong></td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
rates higher. Rural economic concerns have been made more severe in recent decades because the number of jobs in agriculture, manufacturing, logging, and mining have significantly declined. This is a problem because these jobs historically have been the primary employer of rural workers (Albrecht, 2020).

Recent developments in modern information and communication technologies have created vast new opportunities for rural communities. Computers, the Internet, and cell phones have reduced the relevance of distance. It is now possible to live in a rural community and globally market one’s products or skills. The COVID-19 pandemic has made these opportunities abundantly clear as millions of individuals have been able to effectively work from home. Up to one-half of employed Americans have been working from home during the pandemic. While this is not an option for workers in some industries, persons most likely to be able to work from home tend to be high-paid professionals. Given how effective some remote work is, many individuals may wish to continue working from home even when the pandemic is over.

Modern information and communication technologies have also reduced other traditional disadvantages of rural living. For example, telemedicine reduces the disadvantage of living in an area away from medical professionals and online shopping reduces problems associated with not being near shopping facilities. With more people having the capacity to work remotely and thus live where they wish rather than where their job is located, millions may prefer the tremendous benefits of rural living. For rural communities, attracting persons with geographically mobile jobs represents a great economic development opportunity. This is especially true for communities where traditional jobs in the goods producing industries are declining. The attraction of skilled and highly-paid individuals may mean more taxes and support for local businesses and schools.

The benefits of working from home extends beyond the worker and the community as the virtual office provides advantages for employers as well. The company may need a smaller office building with fewer offices and a smaller parking lot which will result in obvious financial benefits. As a society, we could all benefit from more people working from home as there would be less traffic during rush hour, reduced resource consumption, and less pollution, and the potential of more vibrant rural communities.

Attracting Geographically Mobile Workers
To take advantage of these new opportunities, there are several things rural communities need to do:

1. **High quality Internet is essential.**
   Communities without high quality Internet will clearly not compete successfully for mobile workers or gig economy entrepreneurs. This is a concern because rural residents are less likely to have access to high quality Internet than urban residents (Gallardo and Whitacre, 2018). Insufficient broadband is now a significant limitation on telemedicine, which will dampen development (Drake et al., 2019). Since there are significant societal benefits from enabling remote work, making high quality Internet available to all rural areas should be a high priority for federal and state governments.

2. **A marketing plan is necessary to advertise community benefits.**
   An obvious benefit is the amenity advantages of rural living. Of course, attracting remote workers is easier for communities that have high quality amenities such as the Teton Mountains or Lake Tahoe. Similarly, research has found that smaller communities that are home to a college or university are very attractive to potential residents (e.g. Zimpher, 2012). Even communities lacking truly high quality amenities or a college, however, can effectively market their community. There are many people who desire to live next to nature where there is less crowding and pollution. Additionally, many people desire to live near family and friends where they grew up (Von Reichert et al., 2014). These examples represent the kind of competitive advantage that a rural county or region can identify and employ to attract mobile workers and entrepreneurs to even remote and isolated areas in the country.

3. **Provide services and amenities.**
   Communities must make an effort to provide the
types of services and infrastructure desired by professionals. This includes clean air and water, good schools, and hiking trails (Salaghe et al., 2020).

4. **Strategies to enhance the earning capacity of lower income residents.** For those already living in the community these are critically important. Keeping current residents is vital to a community’s economic development. It is much easier to keep individuals already living in the community than to attract residents from outside the community. The likelihood of them staying grows if their incomes are increased. The availability of freelance opportunities provides them with the skills and connections to successfully earn money from their home. The Rural Online Initiative program in Utah (https://remoteworkcertificate.com/) provides an excellent example of a program that enhances these opportunities (Wilson and Hill, 2020).

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Daily life in the United States and Utah has changed considerably since the global outbreak of the COVID-19 novel coronavirus. On 6 March 2020, Gary R. Herbert, Governor of the State of Utah, declared a “State of Emergency” in response to the pandemic. On 27 March, the Governor then issued the “Stay Safe, Stay Home” Directive, which was much less strict than the shelter in place orders seen in some other states as it simply urged residents to leave home infrequently, stay six feet away from others outside the home, and banned private gatherings larger than 20. At the end of April, the Utah COVID-19 Public Health Risk Status was moved from Red (High Risk) to Orange (Moderate Risk), meaning the Governor’s recent directive was no longer in place as of 1 May.

According to the Utah Department of Health, as of 8 October, the state of Utah had 81,947 confirmed COVID-19 cases, 4,167 hospitalizations, and 501 deaths. The majority of each have been concentrated in Salt Lake and Utah counties, the most populated counties in the state, yet rates are highest in rural San Juan County. (See Figure 1 on next page.)
While the curve of lab-confirmed positive COVID-19 cases started to flatten in Utah in April, they peaked again during July, and have remained at higher levels before noticeably increasing again starting in September. Rural counties across the country and in Utah are increasingly becoming hot spots for the virus. For instance, as of 3 October, a record-breaking number of rural counties made it on the White House “red-zone list,” indicating that their infection rates warrant that authorities in those places put further measures in place to control the virus (Murphy and Marena, 2020). In Utah, non-metro counties in the “red-zone” include Summit, Wasatch, Emery, Piute, and Kane.

