



National Prosperity through Modern Rural Policy

10th OECD Rural Development Conference

19-21 May 2015
Memphis, Tennessee,
United States

Exhibit Summary

www.oecd.org/regional/



OECD Public Governance and Territorial
Development Directorate

The largest steamboat ever built, the grand American Queen is a gracious and elegant triumph of American ingenuity. Although filled with today's modern amenities, her rooms and accommodations display all the opulence of the American Victorian era. Glistening woodwork, fresh flowers and antiques adorn her interior spaces. Outside, lacy filigree evokes memories of the many stately river steamers that preceded her and so inspired her designers. While on board, you can select a volume from the vast collection in the Mark Twain Gallery, the boat's library. Or enjoy a sing-along in the Main Deck Lounge, and then tap your toes to a lavish show in the two-deck-tall Grand Saloon, the most elegant showplace on the river. Combining the best of the old and the new, this beautiful lady of the river epitomizes the grace and grandeur that has made Steamboating a cherished American tradition for more than two centuries. One voyage and you'll see why.

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“National Prosperity through Modern Policy”

Competitiveness and well-being in rural areas

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Wastewater to Energy

When the operators of the Milton Regional Sewer Authority decided to increase the capacity of the local treatment plant and reduce nutrients being discharged into waterways, they turned to USDA Rural Development (RD) for help.

The Authority needed to increase treatment capacity and reduce nutrients being discharged into waterways to comply with the Chesapeake Bay Tributary Strategy.

The project eventually developed into a plan to create a green sewage treatment facility, appropriately named as a *Wastewater to Energy Project*. RD provided \$59 million in Water and Environmental Program loans to upgrade the antiquated facility.

The Sewer Authority chose an innovative anaerobic treatment system that receives excess food waste from the nearby ConAgra processing plant, where Chef Boyardee, Healthy Choice, Kid Cuisine and many other products are made.

The waste provides the organic material to fuel the on-site reactors that in turn create bio-gas and ultimately electricity to run the sewer plant. The excess electricity is sold back to the grid.

The anaerobic treatment and nutrient removal systems constructed for the project will allow the Authority to increase the plant's capacity to 4.25 million gallons per day. This will provide for continued residential and industrial growth in the Sewer Authority's service area.

The treatment plant's increased capacity will further regionalize sewage treatment in the area and achieve cost savings and efficiencies. The project is scheduled to be completed in fall 2015.

It has many short- and long-term benefits. It has provided construction jobs since the 2012 groundbreaking. Additionally, it will provide jobs at the treatment plant and will enable ConAgra to add jobs at its facility, thus growing the local economy.

The Milton Regional Sewer Authority is located in Northumberland County in East Central Pennsylvania. It serves about 5,600 customers in six municipalities.

USDA Rural Development
Pennsylvania State Office
(717) 237-2299

www.rd.usda.gov/pa

From the Trash to the Tracks



Refurbished Springhill, Louisiana, industrial park facility

IntegriCo Composites of Louisiana, LLC is a composite railroad crosstie manufacturer located in North Webster Parish Development District's Industrial Park in Cullen, Louisiana. The company was founded in Texas in 2005. This environmentally friendly company diverts recyclables destined for landfills to create crossties for a variety of rail applications. This is done through a patented process that bonds and forms the recyclables to create their signature product. Thanks to an extensive public-private partnership, in 2013 the company expanded its Texas-based operations to Louisiana to increase productivity.

Earlier that year, the Mayor of Springhill – the neighboring municipality to Cullen – contacted USDA Rural Development about the prospect of IntegriCo Composites locating to the Industrial Park. Rural Development partnered with the Bank of Montgomery and provided a \$7.5 million loan at a 90% guarantee. Funding through USDA's Business and Industry Loan Guarantee Program was used to purchase the necessary machinery and equipment to operate the new facility.

The state of Louisiana, through Louisiana Economic Development (LED), provided more than \$5 million in funds to refurbish the facility, make site improvements and extend a rail spur to the new location. The North Webster Parish Development District also provided a below market-rate lease for the facility and the option to renew the lease or purchase the site in the near future.

The company currently produces Class I and Class II crossties and will use the funding to add rail crossing and industrial mat lines to their business structure. The industrial mats are created by connecting several crossties into larger mats, which can be used in a variety of industrial applications at various climates.

The worldwide rail industry has a perpetual need for additional crossties. Wood is the most common stock used to create crossties, but concrete has been used as well. Demand for crossties vastly exceeds supply and the rail industry has long delayed capital expenditures to its lines because of the projected cost. In the near future, rail lines will invest billions of dollars into the maintenance and improvements to current rail infrastructure.

