

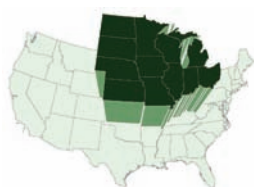


2010 Annual Report



# Working Together to Make a Difference in Rural America

North Central Regional Center  
for Rural Development



**NCRCRD**  
North Central Regional Center  
for Rural Development

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## Mission of the North Central Region Center for Rural Development

Strengthening the ability of the land-grant university system to execute its rural development mission.

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### In Memory of Andrew Isserman (1947–2010)

Former NCRCRD board member Andrew Isserman, Ph.D., passed away unexpectedly in November. Andy helped the center tremendously before, during and after its transition to Michigan State University. We couldn't agree more with the following tribute by his longtime colleague Geoffrey J.D. Hewings, Ph.D., head of the Department of Economics and director of the Regional Economics Applications Laboratory at the University of Illinois:

*Andy was a passionate scholar. Whether it was research, teaching, advising students, serving on committees or promoting regional science, his energy level was always high. He loved to walk around campus engaged in conversation and was often reluctant to leave a meeting or a classroom. He was an innovative teacher who emphasized learning by doing, using a variety of approaches to engaging students. In addition to standard courses in urban and regional analysis, economic impact analysis and federal program analysis, he conducted a film and writing course about regional cultures and economies. His take was that whether it was film, narrative, quantitative articles or even personal experiences, effective storytelling is a critical component to understanding how systems, especially the regional economy, work.*

## Message From the Director



March 2011

Dear friends of the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development:

I am excited by the prospects of fulfilling the vision I helped create in bringing the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development to Michigan State University.

Foremost in that vision is to use the center's resources to knit together strong cross-state teams of individuals working toward better outcomes for the region's rural residents. We will do that by strengthening the capabilities of land-grant institutions to execute their rural development missions.

The center's themes, identified through site visits to the twelve states in 2009, continue to be:

- Developing Entrepreneurial Communities
- Developing Leaders
- Building Sustainable Communities
- Adopting Technology

Last spring, we issued our second call for small-grant proposals. The winning proposals are summarized on the following pages. Our report also features outcomes of our 2009 small-grant awards.

Together with the nation's other three rural development centers, we also launched a program called Stronger Economies Together (SET) to develop and implement a regional economic development strategy and assist with strategic planning. The north central pilot programs conducted by our USDA Rural Development colleagues at Missouri and Ohio were well-received, and we are now expanding the program to Michigan and Indiana in 2011. Plans are to extend the program to additional states in 2012.

Last fall, the center kicked off its inaugural webinar series, built on the principle of using advanced communication technologies to make the latest thinking about rural development strategies available to a broader audience. I encourage you to access the recorded archive at [ncrcrd.org/webinars.aspx](http://ncrcrd.org/webinars.aspx) if you have not had the opportunity to participate in the free webinars.

Scott Loveridge, Ph.D.

Director



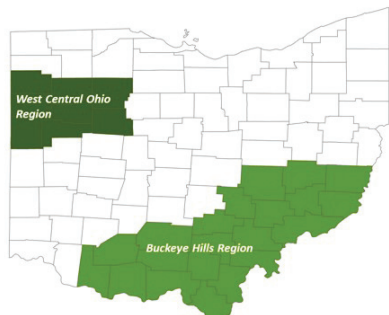
## New SET Program Is Building Stronger Economies Together

To be competitive in our global economy requires resources that rural communities don't have on their own. But collaborating across jurisdictional lines and pooling resources make it feasible for regions to create sustainable economic development.

That's where Stronger Economies Together (SET) comes in. The SET program offers economic development assistance to jurisdictions that work together in multi-county regions of rural America. The program provides training, demographic and economic analysis, and technical assistance to facilitate regional development.

SET was launched in 2009 by USDA Rural Development in collaboration with the Regional Rural Development Centers and their land-grant university partners. Phase I pilot efforts took place in 23 regions in nine states including Missouri and Ohio. In 2011, phase II will expand to 11 new states, including Indiana and Michigan. In late 2011, phase III will add more states.