Despite these trends, in a preliminary review of newspapers published across the state, we find that newspapers in more rural parts of the state appear to focus less on COVID-related issues. When they did focus on coronavirus issues they often focused on topics such as school closures in relation to COVID-19 and confirmed cases in their city or county. Urban or statewide newspapers seem to publish more articles related to COVID-19, with some dedicating a section to stories related to the virus, including a focus on school closures and case counts. In the newspapers from urban areas, many of the articles focused on the coronavirus related to mask mandates and county risk level changes. There were very few articles on these topics in the newspapers from more rural parts of the state.

Amidst these occurrences, little reliable and representative information has been available regarding how Utah residents are perceiving and behaving during the coronavirus epidemic, including how the experience varies along the rural-urban continuum. In this article, we focus on differences related to the pandemic in perceived personal impacts, behavior (e.g., mask wearing), views of government response, and views of science between Utah residents living in rural, transitional, and urban counties. Similar to the Utah Community Development Office (http://www.ruralplanning.org/assets/soru-report.pdf), we consider rural counties to be those with no city over 50,000 and not significantly affected by urban growth, transitional counties to be counties adjacent to urban counties with main interstate connections to urban counties or remote counties with city populations over 50,000, and urban counties to be those with populations over 150,000.

Results
Almost one-half of Utah residents said their overall life had been negatively impacted by COVID-19, with 38% saying their mental health has taken a downward turn. Nearly one in three Utah households have also experienced a negative impact on their finances and about one in four Utahns are part of households that know someone who has tested positive or been sick from the coronavirus. However, there were no differences between Utahns living in rural, urban, and transitioning counties in their perceived overall well-being since the pandemic started, perceived personal impacts from the virus (overall, financial, mental health, and physical
health), views on whether the pandemic would get worse, worry about the coronavirus, or knowing someone who had died from the virus. Residents of rural counties in Utah were, however, significantly less likely than residents of urban and transitional counties to know someone who has tested positive for the coronavirus. Rural residents were also less likely to know someone who was sick with the coronavirus, but the difference was just under the threshold of statistical significance.

Most Utahns made major changes to their behavior during the stay-at-home advisory that lasted from mid-March to mid-May. Notably, rural county residents were significantly less likely to have made majors changes to their daily routine and more likely to have made no changes than residents of transitioning and urban counties (see Figure 2). Thirty percent made no changes in comparison to 16% in transitioning counties and 8% in urban counties.

On the other hand, 38% of rural residents made major changes in comparison to 64% in transitioning counties, and 69% in urban counties. Similarly, since the stay at home order was lifted, rural county residents were the most likely to have no changes in their daily routines. Nearly half (46%) are making no changes in their daily lives, while the same is true for 23% of those in transitioning counties and only 13% in urban counties. Mask wearing also varies significantly by county rurality. About one in three (36%) rural county residents say they never wear a face mask when they are in public in comparison to 19% of those in transitioning counties and 12% in urban counties. They are also the least likely to say they always wear them (27%, 28%, and 33%, respectively)

Rurality of the county of residence appears to make little difference in views on how various levels of government are responding to the pandemic. There were no differences in views on the appropriateness of how swiftly various levels of government responded by county type, how they view the President as doing his job generally and in regards to the coronavirus, how they view Governor Herbert generally and in regards to the coronavirus, how Congress has responded to the coronavirus, and local government response to the virus. Notably, however, in Utah as a whole, views on President Trump’s handling of the coronavirus were much more polarized than views of Governor Herbert and local government officials. Utahns expressed the most disapproval for Congress.

The majority of Utahns thought their communities came together to respond to the pandemic and that they knew people they could turn to for help. Many also would like to see the pandemic used to create social change. There were no differences by county type except for on belief in keeping businesses closed to help slow the spread of the virus. Rural residents had much more polarized views than other residents, with a high percentage strongly agreeing and strongly disagreeing.

By county type, Utahns do use different sources for their news (e.g., non-rural residents more often read national and state-level newspapers, while rural residents are more likely to read local newspapers) and there are important differences in how much they trust a variety of possible sources for information about the coronavirus. While there were no differences in trust in information on the coronavirus from President Trump, the state government, or local government, rural residents were significantly less likely to trust scientists and researchers, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and the World Health Organization (WHO). (See Figure 3 on next page.)

While there is some skepticism of scientific findings in general, most Utahns are concerned about issues like climate change and see it as human caused. There were no significant differences in whether residents

Figure 2. Behavior During the Pandemic, by County Type.
believe scientists adjust their findings to get the responses they want, although rural residents were less likely to strongly disagree with this statement.

Discussion
While the state of Utah has been slower to reach the high case and death counts experienced by some states from COVID-19, it has not escaped the widespread social and economic impacts of the pandemic as our survey results show. Overall, we find that there are some key differences between Utah residents living in rural versus urban and transitional counties with regards to their behavior and attitudes regarding the pandemic.

While we find that perceived impacts do not differ much based on what type of county Utahns live in, we do find that their behavior varies considerably. Rural Utahns were less likely to change their daily routines and wear masks in public. Place of residence also did not play a role in how Utahns viewed the responses of various levels of government to the pandemic, yet it did matter regarding how much they trust some sources of information regarding the coronavirus.