As a more economical and durable option, the composite crossties are expected to become the preferred option. In a nutshell, while composite crossties are slightly more expensive, they last much longer than traditional wood crossties and are much more durable in wetter climates. In addition, composite crossties do not require the harmful chemicals required by wood crossties to combat water, bugs, and other harmful organisms.

This new facility will be an invaluable asset to the community. The Town of Cullen has a population of 1,163 and is one of the most impoverished towns in the country with a median household income of \$12,380. This is an investment in the success and economic vitality of this community. The expansion will immediately create 75 new jobs at an average hourly wage of \$15.38. After the loss of a major manufacturer several years ago due to outsourcing, this area has been starving for an opportunity of this magnitude.

The total project cost, including company-owned assets, exceeds \$20 million. This is a wonderful example of public-private partnerships involving an ambitious private company, an aggressive industrial district, an enthusiastic financial institution, and a progressive government at the state and federal level. For more information about IntegriCo, please visit <http://integrico.com/>

USDA Rural Development
Louisiana State Office
(318) 473-7921
www.rd.usda.gov/LA

Rural Ingenuity at its Finest



Bragdon fire log being formed in a mechanical press

will make this rural community healthier and more sustainable. USDA's investment in the bioeconomy has made the Bragdon Farm a stronger, more vibrant business. In early 2015, Mr. Bragdon bought a 40,000-square-foot building in Waterville and hired 10 people for to manufacture the hay logs and to provide administrative support.

USDA Rural Development
Maine State Office
(207) 990-9160
www.rd.usda.gov/ME

Peter Bragdon is an innovative, rural Maine farmer who has utilized waste hay from his 170-acre family farm in Vassalboro to create hay logs that can be burned in residential fireplaces. In July 2010, Bragdon received a \$26,751 USDA Value-Added Producer Grant to fund a feasibility study on the potential for waste hay logs.

In May 2013, Bragdon received a second Value-Added Producer Grant for working capital to put his creation of bio-based, renewable hay logs into production. The logs can be burned in place of wood in furnaces, stoves, fire pits, chimeras and camp fires. They are made from 100 percent renewable materials and are clean burning, sweet smelling and sustainable.

Producing a renewable energy source from farm waste

"Show Me" Missouri's Bounty



Engenuity Worldwide

Engenuity Worldwide is a start-up company located in Mexico, Missouri. This company produces a solid fuel product made from renewable biomass materials such as corn stover or wood waste materials. It is currently producing a home heating log product made from all "green" materials (no petroleum products). The solid biomass fuel will supplement and/or replace coal in coal fired power plants, which will reduce carbon emissions while promoting a bio-based business and help create an additional value added market for agriculture outputs. More than 300 coal-fired power plants are facing closure because they will be unable to meet new environmental regulations. Engenuity's renewable biomass fuel product offers a cost-effective feedstock that will enable coal-fired power plants to meet environmental regulations without spending exorbitant amounts of money to remain

in operation. In turn, this cost savings represents an opportunity to help save the thousands of jobs in power plants across rural America.

USDA Rural Development provided the company with a \$500,000 Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) grant. The REAP funds were used to help develop the biomass fuel production facility. USDA also provided a \$2 million Business and Industry Guaranteed loan. These funds were used to purchase biomass fuel production equipment that processes corn stover and related biomass products into a densified solid fuel product that will be used in the biopower energy industry. The project created 20 new jobs in rural Mexico, Missouri.

For more information on Engenuity, visit www.engenuityww.com



Nature's E.N.V.

Nature's E.N.V. is a subsidiary of Hampton Feedlot and Hampton Alternative Energy Products. This product is based on a 5,000-head beef cattle feedlot and an anaerobic digester located in Triplett, Missouri. Hampton Feedlot was facing environmental issues related to effluent from the 5,000-head beef feedlot. They decided to build a anaerobic digester to mitigate the environmental impact of the cattle feeding operation and comply with environmental regulations. In addition to mitigating the environmental impact, the digester generates renewable energy for use in the feedlot and creates an all-natural fertilizer product which the company dries and bags for retail distribution. The renewable energy and the fertilizer products represent a value-added agricultural opportunity, and helps ensure that Hampton Feedlot will continue to provide a valuable market for Missouri's beef producers.

Nature's E.N.V. is a shining example of how the agricultural industry can go green, help the environment, produce clean renewable energy, and strengthen and expand the market for agricultural products. USDA Rural Development provided a \$2.8 million Rural Energy for America Guaranteed Loan, an \$850,000 Business and Industry Guaranteed Loan and a \$210,000 Value-Added Producer Grant. For more information on Nature's E.N.V. visit www.naturesenv.com

Blue Heron Orchard

Blue Heron Orchard is a certified organic apple orchard located in Canton, Missouri. Established in 1990, they are the first certified organic orchard in the state. The orchard produces several varieties of apples and apple products, including apple syrup, apple butter, apple cider vinegar and pure apple cider. Owner Dan Kelly strives to promote awareness of health and well-being through a culture of small-scale family farming, sound environmental practices, and fine organic cuisine. No sugar or preservatives are added to any of Blue Heron's apple products.

