

**Initiative for the Future  
Of  
Rural Oklahoma**

**Community/County  
Request for Proposal**



# **Initiative for the Future of Rural Oklahoma**

The Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service (OCES) Leadership Initiative is offering assistance to a limited number of eligible communities. This is a pilot effort designed to assist communities in improving their economy and improving the overall quality of life through the process of developing new leaders or improving the skills of persons already in a leadership role. The initiative encourages formation of working partnerships among citizens in Oklahoma communities and representatives of the OCES, other divisions of Oklahoma State University, and other state, federal and local organizations. Over a three-year period, project goals will be achieved through a partnership between communities, local, state, and regional Extension staff and other agencies, organizations and individuals. Resources will be combined in the pilot communities to provide focused, in depth assistance.

## **Background**

Preliminary results of the 2000 census indicate that citizens in rural and urban Oklahoma communities continue to suffer from low per capita income and less than quality jobs. Many policy makers have also indicated that there is a need for effective leadership in many of these communities. Low income levels relate to lower property values, less tax revenue and therefore less than adequate financing for local government and infrastructure development. Determined effort must be made to assist communities to develop the infrastructure necessary to nurture a sustainable economy and improve their overall quality of life through the process of developing new leaders or improving the skills of persons already in a leadership role.

The problems related to rural economic development in Oklahoma are compounded by the diversity of Oklahoma's communities. Western sectors suffer from declining population while in the northeast there are communities suffering from rapid growth. Low per-capita income - 60% of the national average - is a problem in much of rural Oklahoma. Various environmental problems affect many areas of the state. Oklahoma also has many rural economies that depend heavily upon a single industry. With adequate assistance many of Oklahoma's communities can do what is necessary to help insure their future. OCES through our county offices and educators can be a part of this effort.

## **Overall Goals**

The pilot effort has several goals:

1. Enhance and develop the effectiveness of community leaders and Extension Educators to identify and address critical issues confronting the community and county especially those relating to leadership and community economic development.
2. Demonstrate to the community/county the full range of assistance available from OCES through Oklahoma State University, a land-grant university in Oklahoma.
3. Provide a long-term in-depth commitment to selected communities in order to aid in the planning and implementation of development efforts.
4. Document impacts of the pilot projects with thorough evaluation.
5. Set the stage for an ongoing community/county improvement program based on leadership and economic development.

## Focus and Process

Project proposals will be accepted in two categories.

### Initial Leadership Training

One-year proposal that focuses on skill building through leadership training. It will focus primarily on initial leadership training, organizational skills, and visioning. As part of the training, the class will be given the opportunity to identify a project. If future funds are available, communities may apply for funding to support the project.

### Comprehensive Leadership Training

Successful applicants in the *Comprehensive Leadership Training* category should focus on:

- Additional skill building through leadership training as appropriate for the specific leadership group
- Awareness and knowledge enhancement through educational programs
- A local project identified and implemented to reinforce skill building and teach practical application while supporting community development.

## How Will The Leadership Initiative Help Your Community?

The *Initiative for the Future of Rural Oklahoma* is about developing and empowering local leaders so that they in turn can move the community forward. In other words, the focus of the program is to educate leaders, not just to successfully complete a project. The project is simply a vehicle by which formal leadership training can be turned into action. It is a way to continue leadership training through practical experience.

Several benefits are offered to communities participating in the initiative include:

1. Training will be provided in community leadership and economic development. OCES Specialists as well as other agency personnel as needed will provide training in:
  - Economic Diversification
  - Community Planning
  - Service Infrastructure
  - Local Government
  - Civic Engagement and Leadership Development
  - Youth and Adult Workforce Development

**Appendix One** provides an overview of community development training to be offered through the Southern Rural Development Center and further describes these training program tracks. Oklahoma will use this format in developing and delivering a training curriculum. These are the broad tracks we will follow.