As the virus increasingly spreads to rural areas, understanding the ways rural people have experienced and reacted to the virus, and what sources of information they trust about the virus, will be increasingly important to develop strategies to address rural population health and well-being. Our research indicates that such strategies may not be “one size fits all” and may need to differ based on population contexts, such as rurality. Future research should continue to examine how Utahns are impacted by the virus over time and how their views on government response and behavior shift. Such information can be used by policymakers to better address the changing circumstances during the pandemic. *

Author’s Note
We are thankful for the financial support provided by the small grants program at the Mountain West Center for Regional Studies in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Utah State University (https://mountainwest.usu.edu). We also appreciate the assistance in developing and testing the survey provided by undergraduate research assistants and Utah State University students Abby Palfreyman and Alex Fallon. We also appreciate the feedback and inspiration provided by the work of Lawrence C. Hamilton and Thomas G. Safford at the University of New Hampshire and J. Tom Mueller at the Utah State University as part of the Rural West Covid Project (https://www.covidruralwest.org/).

Methods
The data in this article are based on an online panel survey of 634 adult residents of Utah conducted from 12 June to 29 June, just as the virus was trending upwards in the state mid-summer. We use weights with our data (by sex, age, education, party registration, and region), to adjust the results somewhat to be more representative of Utahn adults. With weights, about half are female, 40% have a college degree, and 35% are registered Republicans. In order to take the survey, respondents had to be 18 years or older, live in Utah year-round, or be a seasonal resident who was also currently registered to vote in the state. Based on the county typology described above, 69% of respondents lived in urban counties, 24% lived in transitional counties, and 7% lived in rural counties. Any differences between location of residence we term as “significant” are large enough that they are not due to chance, and at minimum have a 95% chance of being true (p<.05).

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*Figure 3. Trust in Information Sources Regarding the Coronavirus, by County Type.*
A Policy, Systems, and Environmental Framework

Advancing Extension’s role amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic

By Laura Ryser, Caroline Backman, Clea Rome, Debra Hansen, and Monica Babine

“Embracing the public value of Extension education means repositioning the way we describe our work from what clients learn and do to what economic, environmental, and social conditions change.” (Franz, 2011)

Extension professionals working in community and economic development around the United States have been rapidly adapting and responding to the COVID-19 crisis in rural and metropolitan communities. The pandemic has illustrated the vulnerability in almost every aspect in which we live and work. In contrast to the traditional Extension model of delivering direct education, Extension community development professionals are adapting their approach to address complex issues facing communities with a focus not on individual behaviors, but rather by addressing the policies, systems, and physical environments (PSE) that shape communities and influence individual behaviors and access to resources.
For example, broadband access is a national issue for rural and Tribal communities that requires an approach which builds organizational and agency relationships to coordinate and change policy and removes barriers to funding opportunities at the local level, which can later impact state and federal policy, opening up resources that were previously out of reach. Changes in policy can lead to changes in financial investment to the built environment, such as establishing new Wi-Fi hotspots.

What is PSE?
The Policy, Systems, and Environmental (PSE) change framework emerged from the work of the National Expert Panel on Community Health Promotion, convened by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2007, as a method to address difficult and layered public health problems such as obesity, diabetes, and cancer. The Panel’s recommendations included a renewed emphasis on health interventions not just at the individual level, but public health work that addressed social, family, and community networks. This meant focusing on living and working conditions, as well as addressing broad social, economic, cultural, health, and environmental conditions (Navarro et al., 2006).

As public health practitioners began to address the broader environmental and social factors that influence personal behavior, what emerged was a method that changes the policies, systems, and environments shaping those individual behaviors (Leeman et al., 2015). Rather than focusing solely on individual choices, the PSE approach acknowledges the “interrelated, dynamic, and adaptive factors” (Lyn, 2013) influencing an individual’s health.

The purpose of PSE is to create population-level change based on shared goals between organizations, agencies, and Tribal partners. The approach can be thought of as a framework to create long-term change while moving from programs to projects, or, for example, from offering direct education to coalition building that lead to PSE changes.

The complex issues community development Extension professionals work on requires a framework that utilizes the University's strength to conduct applied research for data-driven solutions at the local level, without the pressure to fund ongoing programs that are costly to administer. PSE builds on the University’s ability and reputation for applied research while continuing in Extension’s role as facilitator of coalitions, evaluator for projects, and administrative backbone to many different public initiatives.

Utilizing the PSE Concept In Extension Community Development Work
The authors propose that, beyond the public health sector, the PSE approach is a useful framework for resilient adaptations by aligning shared goals between organizations and agencies. PSE builds on Extension’s ability and reputation for applied research, while supporting the role as facilitator, convener, evaluator, and administrative backbone to many different initiatives. The approach can be thought of as a framework to move Extension work from programs to projects, or from direct education to larger systemic change.

Often playing a critical role in facilitating the process for desirable PSE change outcomes for community development, the following six key activities are intrinsic to the PSE change framework:
1. Assessing the social and political environment
2. Engaging, educating, and collaborating with key stakeholders
3. Identifying and framing the problem
4. Utilizing available evidence
5. Conducting research to identify needed data
6. Identifying PSE solutions
7. Building support and political will (Lyn et al., 2013)

PSE activities often take place within coalitions and councils made up of many agencies, organizations and stakeholders who are committed to addressing root causes of community-level issues. As these coalitions work through this process, projects are identified and workgroups are formed. Planning for data-driven activities, mapping a community’s assets, and creating vision and goal statements with stakeholders are at the foundation for PSE work, a strength that Extension community development professionals bring to the table.

Implementing a PSE Approach through a Broadband Initiative
In 2015, WSU Stevens County Extension led the formation of the Stevens County/Spokane Tribe Broadband Action Team (BAT). The BAT is a working group of public and private stakeholders organized around bringing high-speed internet connectivity to unserved and underserved areas of Stevens County and ensuring all residents possess the skills and supports needed to fully benefit from that connectivity. The BAT successfully brought together
elected officials and information technology experts to connect unserved areas with telecommunications providers, provided workshops for Stevens County residents with limited digital skills, and improved the region’s maps of broadband availability.