USDA Rural Development provided a \$68,988 Value-Added Producer Grant. The funds were used to assist with processing the organic apples into apple sauce baby food, apple fruit leather, hard cider, sauce, butter, syrup vinegars and dried apples. The Blue Heron Orchard products are marketed throughout Missouri. Blue Heron Orchard also serves a 300-member Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm called Fair Shares in St. Louis, MO. The orchard has an educational component in which elementary and higher education students can attend seminars related to organic and all-natural apple production.

For more information on Blue Heron Orchard, visit www.blueheronorchard.com

Baetje Farms

Baetje Farms is an internationally acclaimed producer of organic cheese from Saanen goats. Baetje Farms is located south of St. Louis in rural Bloomsdale, Missouri. Established in 1912, Baetje Farms has been producing Pure Artisan Farmstead cheese full-time since 2007 and produce both fresh and aged cheeses that comply with all local, state and federal laws and regulations. Since 2007, Baetje Farms has won more than 60 national and international awards for their artisan cheeses; most notably, the "Bloomsdale" cheese which has won a Super-Gold medal at the World Cheese Awards for the past three years. Thirty-five countries participate in this prestigious competition. Starting in 2012, Baetje Farms began shipping their organic cheese products to California, Texas, Florida, Louisiana and along the east coast. In 2014, Baetje Farms received the Agri-Missouri Member of the Year award at the annual Governor's Conference on Agriculture.

USDA Rural Development provided a \$49,999 Value-Added Producer Grant. The funds were used to help market organic goat cheese from the Baetje Family Farm. The project created two new jobs in rural Ste. Genevieve County, Missouri, and assisted Baetje Farms in expanding their presence in Missouri's dairy industry.

For more information on Baetje Farms, visit www.baetje farms.com



Nature's Organic Haven

Nature's Organic Haven is a producer of organic elderberries and related products at their farm in Hermann, Missouri. Phyllis Hannan is the owner of Nature's Organic Haven and received organic certification for her elderberry operation in 2012. From the beginning, Ms. Hannan's goal was to develop her own line of branded elderberry products to be sold at a competitive price. Based on guidelines from USDA, the company identified the need for a healthy alternative drink for school age children. Nature's Organic Haven's primary product is "Nature's Power" elderberry juice. This juice is marketed as a "super food" for its high nutritional content and is a special blend of elderberry, raspberry, blackberry, blueberry, apple, kale and amla (Indian gooseberry) juices.

USDA Rural Development provided a \$190,107 Value-Added Producer Grant. The funds are being used to market elderberry juice and elderberry flour from Nature's Organic Haven's 90-acre farm. This includes expenses for labor, packaging, labeling, marketing, consult fee promotion expenses, utilities, legal, insurance, juice ingredients, bottles and labels for product samples. Nature's Organic Haven will be investing \$1.4 million in capital investments, utilizing a state-of-the-art processing facility in Hermann, Missouri. The project will create seven new jobs in rural Gasconade County, Missouri. Moreover, the elderberry project represents an exciting addition to Missouri's diverse agricultural industry.

For more information on Nature's Organic Haven, visit www.drinknaturespower.com

Les Bourgeois Vineyards

Les Bourgeois Vineyards is a commercial and retail winery located near rural Rocheport, Missouri. Renowned for its spectacular bluff top view of the Missouri River Valley, Les Bourgeois Vineyards and Winery is one of Mid-Missouri's premiere cultural and recreational attractions. A family owned and operated vineyard, Les Bourgeois offers a unique combination of rural quaintness and accessibility. With its central location midway between Kansas City and St. Louis, Les Bourgeois is a popular destination for visitors statewide, and represents a valuable asset to Missouri's agri-tourism industry. Les Bourgeois is active in promoting and assisting the Missouri wine industry, and supports many other Missouri vineyards by purchasing their grapes for processing into wine.

In 2004, USDA-Rural Development provided a Value-Added Producer Grant in the amount of \$46,607. Funds were used as working capital for processing and marketing of grapes into a high-quality, sweet, slightly- sparkling bottled wine.