SET is helping participating regions understand and exploit their economic competitive advantages. Some of the projects in the north central region are addressing infrastructure, creating year-round jobs, developing a regional strategic plan, creating an identity for a lake region, developing a unified business retention and expansion program, improving quality of life, helping locally owned businesses thrive, marketing to increase urban dollars coming to rural areas, and assisting tourists in planning trips.



Two regions in Ohio and two in Missouri (LOREDC is Lake of the Ozarks Region; OTRP is Old Trails Regional Tourism Partnership.) are benefiting from a regional approach to economic development, thanks to the new program, Stronger Economies Together.

## Policy Brief Examines Industrial Development in the Upper Midwest

To help policy makers at a time when state governments across the Midwest are rethinking state tax and economic development strategies, the NCRCD compiled a comprehensive inventory of major economic development incentives in the 12-state region.

According to study author Timothy R. Hodge, "State-level policy makers are keen to know what is going on in nearby states. While states compete with one another for jobs, they also learn from the policies and conditions in nearby regions. By making it easy to see how other all states in the region are structuring their programs, we hope to generate constructive debate about how to move forward in this time of economic transition."

The study, conducted in 2010, shows not only the name and goals of each program, but also the conditions the businesses must meet to qualify and, for many states, where the programs have been implemented. According to NCRCD Director Scott Loveridge, "The maps showing regions of program implementation for each state are particularly compelling, and show that some rural areas are not tapping into these statewide programs."

The study can be found at [ncrcrd.org/Publications/PolicyBriefs.aspx](http://ncrcrd.org/Publications/PolicyBriefs.aspx).

### Small-Grants Program

Small competitive grants awarded to multistate teams are helping the NCRCD achieve its goals. The seed grants, ranging from \$1,000 to \$20,000, aim to improve the ability of land-grant institutions, though their research and Extension arms, to increase the economic development and sustainability of rural areas.

The following section of our report describes outcomes of projects funded in 2009-10 and projects now underway.

## Results of the 2009–10 Awards

### Building Extension's Capacity for a Sustainable Communities Program

The North Central Region Task Force for Sustainable Communities designed a comprehensive, research-based education program for Extension professionals, community and citizen planners, and other community leaders. The curriculum is appropriate for individuals who regularly work with community groups in any subject area and have a basic understanding of community development. Participants who complete the program are then poised to help communities through the sometimes-difficult issues related to sustainability.

The curriculum includes outreach tools, professional-development webinars and a logic model for implementing sustainable development activities in rural communities. Social networking tools of the newly formed eXtension Land Use Planning Community of Practice provide opportunities for participants to log in at their convenience to explore the topics further, pose questions, review additional resources and visit with colleagues in similar situations.

The first round of the curriculum was oversubscribed, with 45 participants from across the country, and another offering is being planned.

Principal investigator: Anna Haines (University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point). Co-investigator: Wayne Beyea (Michigan State University).

**Home to more than 50 million people and our nation's agricultural industry, rural America plays a vital role in ensuring a vibrant national economy.**

— Tom Vilsack, Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture

### Community Retail Development Toolbox Project

This project team is combining retail analysis tools and resources into a comprehensive online multimedia curriculum. The new toolbox will cover everything from conducting focus groups to developing a niche to branding and using space. The free self-help resource

will improve decision-making by entrepreneurs, commerce leaders, and community and economic development leaders.

The project team has worked closely to develop peer-reviewed content. A pilot program is helping them refine content and develop train-the-trainer opportunities. Throughout 2011, the tools will be tested and further refined based on results of their use in community projects.

The NCRCD project served as the catalyst to launch this effort. Participating institutions matched funds in the form of salaries for team members, academic colleagues, web designers and editors.

Principal investigator: G. Davis (Ohio State University). Co-investigators: J. Clark (Ohio State University), E. Irwin (Ohio State University), R. Pesch (University of Minnesota), B. Ryan (University of Wisconsin–Madison), B. Schwartau (University of Minnesota).

### Immigration Reform: Implications for Farmers, Farm Workers and Communities

This project increased the level of understanding of how newcomers from other countries are affecting agriculture and agricultural communities.