The BAT’s success emerged as a nationally recognized model for community collaboration and a key influencer of federal broadband policy. The National Telecommunication and Information Administration’s Broadband USA initiative selected the BAT as a pilot user of its Broadband Community Assessment Tool, and frequently recruits BAT members as speakers for its national training and outreach efforts. This work of WSU Stevens County Extension directly influenced the Digital Equity Act of 2019 — providing over $1 billion in grants over five years to stand-up and support BAT-like organizations across the country.

The BAT approach emerged as a nationally recognized model for community collaboration on rural broadband, which led to a meeting with FCC Chairman, Ajit Pai. Pai encouraged a post-meeting follow-up with his staff, putting power behind the BAT’s regional broadband mapping project.

The infographic illustrates the broad impact of the PSE approach on broadband in Stevens County, and because of the PSE approach, Stevens County was positioned to react proactively to the COVID-pandemic specific to rural broadband access.

**Summary**

As the broadband case study illustrates, PSE frames and communicates complex work internally and externally, as shown by the national attention and support garnered in this case. The PSE approach is a framework for transformative Extension in communities. PSE leverages Extension’s skillset and reputation in communities to accelerate data-based decision-making into population-level changes.

Extension is in a unique position to shepherd this work, with its footing in applied University research and expertise, skillsets in community development, and strong community ties at the county level. Just as Franz’s call to action to Extension described in the last decade, Extension is increasingly called into the next decade to reposition the way we work to meet the rapidly changing, high-intensity needs of the communities we serve, “from what clients learn and do to what economic, environmental, and social conditions change” (Franz, 2011).

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Roughly 35% of Americans living on tribal lands have no access to broadband internet (FCC, 2018). But this is even difficult to know for sure, because mapping areas with insufficient broadband connectivity is a significant challenge. Being a founding member of the Stevens County/Spokane Tribe Broadband Action Team (SC/ST BAT) has led us to solutions and true mapping of need.

**Policy**

I have been fortunate enough to participate in meetings with Washington State Governor Jay Inslee, FCC Chairman Ajit Pai, and U.S. Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA) to discuss the desperate need to expand broadband access in Washington’s rural and tribal communities. These discussions have helped personalize the challenges that pertain to rulemaking for the marquee federal grants that are the primary funding opportunities of broadband infrastructure.

Federal Agencies and Congress need to consider how effective the programs currently are and adjust rulemaking to reach the rural areas of highest need. The current approach of having the data gathering and planning of the infrastructure being spearheaded by the competitive ISPs across the country is not going to solve the connectivity issues where it is not profitable for a company to do the buildout.

**Systems**

The Spokane Tribe developed a three-phased approach to broadband access in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. Emergency access through Cellular on Wheels (COWs) in strategic geographic and populated areas of the reservation and cellular jetpacks for Tribal member students facing distance education delivery – on and off the reservation.

2. Permanent tower builds at these locations based on a hybrid system of 2.5GHz Wi-Fi and Fiber.

3. A fiber to the home design for the final top-tier access to Tribal members. The final phase will be achieved with a partnership with the Spokane Tribal Housing Authority (SIHA). The Tribe will design and deploy the backbone fiber on the main arterial roads on the reservation while SIHA designs and deploys the last mile buildouts in the housing clusters.

**Environment**

As members of the SC/ST BAT, we launched a combined and concerted effort to have residents respond to the speed test – and have had a combined response of 1800+ residents. This data has guided our decisions to design and engineer the projects above. One of the first Drive-In Wi-Fi projects deployed by WSU Extension was on the Spokane Tribe Reservation and became the third most visited site in the system.

Finally, as a member of the SC/ST BAT, our Tribe has benefitted from the relationships, conversations, and resources of working together with our neighbor here in Northeastern Washington. This network of community leaders, academic minds and technical experts has helped connect the rural communities and technical experts to the local, State and federal decision makers who can make a difference with some informed rulemaking and effective programs that are focused on the true bullseye of the rural broadband issue.

**Resources**


For more information, contact Frank Metlow, Planning and Economic Development Director, Spokane Tribe of Indians via email to frankm@spokanetribe.com
“(The revival of community) would have to be done not from the outside by the instruction of visiting experts, but from the inside by the ancient rule of neighborliness, by the love of precious things, and by the wish to be at home.” (Wendell Berry, 1990)

This article explores the central role civic capacity building plays in preparing for disasters and then recovering from them. Our discussion focuses on civic capacity in rural communities and what can be done to help communities capitalize on their civic strengths and prepare for future challenges. Those who study how communities work know why some respond better than others to disruptions like the coronavirus: They are more resilient because they have greater civic capacity.
As the coronavirus continues to devastate communities across the nation in terms of deaths and financial hardship, planning for recovery is taking center stage. Communities are struggling about how to take this next step while simultaneously responding to the ongoing pandemic. Rural areas have not been spared the damage wrought by COVID-19 on families and communities, in no small measure because they have higher percentages of seniors with chronic health conditions coupled with limited access to health care facilities and internet limits on telemedicine (Peters, 2020).