For more information on Les Bourgeois, visit <http://missouriwine.com/>

USDA Rural Development
Missouri State Office
(573) 876-0976
www.rd.usda.gov/MO

Small Businesses Mean Big Opportunities for Native American Community



A market gardener offers his wares at the Santee Farmers Market

The Center for Rural Affairs in Lyons, Nebraska launched the program “Small Business and Market Growth for Omaha and Santee Sioux Tribes of Nebraska”, a multi-layer initiative designed to increase economic opportunities for Native American Communities. Santee Sioux Tribal Headquarters in Santee, Nebraska, is located in Knox County, 200 miles from Omaha and Lincoln. Throughout the past few years, the community has faced several challenges. Transportation options are limited, unemployment is high (11.2% compared to the state’s 4.7%) and the median household income is low (\$16,500, compared to the state’s \$39,250).

To help combat these issues and increase the quality of life in this rural community, USDA Rural Development awarded the Center for Rural Affairs nearly \$300,000 through three rounds of funding by the way of USDA’s Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) program. Funds were used to develop educational programs, create jobs and host farmers markets for the Santee Sioux Tribe, the Omaha and Santee Sioux Tribe, and the Omaha Tribe in Macy.

The funding provided training and technical assistance in agriculture production, value-added and organic farming techniques. Educational sessions introduced Santee residents to the basics of garden production and business skills. For example, a course was offered to demonstrate how to market locally grown foods at farmer’s markets. This funding also led to a first-time partnership with the University of Nebraska. Representatives from the University provided expert guidance at the educational sessions.

Prior to the program, local retail stores failed to maintain stock of edible fresh foods, therefore limiting access to residents. In June 2012, The Santee Farmers Market opened its doors, showcasing 16 vendors. Out of the 16 vendors that participated in the market, 11 were from the immediate Santee area. Most were first-time sellers, using the skills they learned from the educational sessions. Vendors sold vegetables, berries, jams and jellies, baked goods, eggs, teas, dried herbs, pillows, books, beadwork, hair ornaments, jewelry, hand woven/braided rugs, and even fresh brewed coffee. The fresh produce and baked goods was in high demand. Sweet corn, tomatoes, potatoes and cucumbers were some of the top sellers. Several shoppers would return each Saturday looking for their favorite item or a new variety of tasty jelly. The market ran for 16 consecutive Saturdays. By the last day of the market, more than 400 satisfied shoppers had visited the market.

USDA Rural Development’s investment in the Center for Rural Affairs is a direct reflection of the agency’s dedication to improving the quality of life in rural Nebraska. The partnership between the center and the federal agency has expanded throughout the years and will continue to prosper.

The center has already made plans for the 2015 farmers markets. They are expecting even better sales for next year. Next year an Omaha-language name will be used for the market; Uzhi Uthiwi (Garden Market), to better promote the event. A weekly delivery market design will be implemented in 2015 to serve farmers. The Santee Sioux Tribe will launch a new pilot market called Oyate (Family) Baskets in July, 2015. The local gardening group used the Dakota language to name the project to better reflect their culture. Oyate Baskets streamlines delivery of fresh local produce from market gardeners to sell within the Santee community. Produce will be sold at an affordable price. Setting up an EBT (Electronic Benefit Transfer) machine for local residents to pay with SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits is also in the works. Both the Santee Farmers Market and nearest grocery store are located 15 miles from the town of Santee, which does not provide easy access for locals to purchase fresh foods. In 2015, an additional market will open and provide access to fresh produce for locals lacking transportation, while giving market gardeners an opportunity to sell in town.

USDA Rural Development
Nebraska State Office
(402) 437-5550
www.rd.usda.gov/ne

Investing in Higher Education in Rural Areas



Land-Grant Colleges and Universities



In the late 19th century, many leaders recognized that a more skilled workforce was the key to the nation's continued economic growth and to competing in the global market. This thinking led to federal financial support of institutions of higher learning. The funding was generated through proceeds from the sale of federal land to endow these institutions which became to be known as "land-grant" colleges and universities.

USDA's partnership with Land Grant Institutions is an open door, open access program of education, advocacy, innovation, entrepreneurship and resource leveraging. These collaborative investments focus on rural business and economic development and planning grants that help develop and improve the professional skills of rural entrepreneurs while also providing small, under-served rural communities access to USDA Rural Development programs. In 2014 USDA awarded more than \$46 million to over 800 campuses that serve 3.3 million students.

Land Grant institutions focus on the teaching of practical agriculture, science, military science and engineering that creates high-skilled and high-wage jobs for all who desire to learn, regardless of wealth, heritage, or prior academic experience. Land Grant Institutions place a strong emphasis on serving underrepresented minorities in rural areas. They also bring vital, practical information to local agricultural producers, small business owners, consumers, and young people through agriculture experiment stations and cooperative extension programs.

