



## Applications Available for “Stronger Economies Together” Initiative

### **Provides Technical Assistance for Rural Regional Development**

*Applications Available online at: [www.rd.usda.gov/nc](http://www.rd.usda.gov/nc), deadline is 11:59 pm on May 7, 2015*

USDA Rural Development, in conjunction with the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service and other state and local partners, has released details of an initiative called “Stronger Economies Together” (SET), which is designed to help regional teams develop new approaches to strengthen and enhance regional economic development activities. The SET initiative is an opportunity for current or newly formed multi-county teams to receive the latest tools, training and technical assistance to help their region move forward and capitalize on the strengths of the region to create jobs, wealth, and economic development. Up to two multi-county regions in rural North Carolina will be chosen to participate in the initiative.

The SET initiative eligibility requirements are:

- (1) Applicants must be contiguous, multi-county regions (at least 3 or more) in North Carolina or in conjunction with counties in neighboring states;
- (2) The average rural population must be 51% or more of the region’s total population based on Census data or other sufficient data or documentation; or 75% of their land area is located in rural areas of that region based on Census data or other sufficient data or documentation.

Applications for the SET initiative are now available at North Carolina’s USDA Rural Development Website at: [www.rd.usda.gov/nc](http://www.rd.usda.gov/nc). A complete application must be submitted electronically to [blbowen@ncsu.edu](mailto:blbowen@ncsu.edu) by 11:59 pm on May 7, 2015. An acknowledgement of receipt will be sent within two business days. Successful applicants will be announced by June 30, 2015. There is no application fee, but chosen applicants should be prepared to supply some minor logistical support.

The successful applicants (up to 2) will receive coaching and up to 40 hours of technical assistance over a period of up to one year on the following: 1) Valuable training on the core building blocks for developing and launching a regional economic development plan; 2) In-depth economic data tailored to the region, information that helps delineate the critical drivers of your region’s economy; 3) Tools that uncover local assets and resources that can be tapped

to advance your region's economic strategies and actions. We also encourage applicants to collaborate with their local Extension and Rural Development offices. Please see the application for more detail.

An informational webinar on the SET program requirements and benefits will be provided on Monday, April 6, between 1:00 and 2:00 pm. You can access the webinar by clicking on the following link:

[https://collaborate.wolfware.ncsu.edu/join/?join\\_session\\_id=2HHo5rUMkXI](https://collaborate.wolfware.ncsu.edu/join/?join_session_id=2HHo5rUMkXI)

If you have questions, please contact:

- Brian Queen, 919-873-2072, Community Development Coordinator, USDA-NC-Rural Development, [brian.queen@nc.usda.gov](mailto:brian.queen@nc.usda.gov)
- Becky Bowen, 919-628-4317, Program Manager, CultivateNC, North Carolina Cooperative Extension, North Carolina State University, [blbowen@ncsu.edu](mailto:blbowen@ncsu.edu)

USDA Rural Development has 6 Area Offices and 14 sub-area/local offices across the state serving North Carolinians living in rural areas and communities. Area Office locations are in Asheville, Shelby, Lumberton, Asheboro, Henderson and Kinston. Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting the USDA Rural Development web site at [www.rd.usda.gov/nc](http://www.rd.usda.gov/nc).

The North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service (NCCES) is based at North Carolina's two land grant institutions, NC State University and NC A&T State University, in all 100 counties and with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. NCCES gives our residents easy access to the resources and expertise of NC State University and NC A&T State University. Through educational programs, publications, and events, Cooperative Extension field faculty deliver unbiased, research-based information to North Carolina citizens. See <http://ces.ncsu.edu/> for more information.