



Partners for Rural America

2015 Annual Report



The Partners for Rural America is the national organization of State Rural Development Councils
Working together to improve the quality of life in rural America

Guiding principles for State Rural Development Councils (SRDCs) from the National Farm Bill

- ▶ That SRDCs shall include representation from all agencies, organizations and individuals who are dedicated to enhancing economic and social opportunities for rural citizens.
- ▶ That SRDCs shall seek the support and participation of the governors of the states in which the SRDC operates.
- ▶ That participation in SRDC decisions and operations shall be open to all who wish to participate.
- ▶ The SRDCs shall represent the diversity of states' rural populations and geography.
- ▶ That all that participate in SRDCs shall have a voice in their decision and that the SRDCs shall be free from control of any single individual, organization, agency, sector, political party or interest group.
- ▶ That SRDCs shall provide open, neutral environments where all participants' voices can be heard and where major decisions are reached, whenever possible, through consensus.
- ▶ That SRDCs shall receive financial and other support from diverse sources.
- ▶ That SRDCs shall retain an executive director to manage the operation of the SRDC if financially able to do so, and if not, the SRDC shall be operated by a working board of directors.
- ▶ That all SRDCs shall participate in the nationwide network of SRDCs known as Partners for Rural America.

Recent Highlights of Partners for Rural America and State Rural Development Councils

- ▶ Received reauthorization from Congress in the 2014 Farm Bill to continue and expand our work.
- ▶ Held annual conferences in Vermont (2013), Wyoming (2014) and Virginia (2015) attended by most of the active SRDCs to conduct organization business, plan for the future and learn from successful initiatives of the host SRDC and each other.
- ▶ Held regular, monthly, mission focused board meetings as learning and sharing opportunities to help SRDCs advance their work.
- ▶ Submitted an appropriation request to Congress to enable SRDCs to expand their work in helping localities and regions address their initiatives based on community based actions and assets. Although unsuccessful, this funding request helped to inform committees of Congress of the ongoing successful work of SRDCs and strengthened support for our mission.
- ▶ Representatives from three SRDCs are active participants in the State Rural Policy Initiative panel (along with the Rural Policy Research Institute and state policy centers from around the country) to assemble and recommend best practices, help implement rural research, advance rural leadership and build a coordinated rural development approach.
- ▶ Most SRDCs have been actively involved in annual rural summits and conferences to call attention to rural needs and successes and build collaboration to address rural challenges. These events bring together representatives of the federal, state and local government, the nonprofit community and private sector to marshal, lead, coordinate, and empower local populations and identify resources.
- ▶ Provided support and guidance to several states that are forming or reactivating a SRDC.
- ▶ Updating and enhancing the national website to make it more usable and helpful to SRDCs and its partners and rural constituents.
- ▶ Updated the PRA By-Laws to be operationally in tune with current practices and needs.
- ▶ Accepted the resignation of Mary Randolph of Wyoming and Mary Ann Hayes of Maine from the PRA board (with great appreciation for the excellent leadership and support given to PRA and SRDCs).
- ▶ The SRDCs in Oregon, Idaho and Washington received grant funds from USDA Rural Development to advance and enhance initiatives across state lines, eliminate impediments, share expertise and seek new opportunities for rural progress.



Just a few of our committed rural leaders

2014/2015 PRA officers:

Chair: Jerry Townsend, *Illinois Rural Partners*

Vice-Chair: Mike Field, *Idaho Rural Partnership*

Secretary: Christy Morton, *Council for Rural Virginia*

Treasurers: Mary Randolph, *Wyoming Rural Development Council* and
Chris Marko, *Oregon Rural Development Council*



Working together to improve the quality of life in rural America

P. O. Box 21177, Cheyenne, IL 82003 | www.partnersforruralamerica.org