But the federal government's contribution to rural communities does not stop with education. Working in partnership with USDA's Rural Development programs, these institutions can: build rural community libraries and facilities that provide healthcare, child care and elderly care; provide space for local fire departments; upgrade community facilities with renewable energy technology; conduct rural housing needs assessments and planning efforts designed to provide affordable housing for rural residents; host credit summits for business and individuals; bring distance learning and telemedicine capability to communities; plan community water systems and high-speed telecommunications systems and broadband; conduct loan and grant writing workshops; and provide IT support to local businesses. All of these actions have a very real impact on rural communities' ability to attract private investments.

USDA's partnership with land grant institutions greatly increases American productivity, changes lives and brings increased economic expansion that lifts rural America. In 2012 alone, the net total impact of community colleges on the U.S. economy was \$809 billion in added income, a figure equal to 5.4% of the National Gross Domestic Product.

Turning Waste Into Cash



A pioneering upgrade to Wooster, Ohio's municipal wastewater treatment plant has allowed the city to meet state and federal environmental regulations while tripling plant capacity and lowering overhead costs by nearly \$500,000 a year.

The plant, which was completed last year, is now powered by anaerobic digestion and is outperforming expectations. Electricity generated from the digesters helps offset the plant's operating costs. The plant has outperformed expectations so much so that surplus electricity is being sold back to the local utility!

A public/private partnership between the City of Wooster and Quasar Energy Group facilitated the initiative. USDA Rural Development gave the city a

\$1.25 million loan/grant combination from the Rural Energy for America program to improve the plant. Quasar Energy Group developed a proprietary nutrient recovery process for the plant that allows nitrogen to be removed from the digested effluent. This in turn permits treated wastewater to be safely discharged into nearby Killbuck Creek.

The modernized treatment plant is contributing to Wooster's economic revitalization by drawing businesses to the area. For instance, now that the plant can handle the additional industrial load, Daisy Dairy Products has decided to locate a new processing plant in Wooster.

Kevin Givens, Wooster's utilities manager, notes the facility is now exporting nearly as much energy as it consumes. The plant's electric bill, which ran about \$32,000 each month, now averages \$300, saving the city between \$300,000 and \$400,000 each year. Additionally, renovating the facility saved the city roughly \$8.5 million on capital expenses alone.

A planned biogas system will allow the sale of renewable compressed natural gas, which can be used to help power the municipal fleet.

Wooster's Water Pollution Control Plant serves 26,300 customers. Wooster is the seat of Wayne County, about 50 miles south of Cleveland.

USDA Rural Development
Ohio State Office
(614) 255-2400
www.rd.usda.gov/oh

Ranch to Runway: Value Added Wool

Central Oregon ranchers Jeanne and Dan Carver have worked tirelessly over the years to find new ways to profitably preserve Central Oregon's nearly extinct—yet very American—tradition of raising sheep for fiber. In partnership with USDA Rural Development, the Carvers have developed value-added wool products that help their historic, family owned Imperial Stock Ranch remain a model for sustainable agriculture while stimulating economic activity in a very remote rural region.

"This is about more than a product," said Jeanne Carver. "It's an experience, an interconnected relationship with the land and grazing animals, with building and supporting our local and domestic partnerships to create a flourishing economy and a gorgeous product from our own resources."

In 2000, Jeanne Carver rolled out a line of yarn and spool-spun wool from the sheep raised at the ranch. In 2008, Jeanne reached out for value-added planning and marketing assistance from USDA Rural Development. In the relatively short time since then, Imperial Yarn has added capacity and improved the supply chain for their sustainably produced, boutique products including yarn, fibers, patterns and knitting kits, which are sold to more than 300 boutique yarn stores around the country and directly to consumers. In addition, the company sells production yarns to large and small apparel brands. Ralph Lauren, the iconic American brand and U.S. Olympic team sponsor, selected Imperial Yarns from the Imperial Stock Ranch to make sweaters for Team USA to wear at the 2014 Winter Olympics opening ceremony. More recently, Imperial Yarn has branched out to meet the demand for ready-made blankets and throws with their home textiles launched at the February 2015 NY NOW trade show—as well as apparel—the Imperial Collection ready-to-wear line designed by fashion designer Anna Cohen, which launched Fall 2014.

Imperial Yarn is the value-added business offshoot of Jeanne and Dan Carver's family owned and operated Imperial Stock Ranch (est. 1871), which produces sheep, cattle, grains, hay and grasses on more than 32,000 acres of stunning Central Oregon rangeland. Through production of value-added fiber, yarn, home textiles and apparel, Imperial Yarn has created employment and economic opportunity in a remote, rural location while also supporting manufacturing and stimulating new activity among 18 value chain partners who take the raw wool to finished goods. Imperial Yarn/Imperial Stock Ranch provides a strong interface between rural agriculture and designers, fashion brands and clothing companies, and finds itself at the leading edge of bringing apparel manufacturing back to the U.S. And perhaps even most important, through these relationships, Imperial Stock Ranch is connecting and educating urban designers, fashion houses and consumers to a landscape and perspective they would not ordinarily experience.