The team analyzed proposed and enacted policy reforms in response to immigration patterns in the north central region. Their white paper, "The Policy Dimensions of the Context of Reception for Immigrants (and Latinos) in the Midwest," reviews legislative efforts to affect migration into the Midwest and the effects on residents and immigrants. The researchers also provided summaries and assessments of ongoing migration and farm labor developments in the Midwest region in the online publication, *Rural Migration News*.

The grant enabled scholars to travel to and participate in conferences assessing immigration patterns and the outlook for reform. They chaired or presented several sessions that provided current information to many researchers, reformers and policy makers.

Principal investigator: R. Martinez (Michigan State University). Co-investigator: C. Flora (Iowa State University).

## Improving Practice and Collaboration to Aid Distressed Rural Communities

Rural communities in the north central region face extraordinary challenges, more severe and far-reaching than those of the mid-1980s. In the Midwest, high unemployment caused by the downturn in manufacturing has been exacerbated by the global economic recession. In the Great Plains, the issues are related to chronic out-migration from rural to urban areas, as well as an ongoing decline in per-capita income.

Faculty members and community partners participated in conferences to compare three innovative approaches to rural development practiced in the north central region: Home Town Competitiveness, Entrepreneurship Investigation and Energizing Entrepreneurship. Participants compiled best practices for implementing the initiatives and explored ways to improve practices related to rural development.

The grant facilitated increased collaboration among land-grant universities and rural development organizations. As a result, community-change initiatives will be the subject of a special issue of the *Journal of the Community Development Society*.

NCRCRD seed money made possible a grant proposal that will be submitted to USDA's Agriculture and Food Research Initiative: Rural Development Integrated Projects. Two webinars are planned to present the lessons learned in an interactive format.

The NCRCRD simultaneously funded a complementary project (see description of next project), allowing many activities and tasks associated with both projects to be led and managed jointly, helping stretch the reach of the available funds.

Principal investigator: S. Cordes (Purdue University). Co-investigator: M. Emery (Iowa State University).

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**In the Great Plains, chronic out-migration from rural to urban places has resulted in depopulation of more than 20 percent per decade in some counties.**

— Mary Emery, Iowa State University

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## Innovations and Success in Community and Economic Development Extension Programming: Mapping Strategies for Future Success

Researchers studied 12 leading community-change initiatives that represented diverse geographic locations, lead agencies and goals. They identified common elements of success and approaches that can be transferred to other communities.

The investigators synthesized the shared experiences to provide a framework of successful community-change approaches. They shared the common elements with other practitioners through an NCRCRD-sponsored webinar and a session at the Community Development Society International Conference. The grant also helped seed a special community-change edition of the *Journal of the Community Development Society*, planned for summer 2011.

The approaches learned through this grant will help inform practitioners who assist with community development.

Principal investigator: D. Ivan (Michigan State University). Co-investigator: M. Emery (Iowa State University), N. Walzer, (Northern Illinois University).

## Relocalizing Our Food Shed: New Models and Methodologies for Planning Our Food Future

Communities and institutions are increasingly calling for a substantial overhaul of the American food system. The rapidly growing local-food movement reflects a commitment to agriculture that's based regionally, sustainable in practice and intimate in scale. This demand creates opportunities to start, expand or diversify farming operations to grow food for local markets.

The momentum to regionalize our food sheds has reached the point that major infrastructure changes are needed. Most gardeners, chefs, farmers and activists lack the expertise to inform public decision-making. The approach to and design of this new scholarship does not fit the classic model of agricultural research. It calls for a broader, more integrated base of expertise,

reflecting interdisciplinary, socially beneficial inquiry. Land-grant universities are well-positioned to offer this support.

This grant funded a symposium that brought together members of the academic community with other experts and community partners to discuss new ways to meet the needs associated with redesigning our food system. The 82 who attended included a broad array of participants representing eight states and 13 disciplines from anthropology to geography to sociology. Following the symposium, a proposal to present a report was submitted to the Community Food Security Coalition. A global food security grant proposal was submitted to USDA's Agriculture and Food Research Initiative.

Principal investigator: K. Draeger (University of Minnesota). Co-investigators: V. Cadieux (University of Minnesota), A. Gold (North Dakota State University), M. Kurzer (University of Minnesota), F. Kutka (North Dakota State University), R. Pesch (University of Minnesota), P. Porter (University of Minnesota), C. Robertson (University of Minnesota), S. Stark (University of Minnesota–Duluth).