Rural communities struggle to be resilient in the face of the long-term consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Resilience is directly related to social capital, the network of relationships that help communities work together. In rural communities, social capital is typically limited due to low rates of charitable giving, lack of professional and labor organizations, and fewer community civic organizations (Peters, 2020). These factors contribute to the civic capacity of rural communities to respond effectively to persistent challenges. Rural areas with low civic capacity are often more dependent on outside entities (like governments and foundations) for their survival and, thus, less resilient in the face of future challenges. Community resilience goes beyond coping with a crisis like the coronavirus and returning to the status quo. It is a dynamic process of reinvention and transformation from within the community.

Here, we focus on the why and how of bolstering rural communities’ civic capacity, based on our work in Colorado. Rural areas are often blessed with social capital in the form of strong family ties, a myriad of informal mental health supports, a strong sense of belonging, and in some cases community governance that is more representative and attuned to local needs (Cox et al., 2011; Hagler et al., 2019; Kitchen et al., 2012; Wright, 2013). These adaptive capacities contribute to rural communities’ ability to be more resilient in the face of disasters such as COVID-19 (Norris et al., 2008) and are exemplified in aiding struggling neighbors and helping youth continue their education online.

Despite these strengths, research consistently documents the limited availability of community resources to enhance well-being. Support services for families and youth are in short supply (Mohatt et al., 2005). Greater economic stress (Jensen et al, 2003) and a strong sense of self-reliance (Wanless et al., 2010) contribute to higher rates of health problems and family conflict (Spoth & Redmond, 1996). Building rural civic capacity to address these problems at a local level is a priority for recovering from COVID-19.

Over the past two decades, there has been a distinct shift in thinking about where the impetus for adaptation and change should come from in neighborhoods and communities. Perhaps recognizing the limitations of top-down, externally-driven approaches, foundations, government agencies, and other civic actors now support community-driven responses to adaptive challenges such as health, education, housing, policing, and other public crises that require the community to adapt or to be resilient. Three premises inform this thinking about community-driven change:

1. It is more effective in making lasting progress
2. It is more inclusive, therefore more democratic
3. Communities with the capacity for community-driven change are more resilient

Our recent research on community-driven change and civic capacity identified the essential characteristics of communities capable of responding constructively to complex challenges. For example, these communities intentionally confront historic inequities and injustice. They couple an inclusive civic
culture with institutions committed to community engagement. They keep a steady eye on the common good. Many people exercise leadership in different forms at different times. The leadership focus is on purposeful collaboration and mutual learning to make progress on issues of shared concern.

Based on these characteristics, we developed a Civic Capacity Index (CCI) that measures a community’s capacity to respond to challenges and disruptions. With the help of this framework, civic actors can take advantage of existing civic capacity, understand where it is lacking, and build their capacity to respond to future challenges.

Civic capacity, in this sense, is a resource. It describes a community’s (or region’s) capability for collective action to solve local problems and its willingness to energize this capability. It reflects the aspiration for communities and regions to shape responses to challenges in ways that reflect the local culture, context, and needs. At its best, community-driven change can be defined in terms of shared power between decision makers and community members, multiple perspectives on issues, strong participation from diverse people, a focus on the common good, and decision-making processes that are equitable, authentic, and transparent.

To create the CCI, we convened a panel of 34 experts from the U.S. and Canada, with conceptual and experiential expertise related to civic engagement, civic leadership development, and community building. In 2019-20, we worked with the panel to consolidate our knowledge and experience using a concept mapping process. We engaged the panel in brainstorming, sorting, clustering, analyzing, and mapping responses to queries related to the three tasks listed above. We began with the question: Based on your experience and knowledge, what would you see if community-driven change is occurring? Ultimately, the panel helped create the Civic Capacity Index with 52 items organized into seven domains. These dimensions, which align well with the central features of community resilience (Norris et al., 2008), include collective leadership, equity and inclusion, an engaging civic culture, and various facets of coalitions and collaborations.

We are now validating the CCI in communities with varying levels of civic capacity. Our work focuses on three dimensions of validity: discriminant, convergent, and concurrent.

- **Discriminant validity** helps distinguish civic capacity from other factors such as geography, path dependency (historical events/choices shaping current conditions), and the sociopolitical and economic forces that also shape how communities and regions act.

- **Convergent validity** helps us determine how well the CCI corresponds with other indicators of community resilience and well-being.

- **Concurrent validity** measures how well the CCI correlates with context and content experts’ perceptions of their communities’ equity and inclusion as well as collective efficacy, both of which are core elements of community resilience. If the CCI correlates with these core elements, it provides a strong rationale for interventions to confront racism and injustice as one means to promote civic capacity and community resilience.

We envision the CCI being used in the following ways:

- As an assessment instrument to help communities assess their collective capacity to respond to challenges, which could be an important addition to Extension community needs assessments

- As a diagnostic tool to design authentic, inclusive collaborative processes tailored to take advantage of existing civic capacity and building capacity where it is lacking, thus providing a foundation for Extension’s strategic planning and doing

- As a framework for leadership development to assist civic leadership development programs that help build social cohesion, community well-being, and collective efficacy

- As an evaluation measure for assessing the impact of Extension’s collaborative problem-solving processes and leadership in civic capacity building initiatives

- As a framework for research on community-driven change, to provide insights about why some communities respond more effectively to challenges than others
The lessons of our research apply equally to rural and urban areas. Civic capacity is the crucial resource for responding to civic challenges and disruptions. Directly engaging the full diversity of the community taps new sources of leadership and the local knowledge of lived experience, allowing systemic inequities to be addressed. Making lasting progress in the civic arena requires moving the focus of leadership from the individual to the community to learn, adapt, and innovate together. Tight links between institutions and communities connect the “grassroots” with the “grasstops,” leading to pragmatic, action-oriented coalitions. Civic intermediary organizations help build civic capacity and facilitate working together. Open, authentic, and structured processes help community members cross boundaries, bridge differences, learn together, solve problems, and get things done.