Since 2008, Imperial Yarn has participated in the Value Added Producer Grant (VAPG) program for planning and working capital assistance to keep their sustainably and traditionally produced wool a profitable and job-creating venture in an evolving marketplace. Over the years, Imperial Yarn has increased production volume by more than 700 percent and is communicating with more than 100 companies and designers interested in using Imperial Yarn.

With expanded product lines and sales, Imperial Yarn now sources wool from neighboring ranches and has added new onsite jobs benefitting Central Oregon. At the same time, the company has increasing contracts with local artisans, U.S. apparel brands, as well as domestic manufacturing partners across the country. By engaging urban neighbors in this process, we are building a greater understanding and support for the issues and needs of rural America.

USDA administers the VAPG program to help agricultural producers add value to the agricultural commodities they already produce, generate new products, expand market opportunities, create jobs, and increase rural economic activity. The greatest by product of this is the enriched connections and relationships between rural and urban neighbors.

USDA Rural Development
Oregon State Office
(503) 414-3302
www.rd.usda.gov/ok

Building on Cultural Assets - Rentiesville's Revival

A few miles off Interstate 40, among the lakes and rolling, wooded hills of eastern Oklahoma, sits the small, African-American community of Rentiesville. It is home to the nation's largest Civil War battle in which African-American, Native American, Hispanic-American and Anglo-American soldiers engaged. The heroics of the Civil War's first African-American regiment, the First Kansas Colored, were largely responsible for the Union's victory. Although today's Rentiesville has high levels of poverty and unemployment, it has historic and cultural assets that provide the community with distinct opportunities.

USDA Rural Development gave the town a \$1.1 million in loans and grants to build a multi-purpose community and visitor center. The center will include a library and educational exhibit that showcases Rentiesville's distinct cultural heritage. The funding was made possible through USDA's Rural Business Enterprise Grant and Community Facilities programs.

To expand economic opportunities in Rentiesville, USDA Rural Development awarded a portion of the funds to Cross Telephone Cooperative to extend high-speed internet access throughout the town.

In addition to being home to the great Blues legend, D.C. Minner, scholar and civil rights leader John Hope Franklin, and the region's largest Blues Festival, the town is the historic site of Oklahoma's largest military engagement, The Battle of Honey Springs. The visitors' center will offer guests the opportunity to enjoy hiking and area wildlife, while learning about the Battle of Honey Springs and the impact of the Civil War on Native Americans.

The National Park Service predicts 150,000 people will visit the 5,000-square-foot visitors' center annually. This is expected to pump \$9 million in tourism revenues into the local economy.

This project is a partnership between USDA Rural Development, the National Park Service, McIntosh County, and local businesses and non-profit organizations. The Friends of Honey Springs organization has leased the land from the Oklahoma Historical Society to construct the center.

USDA Rural Development
Oklahoma State Office
(405) 742-1000
www.rd.usda.gov/ok

Cooperative Non-timber Forest Products



Bundled firewood produced by the Oregon Woodland Cooperative

Oregon Woodland Cooperative (OWC) is a group of more than 60 private landowners who own more than 20,000 forested acres in Northwestern Oregon. The organization manages plantations, maintains roads and cares for the forest land in Oregon. For years, private forest landowners in Oregon have sought ways to harvest and market the forest's array of saleable, sustainable products that have the potential to produce revenue.

In 2009, USDA Rural Development gave OWC a \$150,000 Value Added Producer Grant (VAPG) to help develop new products available on private forestlands. OWC identified a number of saleable, non-lumber products. A second VAPG grant of \$150,000 in 2011 provided OWC with the working capital to evaluate the quality and processing needs of these new products and to develop strategies to sell them.

The new products include bundled firewood, truffles, specialty wood for carvers and wood turners, finished artwork and other items, hardwood flooring, essential oils, floral products and medicinal plants.

The project is helping forest landowners tap into new income opportunities. Many of the new products command premium prices. Firewood bundled in small quantities and marketed in urban retail outlets, for example, brings in more than twice the bulk rate per cord. Other wood items include kindling, salvaged material for carving, and small diameter timber for poles.

Some of the project participants work together each winter to create holiday wreaths and decorations from ornamental greens that otherwise would have been chipped or burned. Through the project, these producers – including chefs looking for locally sourced truffles and mushrooms or retailers featuring naturally scented soaps – now have fully developed products and access to specialty markets.