## Rural Alliance for Service Learning

Service learning – the practice of sending students off campus to do community work for course credit – is increasingly popular in colleges and universities. But until now, there was scant research on higher education service learning in rural areas and scholars did not know whether those findings applied differently to urban and rural contexts. This project took the first steps toward building knowledge of rural service-learning models and infrastructures to support their implementation.

Researchers examined access, effectiveness and factors that make service learning in rural settings unique. They discovered important predictors of success for rural service-learning projects. They found that the most significant challenges center on transportation difficulties and limited partnering

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**The seed grant from NCRCRD helped establish a good partnership, conduct preliminary research and enable staff to travel to a conference where the most recent literature in the field was discussed. I don't think we would have gotten the \$397,530 AFRI grant without the seed money.**

— Mary Hendrickson, University of Missouri Extension

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organizations. The strategy includes growing a regional network of rural service-learning practitioners who can share ideas.

This work led to a white paper, "The State of Rural Service Learning," on the Rural Alliance for Service Learning (RASL) website. Case studies documenting local cases of rural service learning are also on the RASL website at [comm-org.wisc.edu/rasl](http://comm-org.wisc.edu/rasl). In addition, the scholars presented a webinar, "Higher Education Community Engagement in Rural Areas" in 2011.

The investigators are planning a large-scale project to develop and support rural service learning.

Principal investigator: R. Stoecker (University of Wisconsin–Madison). Former principal investigator: P. Proulx-Curry (formerly University of Wisconsin–Madison). Co-investigators: G. Goreham (North Dakota State University), D. Nagy (South Dakota State University), C. Mark (Michigan State University), S. Wood (Kansas State University).

## Studying Food System Approaches in Three Types of Rural Communities

The project team used NCRCRD seed money to develop a proposal for USDA's Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) Prosperity for Small- and Medium-Sized Farms and Rural Communities grant program. Researchers, farmers and operators of food- and agriculture-related businesses participated in an online miniconference to share ideas about community-based local and regional food systems in three types of rural communities.

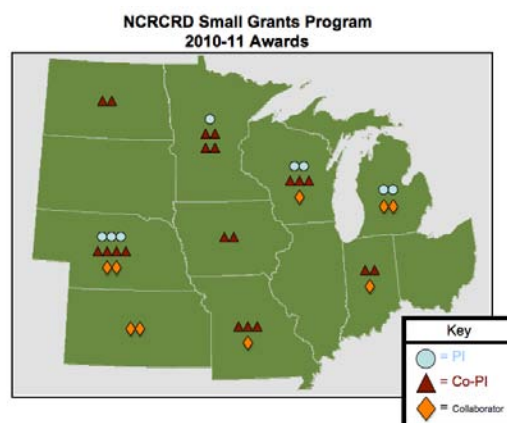
The pilot research provided preliminary data on the status of local-food initiatives in the research communities, as well as interest among farmers seeking markets and consumers wanting to buy food locally.

Researchers used the data collected to develop a proposal to study food-system approaches to rural development in three types of rural communities: declining resource-dependent, chronically poor, and communities with amenity-driven growth along with resource-based decline. Communities were chosen to represent the spectrum of rural communities.



The project team's grant proposal to examine the opportunities and challenges of connecting farmers with consumers in regional food systems was funded by USDA. The long-term result will be usable tools that rural development specialists can employ to understand and guide local communities considering regional food systems as an economic development strategy.

Principal investigator: M. Hendrickson (University of Missouri).  
Co-investigator: R. Cantrell (University of Nebraska).



## 2010–11 Awards (Completed)

### Establishing a Knowledge and Organizational Infrastructure for Rural Design

Design is a powerful tool to help rural communities address existing problems and prepare for new economic and social challenges presented by climate change. But the design and planning fields have historically ignored rural communities. In 2010, researchers, practitioners and Extension professionals attended the First International Symposium on Rural Design, which was conceived to create a new field addressing the challenges of rural design. Participants identified the need for an organizational infrastructure to nurture this new field that can improve rural quality of life. The team is creating a social networking website to continue the work begun at the symposium. The website will facilitate continuing discussion, sharing of resources and research, and collaboration on major grant proposals.