2. Grant funds may be awarded up to \$100,000 (including matching funds and resources) for financing your three-year community/county project or \$10,000 (including matching funds and resources) for a one-year initial leadership training program. Funds may be spent for guest lecturers, facility rental, tour transportation, lodging and meals, equipment, supplies, community surveys, technical assistance, grant writers, publicity, workshop expense and other appropriate purposes as shown in your project budget. Funds cannot be expended for building or improving existing facilities. Grants will be awarded through county extension offices and all expenditures must comply with Oklahoma State purchasing requirements.
3. Regional training programs offered to community teams. These regional training programs will provide team members with intermediate and advance training in the topics listed above and others. Team members are expected to attend these training sessions.
4. Educational material, technical assistance, and problem solving expertise to aid in leadership and community economic development.
5. Sustained follow-up, technical assistance, and support will be available to the participating communities.
6. Technical assistance to help evaluate the project.

### **Who is Eligible?**

Community, county or multi-community/county proposals are welcomed and encouraged. Preference will be given to proposals demonstrating broad based participation from community members and groups in their economic and leadership development efforts. Strong local Extension staff interest and commitment will also serve as a prerequisite for pilot community selection. County Educators are encouraged to consider interdisciplinary areas when developing proposals.

Leadership capacity is not comparable across communities/counties. Some have benefited from a variety of leadership training opportunities and have a cadre of leaders ready to identify a project and work toward its implementation. Others have lacked opportunity to train leaders. These communities should start with leadership training and allow project identification to wait until the leaders are better equipped to initiate their chosen project.

In order to accommodate the specific leadership training needs of these communities, proposals will be accepted in two categories: Initial Leadership Training and Leadership Projects.

**Initial Leadership Training:** Proposals submitted in this category should be one year in duration and focus exclusively on leadership skills and orientation to resources. At the end of the one-year period the leadership team is expected to identify a community based-project and submit a proposal for it's funding. (That proposal would be expected to meet the criteria presented in this document for leadership projects.)

**Leadership Project:** Proposals submitted in this category should be three years in duration and may include both leadership training and a local project. The project should contribute significantly to community development needs identified locally.

### **What Must a Participating Community Agree To Do?**

Local citizens and officials must commit considerable time and resources. A three-day training session will be held to kick-off the project. Eight to twelve “community team members and county educators” must agree to attend this session, and each additional yearly session during the second and third year of the project. This time commitment is critical to the pilot effort.

Each grant recipient will be expected to provide local cash or in-kind match. A minimum amount equal to 10% of the awarded grant will be required. All matching funds will be expended locally. Neither county extension staff time nor leadership training participants’ time may be used as match.

Communities must agree to participate in all evaluation efforts. Not only will the individual project be evaluated as to its ability to reach the identified objectives but in the overall evaluation of the OCES Initiative. State staff will work with each successful applicant to devise the evaluation process that will be used with their project.

Participating communities must assist in disseminating the results of the projects both within the community and across the state.

### **Review Criteria**

It is recognized that communities in Oklahoma are often in different stages of development. Some communities have established leadership programs and local organizations. These communities may easily identify a local project and propose a three-year development effort. Other communities are in earlier stages of development and have no history of leadership training. These communities need to start with leadership training.

The criteria used to evaluate proposals in the *Initial Leadership Training* category differ from those used to evaluate the *Comprehensive Leadership Training*.

#### **Criteria for Initial Leadership Training**

1. **Impact of Leadership Program** - Who is the target audience for this leadership program? Is the target audience inclusive and representative of your community?
2. **Objectives of the Program** - Can you describe specific goals for your leadership program? Are there unique approaches to this program? What is the timeline and does the budget tie to your goals?
3. **Community Awareness** - What steps will be taken to ensure the project is publicized at all steps of the process?

4. **Partnerships** - What level of OCES involvement is expected? What level of community support (cash or in-kind match) is anticipated? What community partners are involved?
5. **Demonstrated Local Commitment** - How will the work under the project be sustained in the future? What efforts will be made to continue to expand the leadership roles of participants and to bring additional participants into the program? Can it be replicated in another county or community?
6. **Local Resources Committed** - both in-kind and actual cash.