OWC members have created 2 new full-time and 35 part-time jobs for rural Oregonians.

USDA Rural Development
Oregon State Office
(503) 414-3302
www.rd.usda.gov/or

Sun Powered Sausage

Wamplers Farm Sausage Company is a pork production company located in Lenoir City, Tenn. Family owned and operated; Wamplers is a multi-million dollar business selling products domestically and internationally. As Wampler's sausage production facility has grown, its need for power has grown exponentially.

In 2011, Wamplers partnered with USDA Rural Development and United Community Bank to fund a 500 KW solar photovoltaic array. Wamplers committed \$826,862 to the project. USDA provided a \$250,000 Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) grant, as well as guaranteed a \$1,230,585 REAP guaranteed loan to fund the project for Wampler's. USDA partnered with United Community Bank to provide the loan to Wampler's.

The system provides Wamplers with approximately 650,000 KWH of power production annually, which offsets the large amount of power the pork plant uses.

Wampler's, is committed to delivering quality and affordable products, while remaining environmentally friendly. The new photovoltaic system provides clean, green energy throughout eastern Tennessee and helps to reduce the carbon footprint in the region. The project greatly offsets Wampler's power consumption. The company sells excess power to the Tennessee Valley Authority for a premium. This makes the company more profitable and helps employ 150 people from the region. During the construction of the system, the tax base and employment opportunities in the community increased.

To learn more about the Wamplers story, watch its YOUTUBE video at <http://youtu.be/bZ1zzStK9Fc>.

USDA Rural Development
Tennessee State Office
(615) 783-1312
www.rd.usda.gov/tn

Local Group Uses Renewable Materials to Build Affordable Housing

Emily Niehaus worked as a credit union loan officer in Moab, Utah, before she established the group Community Rebuilds. She regularly faced qualified loan applicants who were denied loans because financial institutions generally do not make loans on old, pre-HUD code trailers. Emily saw this as an opportunity to help lower-income people get into their own affordable, permanent homes. She established Community Rebuilds and in 2010 began teaching trailer owners how to qualify for USDA housing loans for homes made with renewable materials.

When Niehaus sought the first loan for a straw bale home, Rural Development was skeptical. Emily did not give up. Instead, she put together a one-day class to educate Rural Development loan officers. Now, Rural Development is a proud partner with Community Rebuilds. The organization's vision is a positive force for economic renewal and the restoration of the local sense of community.

The Obama Administration awarded Community Rebuilds the Champions of Change Award. In 2012, the group started participating in USDA's Mutual Self-Help Housing program, in which prospective homeowners help build homes under the direction and supervision of qualified contractors. These "sweat equity" contributions lower the cost of the home.

Community Rebuilds is demonstrating that an agricultural product such as waste wheat straw can become a commodity that improves the farmer's revenue stream.

The homes the group constructs are well insulated and incorporate passive solar design principles. Some are fitted with photovoltaic panels and are, or approach, net zero energy use.

The Community Rebuilds model demonstrates that affordable, energy efficient homes can be created for low-income people. Community Rebuilds is also showing that homes can be built using locally available materials that reduce the environmental impact of construction.

Many of the organization's interns move on to practice sustainable building in other communities around the United States and in other countries. More information on Community Rebuilds can be found at www.communityrebuilds.org/

USDA Rural Development
Utah State Office
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Community Futures Program Supports Local Economic Development

The Community Futures Program supports community economic development by helping rural Canadians become self-reliant and implement sustainable development strategies. The program fosters job creation, and diverse, economically sustainable rural economies.

Its purpose is to implement economic development and job creation strategies in the country's non-metropolitan areas experiencing chronic or acute unemployment. The program was established in 1985 as part of the Canadian Jobs Strategy in Canada's Employment and Immigration agency.

The program relies upon a bottom-up, participatory approach to community development. Program managers work with community stakeholders and partners that include the private sector, non-profit organizations, non-government organizations, financial institutions, municipalities, associations, regional networks, educational organizations and labor groups.

Financial support is provided to the 269 Community Futures Organizations that have been established across Canada. These are incorporated, not-for-profit organizations with volunteer boards of directors and professional staff. Together, they form a national network involving more than 3,400 volunteers who dedicate thousands of hours annually to their communities.

Community Futures Organizations are accountable to government through terms that have been set out in their contribution agreements with the federal government.

Canada's four Regional Development Agencies deliver program funding through their respective regions:

- Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA),
- Canada Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec (CED-Q),
- Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD); and
- The Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev).

The Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario (FedNor) under Industry Canada (IC) funds the program in northern Ontario.