Principal investigator: T. Kinney (Formerly Streng) (University of Minnesota). Co-investigators: D. Thorbeck (University of Minnesota), T. Borich (Iowa State University).

## Great Lakes Land-Grant Institutions Tribal Water Resources Summit

Water resources are central to the sustainable growth and development of rural communities across the Upper Midwest. Tribal communities and 1994 land-grant institutions have unique needs and can make unique contributions to the science and art of water-resource management. The team planned and hosted a summit to assess and set priorities for tribal water-resource issues across the upper Great Lakes region. The assessment, focusing on Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin, provided a context for enhancing and encouraging integrated water-resource research, education and Extension collaborations. Priorities that emerged from the summit are being woven into larger coordination proposals.

Principal investigator: P. Robinson (University of Wisconsin–Extension). Co-investigators: M. Cook (College of Menominee Nation), D. Zak (University of Minnesota), R. Power (University of Wisconsin–Extension).

## 2010–11 Awards (in Process)

### Challenges Facing Small- and Medium-Sized Entrepreneurs in Emerging Cool-Climate Wine Regions

The past decade has seen rapid establishment of small- and medium-sized wineries in nontraditional, cold-climate wine regions of Michigan, Missouri and

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**About three-quarters of the area of the United States is still rural.**

— Dallas Tonsor, USDA Under Secretary for Rural Development

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northwestern New York. These rural entrepreneurs include grape growers who vertically integrate into winemaking as well as nonfarmer investor-entrepreneurs who opt for a rural lifestyle. This project will identify the economic, business and marketing challenges these rural entrepreneurs face. The team will explore how collective action might help the small- and medium-sized wineries overcome the challenges to establish successful wine clusters, which can foster development of related industries. The group will conduct an exploratory comparative analysis of the three emerging wine regions. This project will lead to an inventory of

land-grant faculty and staff members providing resources to wine producers in the region, a research article, a general-audience webinar and a proposal submitted to external funding sources.

Principal investigator: B. Ross (Michigan State University).  
Co-investigators: F. Chaddad (University of Missouri), M. Gómez (Cornell University).

## Collaborative Proposal Development for Connecting Farm and Community

This grant enables a multistate team to develop a funding proposal that builds on strengths in applied research and Extension programming connecting small- and medium-sized farms to their communities. The resulting proposal, to be submitted to the Agricultural Prosperity for Small and Medium-Sized Farms competition of the USDA Agriculture and Food Research Initiative, will fund work to bridge the social and biophysical sciences and engage Extension, research and teaching staff. Participants will meet and visit the focus area: the Omaha (Nebraska)–Council Bluffs (Iowa) urban area and surrounding rural counties.

The work will strengthen the economic, ecological and social foundations for rural development in the food and agriculture sector.

Principal investigator: D. Conley (University of Nebraska–Lincoln).  
Co-investigators: C. Francis (University of Nebraska–Lincoln), B. Wells (Iowa State University).

## Contribution of Youth Engagement to the Development of Community Social Capital

More and more community-change strategies encourage youth engagement. Many Extension youth-development programs create opportunities for young people to improve their communities. Yet community economic-development educators and 4 H educators rarely interact about how youth engagement can support successful community change. The investigators plan to create a bridge between these educators and strengthen evaluation of youth-engagement strategies. Researchers will collect data on the impact of 4 H community involvement, and then explore ways to incorporate strategies from community economic development into 4 H programming and vice

versa. They'll expand understanding of how youth engagement contributes to community social capital, which reflects the connections among people and organizations that make things happen. Products of this work will drive proposals for further research, Extension and education activities.

Principal investigator: M. Calvert (University of Wisconsin–Extension 4 H Youth Development). Co-investigators: D. Blyth (University of Minnesota), R. Allen (Hubert H. Humphrey Center), G. Wise (University of Wisconsin–Extension).