Just as flattening the curve of the coronavirus in its initial stages took leadership and concerted action, so too does creating a more resilient society. The coronavirus has revealed, not for the first time, many of the staggering issues of inequality in our country. Extension has a role in balancing the scales of justice at the local level, because programs that enhance social capital are a conduit of social justice (Fields & Nathaniel, 2015; Iverson, 2008). If we only mitigate the symptoms of the coronavirus pandemic, we will have missed an opportunity to generate the ideas and political will to build a more just and equitable society. Realizing these aspirations takes civic capacity. Fulfilling them restores confidence in our collective capacity to respond to disruptions and challenges yet to come. ★

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Race and Ethnicity Relations Dialogue with a Racially Homogenous Audience

Extension facilitators’ experiences and lessons learned

By Jackie Amende, Surine Greenway, Nicasio Usabel, Andrew Bingham, and Sendy Martinez

Abstract
A race and ethnicity relations dialogue workshop was provided to Extension faculty and staff, a highly racially homogenous group. Two trained Extension Educators facilitated the dialogue with a focus on promoting racial understanding and healing and enhancing community relations. The trained coaches have highlighted their own experiences and lessons learned while implementing this workshop that may be valuable to those doing similar work within their own organizations.

Introduction
Idaho’s 2019 population was 93% White (United States Census Bureau, 2019). In 2019, 89% of Extension faculty identify as White (University of Idaho Extension, 2020). The majority of people of color (POC) in Extension are in non-faculty positions. Additionally, a diversity specialist and support-designated position for University of Idaho Extension, does not currently exist.
Two Family and Consumer Sciences Extension faculty attended the 2018 Coming Together for Racial Understanding Train-the-Trainer Workshop at the National 4-H Center. Idaho was one of 20 states represented in the five-day pilot. The Coming Together for Racial Understanding initiative seeks to promote racial understanding and healing through civil dialogue within the Cooperative Extension System (SRDC, 2017). Those who complete the workshop become trained “coaches” and bring content back to their state Extension system to facilitate civil dialogues surrounding race and ethnicity relations (SRDC, 2017). The designed dialogue process centers around having “a diverse, broad-base of participants relative to the situation” for optimal understanding and learning to thrive (SRDC, 2017).

The trained coaches offered a statewide two-day workshop for Extension faculty and staff in October 2019. Bringing this dialogue content to a highly racially homogenous state would require strategic adaptations of the curriculum. Even with intentional adaptation and audience considerations, the coaches learned about offering this content to an audience with little representation from marginalized populations.

Detailed in this article are the experiences and learnings the coaches gained in regards to:
• promotion of the workshop,
• facilitating dialogue using the affinity group format,
• navigating the Step Forward, Step Back activity,
• and the addition of state-specific history in the workshop.

Learning 1: Promotion of Diversity Dialogue Training to a Racially Homogenous Audience
The coaches expected resistance from faculty and staff to attend a two-day workshop focusing on race and ethnicity relations dialogue. To promote the workshop, coaches recruited support from administration. Administration played a vital role in increasing participation by sharing provided messaging with subordinates and by providing travel scholarships to subordinates.

To provide participants with insight into the workshop, a “teaser” (introductory training) program took place during the university’s annual Extension conference. The full two-day workshop had 48 Extension participants in attendance. Of those that completed the post-survey, three participants self-identified as Hispanic/Latinx, three participants did not respond, and the remaining participants identified as White.

The strategic marketing of the two-day training likely encouraged attendance. However, with continued facilitation of this dialogue, the Idaho coaches conclude that while gaining leadership’s support is important, it can create a “volun-told” mentality for subordinate employees. This encouragement can unwillingly promote participant attendance to a sensitive workshop they may not be ready to engage in, potentially causing more harm than good for the participant and their peers. Instead, gain and foster leadership support, while ensuring clear messaging to personnel and participants “…invite involvement rather than mandate participation” (SRDC, 2017).

Learning 2: Affinity Group Formats with Little Diversity
Two workshop activities include separation of participants into self-identified affinity groups, based on race and ethnicity. Affinity groups “…give people with similar racial or ethnic backgrounds an opportunity to talk about issues that are very important to them” (Everyday Democracy, 2008). Due to a majority of white participants in this workshop, the white participants separated into male and female affinity groups. Two particular scenarios occurred as groups convened: white leadership joined a marginalized affinity group (Scenario One), and the white female group, the largest affinity group, resulted in ineffective race relations discussion (Scenario Two).
SCENARIO ONE
Two white participants in superior positions chose to join the Hispanic/Latinx Affinity Group (the only diverse affinity group present). Coaches became aware of this happening, but were inexperienced in handling the situation.

After reflecting with a Hispanic/Latinx Affinity Group member, it was clear the member was looking forward to the affinity group to allow for some relief from the workshop, as being one of a handful of diverse participants at a diversity training can be exhausting. Having people who do not identify with the affinity group did not allow for the group to reflect and discuss amongst peers that can relate. This aligns with research indicating that POC tend to enjoy affinity groups greater than white people (Lambertz-Bendt, 2016).

Research indicates that white people can view affinity groups as a design intended to continue to separate races and ultimately create more segregation (Lambertz-Bendt, 2016). Potentially, white people may join diverse affinity groups because they may feel that it is more beneficial for them to learn from people of different races, rather than from their white peers (Lambertz-Bendt, 2016).