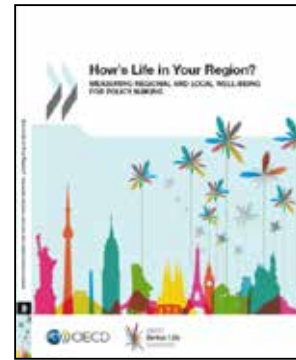
Since its inception in 1985, Community Futures Organizations have financed more than 120,000 Canadian entrepreneurs, assisted in the creation of more than 495,800 jobs, and invested more than \$4.2 billion directly into the rural Canadian economy.

In addition, these organizations have spearheaded thousands of successful community economic development initiatives that have helped to strengthen and diversify the local economies of rural communities across Canada.



How's Life in Your Region? Measuring regional and local well-being for policy making

How's life? Our day-to-day experience of life is essentially local. Whether people can find a job, a good school for their children or adequate healthcare depends on where they live. The OECD 2014 report *How's Life in Your Region?* provides a wide range of measures of social progress in OECD regions and strengthens discussion of how to improve the lives of current and future generations.



[Paperback](#) and [e-book](#)

A framework for measuring regional well-being

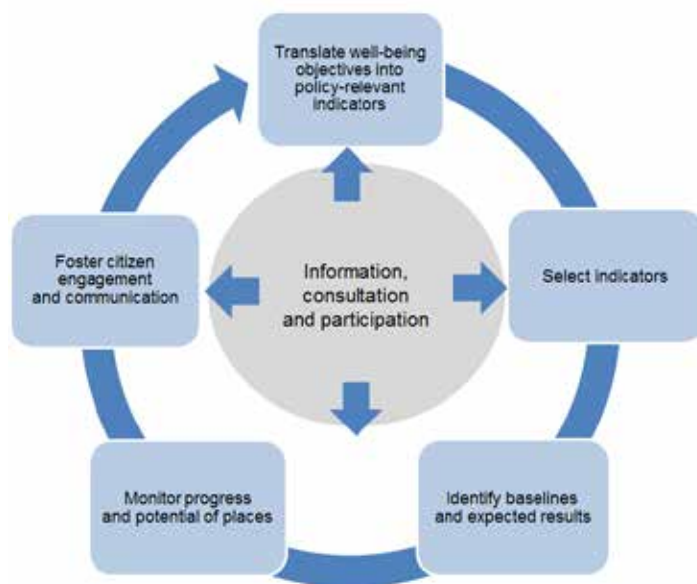
- Following the launch of the OECD Regional Well-Being web tool (www.oecdregionalwellbeing.org), this report presents a **common framework** for measuring well-being at the regional level and improving policy effectiveness.
- The report paints a comprehensive picture of well-being outcomes through a set of internationally comparable indicators in **362 regions across 34 OECD countries**, covering **9 dimensions** that shape both people's material conditions and their quality of life.
- In many OECD countries, regional disparities in various well-being dimensions have increased during the past 15 years. Higher regional disparities in income, education, health, jobs and access to services often mean **lower well-being performance** at the national level.
- The ability of regions to change their well-being outcomes over time and their influence over multiple well-being dimensions vary. While jobs outcomes can change in just a few years, other dimensions, such as safety and education, imply longer term investment.



Guidance for implementing a regional well-being strategy

Regions use well-being indicators for many purposes, according to their specific priorities and needs. Indicators can help regions identify their relative strengths and weaknesses in well-being, monitor trends and compare them with those in other places. They can also raise awareness on specific well-being challenges. Finally, they can guide policy prioritisation, reflecting what matters most to citizens.

Regions and cities that want to adopt a well-being strategy to improve current living conditions and future opportunities for their citizens should consider the following steps:



- **Translate well-being objectives into policy-relevant indicators.** Regional well-being measurement needs to be clearly linked to regional policy objectives that are aligned across and within levels of government.
- **Select indicators.** A deliberative consultation should be set up to focus on a limited set of indicators that reflect local priorities and assets.
- **Identify baselines and expected results.** Establishing a clear starting point and a range of targets to be achieved helps frame the course of public action around a transparent timeline and intermediate milestones.
- **Monitor progress and assess the potential of different places.** Regional well-being indicators provide a tool for tracking change over time.
- **Foster citizen engagement and communication.** Engaging citizens from an early stage builds momentum for action, facilitates policy adjustments when necessary, and increases accountability and trust.

Future steps:

- Enhance the production and monitoring of well-being measures in regions;
- Expand the regional well-being framework and measures to cities and rural areas.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.oecd.org/regional/how-is-life-in-your-region.htm>
Share your thoughts with us by contacting: regionalwellbeing@oecd.org



www.oecd.org/regional