## The Impact of Invasive Plant Species on Ecosystem Goods and Services

The effects of invasive plant species have reached global scales, with costs estimated in the billions of dollars. Although controlling invasive plant species is warranted in many environments, they do provide beneficial services to ecosystems. Such services have yet to be quantified. In many cases, there's a trade-off between negative effects, such as loss of diversity, and positive effects, such as erosion control. For example, tamarisk shrubs growing along the Colorado River have completely choked out native plants. But songbirds, rare to the area, nest in the tamarisk, putting local officials in a quandary. This early career grant aims to quantify the contributions of invasive plant species to ecosystems and use geospatial technologies to predict their spread and distribution. Once the value of ecosystem services is determined, the value of managing invasive plant species can be fully realized and better decisions can be made in implementing policies.

Principal investigator: S. Young (University of Nebraska).

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**The community projects develop citizen-scholars. The Drury students are seeing that what they're learning in the classroom has an application with a greater meaning than just academic.**

— Jeffrey Barber, University of Missouri Extension

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## Preparing Youth for an Increasingly Diverse World

Young people need to develop cultural competency skills that will allow them to think more globally and be comfortable with people of different backgrounds.

Youth in rural communities have diminishing economic opportunities, prompting many to move outside their communities as soon as they are able. This planning grant funds a team that will plan a long-term partnership focusing on helping youth think globally and explore and develop opportunities in their own communities. The team will explore potential programs to pursue, then plan and develop funding proposals for future activities.

Principal investigator: M. de Guzman (University of Nebraska–Lincoln). Co-investigators: P. Fairchild (University of Nebraska–Lincoln), K. Potthoff (University of Nebraska–Lincoln), B. Randall (North Dakota State University), R. Vetter (North Dakota State University), J. Cervantes-Guzman (University of Nebraska–Lincoln), J. Becker (Purdue University Extension), J. Taylor (University of Missouri), T. Witkoske (Purdue University Extension).

## Public Talk, Public Action: Professional Development Community of Practice

This initiative will strengthen the capability of Extension professionals to work in partnership with the public to design, implement and learn from citizen-centered approaches to contested public issues. The team will organize a professional-development community of practice among Extension educators across the nation within the web-based eXtension educational platform. This will help Extension educators develop the knowledge and skills they need to effectively employ citizen-centered approaches to assist communities struggling with difficult and controversial public issues. It will broaden Extension’s partnership work with local governments, public agencies, nongovernmental organizations and citizens. The result will help tap the collective resources of communities to address tough public issues.

Principal investigator: W. Wright (Michigan State University). Co-investigator: S. Hodge (University of Missouri).

## North Central Land-Grant Colleges and Universities

### Original 1862 Land-Grant Institutions

Iowa State University  
Kansas State University  
Michigan State University  
North Dakota State University  
Ohio State University  
Purdue University  
South Dakota State University  
University of Illinois  
University of Minnesota  
University of Missouri  
University of Nebraska  
University of Wisconsin

### 1890 Historically Black Institutions

Lincoln University

### 1994 Native American Tribally Controlled Institutions

Bay Mills Community College  
Cankdeska Cikana Community College  
College of Menominee Nation  
Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College  
Fort Berthold Community College  
Haskell Indian Nations University  
Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community College  
Leech Lake Tribal College  
Little Priest Tribal College  
Nebraska Indian Community College  
Oglala Lakota College  
Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College  
Si Tanka University  
Sinte Gleska University  
Sisseton Wahpeton College  
Sitting Bull College  
Turtle Mountain Community College  
United Tribes Technical College  
White Earth Tribal and Community College

### Hispanic-Serving Institutions

The center is eager to serve federally designated Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) wishing to pursue rural-development activities. The HSI status depends on an enrollment threshold of 25 percent or more Hispanic students, so qualifying institutions may vary from year to year.

### NCRCRD Staff

Scott Loveridge, Director

Steve Miller, Ph.D., Senior Fellow, Stronger Economies Together

Rosa Soliz, Communications and Logistics Associate

Tim Hodge, Graduate Research Assistant

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### [ncrcrd.org](http://ncrcrd.org)

The North Central Regional Center for Rural Development (NCRCRD) is one of four regional centers in the United States that have worked to improve the quality of life in rural communities for nearly 40 years. With funding from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture and the land-grant universities in our 12-state region, the NCRCRD helps Extension professionals, researchers and other partners address issues that affect rural areas across the region. The center provides leadership in rural development by linking research with education and community outreach to facilitate, integrate, link and coordinate research and action for rural America.

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