

# North Central Region March 22, 2022

Regional Listening Session





# RESPONSES FROM THE NORTH CENTRAL REGION RURAL PRIORITY LISTENING SESSION

- Farm stress, perseverance
- Succession planning
- Positive social capital
- Grit
- Human capital
- Neighbors who care
- Hometown
- Scrappy
- Innovative
- Re-invention
- Connection
- Quality of life
- Diversification
- Choices
- Entrepreneurship
- Community vibrancy
- Ability to respond and adapt to changing conditions
- Equitable opportunities



# TOPICS INCLUDED IN THE NORTH CENTRAL REGION RURAL PRIORITY LISTENING SESSION

- Workforce Development
- Community Vibrancy
- Economic Development



# CROSS-CUTTING THEMES IN QUALITATIVE DATA ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## Assets

- Social and community reciprocity, community pride
- Tourism, recreation, travel, hospitality, natural resource endowments
- Rich set of organizations that support ecosystem/social capital

## Challenges

- Lack of broadband inhibiting economic growth, innovation, and entrepreneurship
- Lack of amenities (housing, healthcare, financial services)
- Lack of local leadership or political organization
- Lack business/professional services needed
- Lack of targeted/accessible financial resources and technical expertise

## Opportunities

- Entrepreneurship
- Workforce training
- Digital and remote working skills, enhancing digital tools
- Education systems
- Broadband capability and infrastructure
- Funding
- Building rural tourism
- Family resources and housing
- Grant opportunities and other financial assistance



# LISTENING SESSION RAPID FINDINGS: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- **Linking people and assets in communities:** creating space for interdisciplinary work; investigating how to collaborate across tribes, local, state government; bringing Extension into conversations, researching best practices from other communities
- **Applying for and receiving grant funding:** including minorities and marginalized populations, collaborating on funding opportunities, grant-writing workshops
- **Provide amenities that will attract and retain residents:** affordable and attractive housing, schools, community colleges, broadband, health insurance

# LISTENING SESSION RAPID FINDINGS: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## Research

- Creating space for interdisciplinary work surrounding economic development
- Measuring bridging and bonding social capital (difficult to measure)
- Looking forward in rural development, creating policies conducive of future economic growth
- Contacting tribal departments of commerce to build relationships
- Identifying individuals working in the realm of economic development (regional directors, chambers of commerce, etc.)
- Creating internship/job opportunities for local youth looking for their first career opportunity
- Investigating how to collaborate across tribes, local, state government
- Working with larger companies to train rural residents in remote work
- Developing grant-writing capacity, especially in disadvantaged communities
- Co-applying for funding with tribes and local businesses

# LISTENING SESSION RAPID FINDINGS: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## Extension, Outreach, and Education

- Overcoming the “ivory tower” academia label that limits sharing and listening from communities
- Including and integrating people from a diverse set of backgrounds through Extension programming
- Scaling businesses up by partnering them with small business development centers
- Sharing best practices that already exist
- Incorporating the RRDC's to reach across the network and share programming
- Connecting resources through Extension and community networks
- Creating and marketing a one-stop resource center that will serve as a single point of entry to address issues
- Initiating internship/job opportunities for local youth looking for their first career opportunity
- Enhancing and expanding STEM in grade schools
- Enlisting local econ development organizations in communities with “boots on the ground” work
- Provide health insurance and livable wages to young people starting new careers
- Providing affordable and attractive housing
- Investing in student scholarships



# CROSS-CUTTING THEMES IN QUALITATIVE DATA ON COMMUNITY VIBRANCY

## Assets

- Where available, broadband can be an asset to encourage rural vibrancy
- Youth-focused organizations (4-H, Scouts)
- Rural places have opportunities for new leaders
- Leadership trainings through Extension

## Challenges

- Youth lack opportunities for careers with remote work/digital ready skills
- Lack of broadband for remote work
- Population decline/youth moving away
- Job losses, housing and amenity shortages
- Limited capacity to deal with complex issues

## Opportunities

- Arts
- Trust-building
- Youth workforce training
- Broadband capability, affordability, and infrastructure
- Leadership development and entrepreneurship training
- Research and share promising practices, case studies
- Build capacity for civic engagement
- Research and share how social capital and trust are built in communities





## LISTENING SESSION RAPID FINDINGS: COMMUNITY VIBRANCY

- **Defining, measuring, and quantifying *community vibrancy* along with rural:** can be imperative in not only obtaining grants but also uniting communities to address issues
- **Extension programming and collaborations:** relationships, programming, and collaborations from and amid Extension in communities is vital to creating community vibrancy
- **Support for grant writing and fundraising:** programs that teach local groups and agencies how to search for, apply for, and acquire grant funding, including philanthropic organizations in planning, community-based fundraising efforts
- **Connecting and including marginalized groups in communities:** groups from under-represented groups, those living in poverty, and young people should be included in community conversations and planning

# LISTENING SESSION RAPID FINDINGS: COMMUNITY VIBRANCY

## Research

- Understanding priorities, wants, and needs of community members from their own perspectives
- Showcasing success stories in communities that can be shared with other communities
- Implementing community asset mapping and other associated tools for communities
- Quantifying vibrancy, its baseline, and impact
- Defining vibrancy across culture and being inclusive across all community members
- Engaging new leadership while current leadership is still holding positions of power
- Involving those most affected by poverty in the discussion on vibrancy
- Addressing quality of life perceptions in analysis of community vibrancy
- Enhancing community and business reciprocity
- Utilizing data-driven information about population trends
- Enabling succession of Main Street businesses