### **Criteria for Comprehensive Leadership Training**

1. **Problem/issue identification** - Has the problem/issue been clearly identified? Is there an understanding of the current situation? Has the problem/issue been identified in the goals of other agencies and/or groups or how does the proposed project fit into existing plans of other agencies and/or groups?
2. **Potential Impact/Outcomes** - Who is the target audience, and how will this project impact that audience? What is the anticipated impact on the community/county at large?
3. **Projected Goals and Objectives** - Does the proposal provide for a clear set of goals and objectives? Do these goals and objectives seem sound (Can they be done, are they feasible, do they get at the problem/issue, have they been tried before or will this be a unique approach, etc)? Do they address the problem/issue? Is it likely that the proposed approach will yield a successful project (Will they achieve the impact and outcomes set forth in #2)? Is there a timeline provided for the goals and objectives? Does the timeline fit what is being proposed? Does the budget tie with the proposed goals and objectives?
4. **Publicity/Information dissemination** - What steps will be taken to ensure that the project is publicized at all steps of the process? How will the final results be disseminated?
5. **Anticipated Participation** - What level of OCES participation is anticipated? What level of other participation (non-economic) is anticipated? What level of economic participation (cash or in-kind) is anticipated? (Attach any letters of support received for the project - strong letters of support will offer specific details of what support can be anticipated.) Describe how the proposed project is interdisciplinary, involving multiple people from a variety of backgrounds.
6. **Demonstrated Local Commitment** - How will the work begun under the project be sustained in the future? What efforts will be made to continue to expand the leadership roles of participants and to bring additional participants into the program? Can it be replicated in another county or community?
7. **Local Resources Committed** - both in-kind and actual cash.

**PROPOSAL FORMAT**  
**Initiative for the Future of Rural Oklahoma**

- Leadership Project**
- Initial Leadership Training**

**Section One**

Title of Proposal \_\_\_\_\_

County and or Community \_\_\_\_\_

County Extension Educator \_\_\_\_\_

Team Members

Contact Person \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

FAX \_\_\_\_\_

## **Section Two**

Do not exceed **two** pages.

### **2. Narrative**

NOTE: Initial leadership projects will select priority area related to “civic engagement and leadership development.”

Include

1. Project description or process anticipated being used to select project. Include justification for project - where your community is now and where you want to go. Why do you need it?
2. Priority Area (more than one can be included)
  - Economic Diversification
  - Community Planning
  - Service Infrastructure
  - Local Government
  - Civic Engagement and Leadership Development
  - Youth & Adult Workforce Development
3. Specific relationship to priority area and expected outcome(s)
4. Project timeline
5. Potential for securing continuing funding for this project.
6. How will you evaluate the project?

## **Section Three**

### **Budget**

1. A line-item budget (See attached format)
2. A budget narrative **NOT** to exceed one page
3. Approval signatures

# Budget Page Initiative for the Future of Rural Oklahoma

## Budget Format

	Grant Funds Requested	Matching Funds (Cash Dollars)	Matching Funds (In kind)*	Total Project Funds
Hourly wages	_____	_____	_____	_____
Supplies	_____	_____	_____	_____
Equipment	_____	_____	_____	_____
Travel	_____	_____	_____	_____
Other (list)	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>Total</b>	_____	_____	_____	_____

\*Please describe in-kind contribution in narrative.

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### APPROVAL:

\_\_\_\_\_  
County Director

\_\_\_\_\_  
District Director

### Deliverables

Deliverables are an in-depth fiscal and programmatic report, to be received annually. Also required is a one to two page executive summary including documented impacts of the project to appear in the OCES report to the Legislature/Administration.

### Submission Guidelines

Submit an original and six copies of the proposal to Dr. Mike Woods (405-744-9837), Ag Econ 514 Ag Hall, **no later than June 30, 2002 at 5:00 p.m.** Awards will be made and announced before July 30, 2002.

**Questions** - Call Your District Director

## Appendix 1

# **Expanding the Community Development Capacity of the South's Land-Grant University System<sup>1</sup>**

## ***A Comprehensive Extension Community Development Training Strategy***

### **Introduction**

The presence of a strong community development program is emerging as a critical need in many land-grant universities in the South. Agriculture, still a powerful economic engine in many parts of the rural South, now finds itself sharing the economic stage with several other sectors, including manufacturing, services, and retail trade. Many community economies are growing and diversifying, while others are in an economic tailspin. Technological advances are creating a demand for better-educated, more skilled workers, resulting in the displacement of thousands of Southern workers having little more than a high school education. Our region is witnessing dramatic compositional shifts in its population, including the rapid expansion of the South's Latino and African American populations. While some communities – both urban and rural – have attracted many new residents, others have struggled to hang on to the few residents that remain.