To prevent this situation in the future, the Idaho coaches need to be trained to improve their facilitation skills to address these issues when they occur (Lambertz-Bendt, 2016). Effectively intervening at the time and continuing to communicate the purpose of affinity groups may prevent and resolve a similar situation from occurring in the future.

SCENARIO TWO
The white female group was the largest affinity group at the workshop. Rather than exploring their racial identities, reflecting on lived realities, and practice talking about race, the group less-than productively encouraged the less constructive voices in the group to express assumptions, attitudes, and experiences that stifled effective dialogue. Because these voices took up more space and room in the dialogue, they muffled voices that may think differently and provide new perspectives.

Reflecting on this experience, this group was undergoing “conversation roadblocks” (Catalyst, 2016). These roadblocks are “…assumptions, attitudes, or experiences that can stifle our ability to talk about our differences...often with (an) underlying motivation such as fear, resistance...(Catalyst, 2016)”

To better facilitate a future affinity group, coaches need to continue to remind participants of dialogue ground rules and the intention of the affinity group. It is important to note that some members in this group may not have been ready to participate in race and ethnicity relations dialogue. Incorporating what was understood in Scenario One (above) could help prevent this situation in the future.

Learning 3: Step Forward, Step Back Activity with Little Diversity
The Step Forward, Step Back activity is also called The Privilege Walk. The activity is used to share stark equitable differences based on race and ethnicity. In our case, this activity sparked strong emotions from the few POC in attendance. Through post-activity dialogue with those individuals, emotions stemmed from feeling like a target of sympathy or tokenism. The diverse representation in the room poorly received this activity. This was different from the experience the coaches had when they participated in the national training. However, the national training had greater diverse representation, which could have allowed for less tokenism and a shared sense of community and identity among POC.

In reflection, this activity has been shown to cause strong emotions, build barriers that might not have otherwise existed, and offer a learning experience for white people that is often reliant on the lived oppression of POC. These outcomes are more likely to occur when the activity is only centered around race and ethnicity, and no other forms of identity and oppression (i.e. economic status, gender identity, etc.).

To prevent similar responses in the future, allow participants to use all sense of identity and lived experiences, not just race and ethnicity, when answering the questions to Step Forward, Step Back. There are alternative activities that promote the same message, without capitalizing on the marginalized populations in the room, like the Privilege for Sale activity (The Office of Intercultural Engagement, n.d.). Finally, engaging POC in the workshop planning and implementation may allow for diverse perspectives and prevent harmful experiences from occurring.
Learning 4: Pulling in State-Specific History
The audience of this workshop was comprised of many individuals who have lived in, or currently live in rural, racially homogenous communities for the majority of their lives. Many have not seen or recognized racial disparities. This is largely due to a lack of experience, education, and relationships with POC. To pull this content closer to home, the two-day workshop took place in the state’s capitol where the Idaho Anne Frank Human Rights Memorial resides. The memorial was built in Idaho due to Idaho’s history with white supremacy. The coaches arranged a tour of the memorial with the intent to build connection between the workshop content and the participant. Through reflection, feedback and evaluation responses, facilitators viewed this workshop activity as a successful component that resonated with this audience.

Conclusion
For Extension systems without a diversity specialist position, Extension Educators with alternate specialties may step into a diversity and inclusion role. Although, a designated diversity specialist position could provide more experienced facilitation, expertise, and time allotted to this work. These lessons may be valuable to other diversity and inclusion coaches who provide similar efforts within their organizations, who may be inexperienced in this work, and who work within racially homogenous systems. With continuous reflection and research, coaches can build competence in race and ethnicity relations dialogue.

Acknowledgements
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The National Extension Climate Initiative

Expanding opportunities for learning and sharing best practices on climate change education and research

By Paul Lachapelle

Increasingly, the impacts associated with our changing climate are taking a dramatic toll on our communities, not only across the western United States, but also around the world. The National Academies of Sciences (2020) have issued multiple position statements that humans are changing Earth’s climate and the evidence is clear and compelling: climate change is increasingly affecting people’s lives, and the impacts are having significant effects on infrastructure, agriculture, fisheries, public health, and the ecosystems that support society.
According to Hoegh-Guldberg et al. (2019), climate change will be the greatest threat to humanity and global ecosystems in the coming years, and caution that increases in global mean surface temperature of 2.0°C or higher than the pre-industrial period looks increasingly unmanageable. Moreover, Steffen et al. (2018) conclude that self-reinforcing feedbacks could push the Earth system toward a planetary threshold they term, “Hothouse Earth,” leading to much higher global average temperatures and sea levels than any in the past 1.2 million years. Members of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change refer to the “unprecedented climate future” in which the balance of life will be pushed to greater extremes than has been experienced in all human history (Holthaus, 2018).

In the western United States, we have experienced dramatic examples of climate-related impacts. A ‘Megadrought’ is reported to be emerging in the region that might be worse than any in 1,200 years, with half of this historic drought blamed on man-made global warming (Williams et al., 2020). Meanwhile, the worst heat in 70 years threatens to take down California’s grid (Aleem, 2020). According to Eilperin (2020), a cluster of counties on Colorado’s Western Slope, along with three counties just across the border in eastern Utah have warmed more than two degrees Celsius, which is double the global average and impacting the potential to produce, use, and export water. Agricultural, energy, forest, and aquatic systems, to name but a few, are in many cases being impacted and stressed to the near breaking point for parts of the year or longer.