# LISTENING SESSION RAPID FINDINGS: COMMUNITY VIBRANCY

## Extension, Outreach, and Education

- Supporting Extension programming and collaborations to enhance community vibrancy
- Hosting resource fairs and community conversations related to housing, food, jobs, etc.
- Incentivizing community participation
- Fostering collaboration between 1862, 1890, and 1994 Land Grant Institutions, and regional/multistate groups
- Understanding the social determinants of health, income inequality, and educational attainment
- Supporting communities in locating, applying for, and acquiring grant funding for local projects
- Including young people to become integrated with local boards, government, and other agencies
- Implementing professional development for local staff, government staff, and community members
- Developing philanthropic cultures in communities
- Addressing digital competency
- Enhancing broadband access and service



# CROSS-CUTTING THEMES IN QUALITATIVE DATA ON WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

## Assets

- Youth-focused organizations
- Community colleges and vocational schools
- Colleges, universities, trade schools, Extension
- Interest in equity to ensure high quality of life
- Work ethic, human capital, access to labor

## Challenges

- Population decline/brain drain of youth
- Lack of broadband for remote work
- Poverty, low educational attainment, substance abuse
- Resources for rural school districts
- Lack of skilled and motivated workforce

## Opportunities

- Mentor/apprenticeship opportunities
- Develop more opportunities in the trades
- Link local training to local needs
- Transportation, housing, and broadband needs
- Training/certificate programs
- Entrepreneurship training



# LISTENING SESSION RAPID FINDINGS: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- **Remote work:** creating opportunities, preparing the workforce for it, increasing the infrastructure and digital readiness of communities
- **Wrap-around services:** childcare, eldercare, housing/rentals, broadband,
- **Attracting and keeping talent in rural communities**

# LISTENING SESSION RAPID FINDINGS: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

## Research

- Identifying current career pathways and where gaps in training exist
- Identifying barriers that are preventing adult learners from accessing skill development opportunities
- Role of incentives provided by businesses to attract rural workers
- Creating remote-friendly communities and enhancing digital infrastructure and its link to attracting talent to rural areas
- Retaining young people and the population as a whole to rural communities through amenities, natural resources, and community assets
- What trainings are currently available?
- Identifying the need for wrap-around services to enhance workforce development
- Addressing access issues to trainings (digital and otherwise), remote work, and professional development

# LISTENING SESSION RAPID FINDINGS: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

## Extension, Outreach, and Education

- Highlighting trades, apprenticeships,
- Creating unique education and training to meet needs of local employers
- Connecting community members to share knowledge and resources
- Expanding remote training
- Understanding workforce needs of minority groups in rural areas
- Supporting housing, broadband, childcare, elder care, and other wrap-around services in the area
- Funding community colleges to provide resources, tools, and equipment needed for proper workforce training
- Onboarding new workers and returning workers to the workforce in rural communities
- Linking immigration to what jobs and workforce are needed in rural communities
- Aligning workforce opportunities that reflect needs of students and workers

# LISTENING SESSION RAPID FINDINGS: COMMUNITY VIBRANCY (CV), WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT (WD), AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (ED)

## Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

- Tribal communities (CV, ED)
- Tribal enterprises (ED)
- Including young residents and retirees in trainings (WD)
- Minorities who may not be included in career opportunities (WD)
- Small town residents who are not connected to universities or professional careers (CV)
- Leaders from community-based organizations (CV)
- Ethnically diverse populations (ED) and providing them Extension resources
- Address appropriation in tourism regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion (ED)
- Invest in creating culturally relevant materials and populations who have not historically had access (ED)

## Climate Resiliency and Sustainability

- Including climate resiliency in community development plans (CV)
- Linking small farmers' perception about climate change affecting wellbeing and farming operations (ED)
- Educating rural residents on how to be responsible regarding climate change (ED)
- Involve local utilities to invest in solar/wind projects or other renewable energy sources (ED)
- Must be community driven and not provider driven – need to have capacity building in regards to sustainability (WD)



# LISTENING SESSION RAPID FINDINGS: WHAT IS ONE THING YOU HEARD THAT IS EXCITING GOING FORWARD?

- Huge role and demand for coordination of resources
- Engaging youth in workforce training
- Interest in doing more work across state lines
- Networking, sharing resources and experiences
- Taking down collaboration barriers
- Civil conversation
- Ideas that are about innovation
- Civil discourse training
- Diversity of ideas
- Attention to definitions of rural
- Innovation
- Getting young people involved in the process
- Lots of people excited about positive rural features
- Young people
- Meaningful civil engagement
- Commitment
- I am not alone!
- Consideration of what vibrancy means
- Finding creative ways to foster community dialogue
- Addressing wrap-around services to address workforce barriers
- Capacity to work together to get things done

# LISTENING SESSION RAPID FINDINGS: WHO STILL NEEDS TO BE BROUGHT TO THE TABLE?

- Inclusive space is about cultural competence - we need experts in cultural competence
- End users of research and services
- Young adults
- Youth
- Underserved populations
- Young people
- Retirees/retirees returning to work
- Minority groups
- Mothers
- So many groups
- Elected leaders at the state level
- Local community members
- Local representatives
- Government
- People in poverty
- Tribal communities
- Elected officials at state and federal level
- Older people
- Leaders at the community level who are doing frontline work beyond workshops
- Low-income community members
- People who choose to live in rural places because they don't want to be in diverse communities or communities with more contemporary perspectives - how to integrate them into the conversation?
- Most everybody
- Any people or group that has not historically been involved or engaged
- Native American people in States that have no federally recognized tribes
- Local government to understand what they need training and technical assistance on in order to set up a workforce ecosystem