These are a sampling of the complex conditions facing communities in the South today. The challenges are many, but the opportunities are equally considerable. Enhancing the capacity of communities to build a future for themselves requires guidance, information, and education. No entity is better positioned to carry out these important activities than is the primary outreach education arm of the South's land-grant institutions --- the Cooperative Extension Service.

The following outlines a plan by the Southern Rural Development Center to strengthen and advance the capacity of the region's 29 land-grant institutions to carry out high quality, cutting-edge Extension Community Development programming. It promotes the development of a pool of Extension specialists and agents, both within and across state boundaries, having specialized community development skills. Complex community issues demand well-trained and skilled Extension agents. Developing the pool of agents with such skills is the very goal of this plan.

### **CD Training Plan: An Overview**

Figure 1 visually presents the overall strategy for advancing the community development training of Extension educators located in the South. The first step in the plan is to present a broad overview of what community development is all about. It is intended to help agents and specialists, with primary responsibility in agriculture and natural resources (ANR), 4-H youth development, or family and consumer sciences (FCS), gain a better understanding of how their own programmatic activities can be further strengthened with an understanding of key communities development principles. At the same time, it can serve as an entrée point for those Extension educators who want to begin pursuing community development as a major part of their Extension activities.

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<sup>1</sup> Prepared by Bo Beaulieu, SRDC Director, with input from the SRDC Board of Directors Subcommittee on CD Training (chaired by Dr. Margaret Hale, Texas A&M University) and the Southern Region Extension Community Development Program Leaders

Figure 1. Comprehensive CD Training Plan for Extension Specialists and Agents in the South