All of this leads us to the term, “Anthropocene,” increasingly used to describe this current geological era and the significant human impact on Earth’s geology and ecosystems primarily as a result of anthropogenic climate change (Steinmetz and Revkin, 2020). The social, economic, and environmental impacts are now too significant to ignore.

Extension professionals are recognizing the critical importance of reaching citizens with current and accurate information about the impacts of climate change and methods of adaptation and mitigation. In 2012, the Land Grant-Sea Grant Climate Extension Summit took place in Maryland and produced the report titled, “The Role of Extension in Climate Adaptation in the United States,” (Susko, et al., 2013) to address the growing call to confront climate education and research through the Land and Sea Grant University System. However, since this one event, there has been no coordinated national effort to initiate a comprehensive and inclusive climate change program across the Extension system that is open to all faculty, staff, and interested constituents.

The National Extension Climate Initiative is a new collaborative effort to link professionals currently working or interested in climate change-related education and research across all Extension program areas and their national associations. More importantly, the initiative is open to all Extension faculty and staff and colleagues working in the Sea Grant system as well as interested constituents and partners.

“Climate change is increasingly affecting people’s lives, and the impacts are having significant effects on infrastructure, agriculture, fisheries, public health, and the ecosystems that support society.”
This initiative builds on, reinvigorates, and expands the previous work done by the Association of Natural Resource Extension Professionals (ANREP) Climate Science Initiative that was initiated several years ago by Chris Jones from the University of Arizona and his colleagues. This expanded effort, in partnership with the Western Rural Development Center, is open to anyone interested in community climate outreach and has the following goals and objectives:

1. Expand climate literacy across the Extension system by providing Extension professionals (faculty, staff, and administration) and other interested constituents with the opportunity to learn and interact with peers on a range of topics related to climate change educational outreach and research.

2. Develop a network of well-informed and motivated professionals across the Extension system to initiate, support, and implement climate outreach.

3. Communicate and share current and future work with a core group of self-selected faculty, staff, and administrators representing all program areas of Extension who meet regularly via listserv, social media, and video conference.

4. Represent participating Land and Sea Grant Universities, associations, and related committees and organizations and constituents.

5. Meet annually via national association conferences and affirm progress.

6. Pursue grant funding collaboratively when convenient or supported.

To date, over 130 individuals have subscribed to the NECI listserv. Meetings take place each month and with updates on new programs, resources, and information. The group also highlights several members on each month’s call.

Among the many interesting and informative presentations have been Allison Morrill Chatrchyan with Cornell University who provided an overview of Cornell’s Climate Smart Solutions Program and Climate Smart Farming Program. Monthly calls have also featured Sabrina Drill and Susan Kocher with the University of California Cooperative Extension and David Kay with Cornell, who discussed their NSF-funded CONVERGE Working Group and recent priority of natural hazards and the pandemic.

Other highlights include Sara Via with the University of Maryland Extension discussing her “Climate and Sustainability Webinar Series,” Rachel Steele with the USDA Agricultural Research Service on the USDA Climate Hubs, Amulya Rao with the University of Wisconsin presenting on their ongoing climate change educational efforts, and Natalie Carroll with Purdue University on her weather and climate curricula for youth. Overall, the monthly meetings, as well as the prolific use of the email listserv have proven to be an informative and rich opportunity to share, learn, and network on a variety of climate change related topics.

The NECI is an attempt to address the increasingly polarized and politicized world of climate science, policy, and communications for educators working to reach constituents across the United States. The outcome is already becoming clear: an increasingly larger group of Extension and Land and Sea Grant outreach professionals who have a better understanding of the concepts, processes, and educational resources associated with climate change science and policy in their states, regions, and across the United State and globally.

The initiative has also worked to establish a coordinated network of professionals who, through their knowledge of climate science and policy, are better connected, prepared, and motivated to provide educational outreach and research to their respective constituents and communities across the Extension system.
Presumably, some of you reading this will, hopefully, live to see the year 2100. This initiative will help us ask questions that will carry us forward to this milestone year; with questions such as: have we as outreach educators done everything in our power to prevent what is increasingly referred to as an existential threat? How can we be most effective at addressing the social, economic, and environmental challenges associated with a warming world? What types of career opportunities and lifestyle choices available in our communities now and for our children in the future? How will we, as educators working with our partners in the Land and Sea Grant systems as well as other outreach educators and concerned citizens, work together to navigate this increasingly uncertain and unprecedented future? The National Extension Climate Initiative serves to explore these and other questions as we lay out our collective roadmap through the Anthropocene.

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"Extension professionals are recognizing the critical importance of reaching citizens with current and accurate information about the impacts of climate change and methods of adaptation and mitigation."

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**National Extension Climate Initiative**

For more information, visit the website at [https://www.montana.edu/communitydevelopment/NationalExtensionClimateInitiative.html](https://www.montana.edu/communitydevelopment/NationalExtensionClimateInitiative.html)

Subscribe to the listserv by sending an email to the author at paul.lachapelle@montana.edu.

You can join the related eXtension Connect group by visiting [https://connect.extension.org/g/national-extension-climate-initiative](https://connect.extension.org/g/national-extension-climate-initiative)

The monthly meetings are the first Thursday of the month at 3:30 p.m. ET. Please join us!
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**Race and Ethnicity Relations Dialogue with a Racially Homogenous Audience**


**The National Extension Climate Initiative**


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### Rural Connections At-a-Glance

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