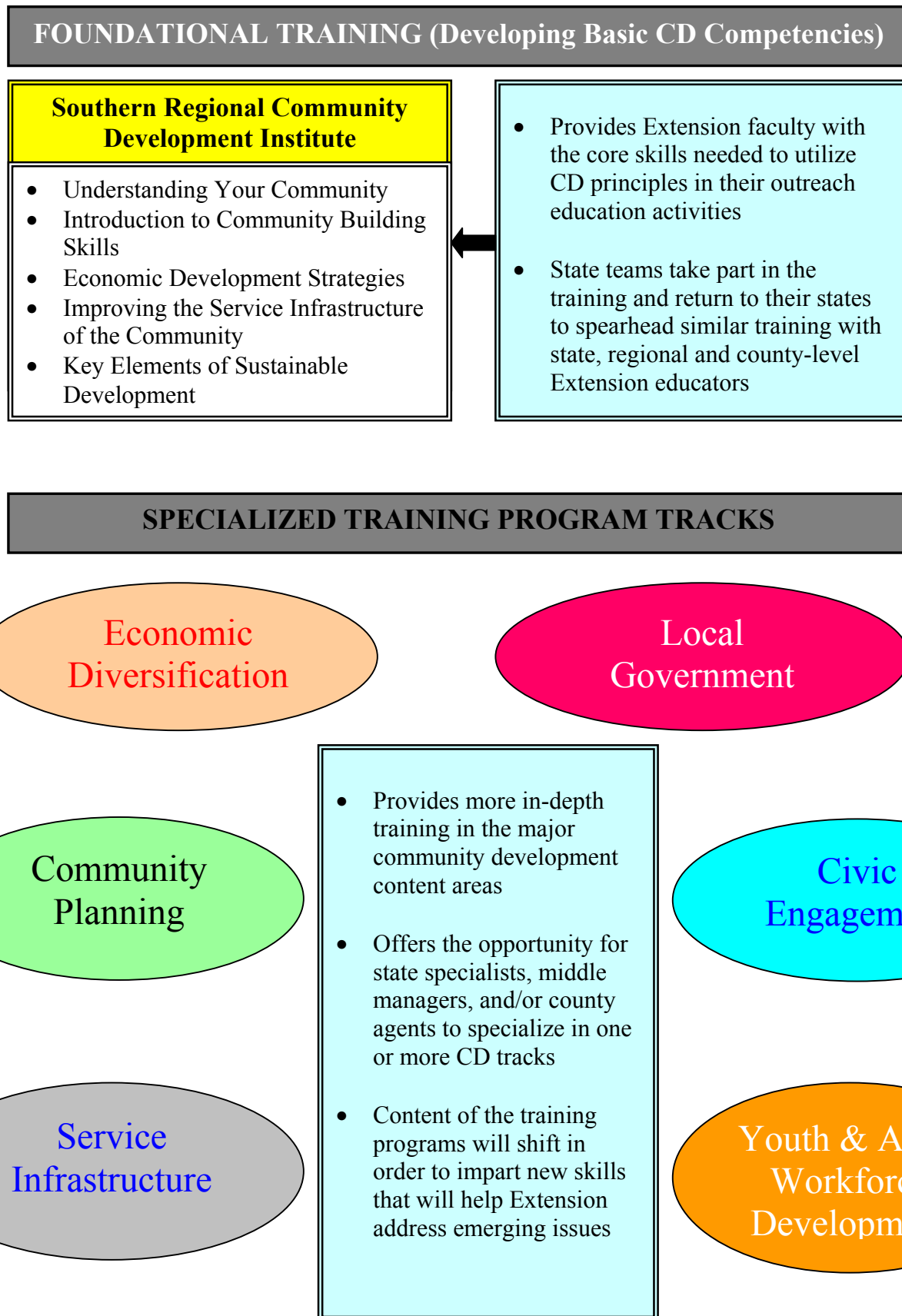


Table 1. Examples of Content Area to be Covered in the Specialized Tracks

<b>SPECIALIZED TRACKS</b>	<b>POSSIBLE CONTENT AREAS</b>
<b>Economic Diversification</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Economic structure of the community</li> <li>● Determining economic leakages</li> <li>● Exploring value-added opportunities (farm and nonfarm)</li> <li>● Business retention and expansion</li> <li>● Entrepreneurship</li> <li>● Home-based and micro businesses</li> <li>● Exploring the use of e-commerce by local businesses</li> <li>● Agri- and eco-tourism</li> </ul>
<b>Community Planning Tools</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Strategic planning and visioning</li> <li>● From Vision Action</li> <li>● Community asset mapping</li> <li>● Needs assessment</li> <li>● Socio-demographic analysis</li> <li>● Use of GIS to map key data on your community</li> </ul>
<b>Service Infrastructure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Input/output modeling for assessing the costs of local services</li> <li>● Health care</li> <li>● Telecommunication services</li> <li>● Transportation</li> <li>● Water and waste management</li> </ul>
<b>Local Government</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Public issues education</li> <li>● Impact of federal policy on local government activities</li> <li>● Finance and taxation</li> <li>● Training of local elected officials</li> </ul>
<b>Civic Engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Assessing population diversity</li> <li>● Leadership Development</li> <li>● Building partnerships across local organizations and institutions</li> <li>● Involving citizens in local issues: some key steps</li> </ul>
<b>Youth/Adult Workforce Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Understanding the current status of local labor markets</li> <li>● Education/skills needed for the expanding sectors of the economy</li> <li>● Federal/state workforce investment policies</li> <li>● Linking with local workforce investment boards</li> </ul>

## Appendix 2

### **Possible Accomplishments and Successes**

- Forum for county-based comprehensive planning
- Facilitate development of local growth management plans
- Establishment of county-wide Chambers of Commerce
- Adopt-A-Highway programs initiated to clean up counties
- Creation of after-school Homework Centers
- Successful team building which brought in a \$30 million value added processing plant to one county providing more than 700 jobs
- Adopt-A-School programs initiated to increase community/school relations
- Implementation of beautification programs along major highways
- County-wide recycling programs initiated
- Creation of educational materials on children-at-risk, teenage pregnancy, local option sales tax, county-wide zoning, land use planning
- E-911 system county-wide
- Road naming to increase public safety and implement E-911 system
- Establishment of educational scholarships for local students
- Business/education partnerships initiated
- Implementation of "Business After Hours" for local businesses
- Establishment of full-time recreation directors position
- Increased tourism through creation of new festivals and recreational tournaments