



AgEcon SEARCH
RESEARCH IN AGRICULTURAL & APPLIED ECONOMICS

The World's Largest Open Access Agricultural & Applied Economics Digital Library

This document is discoverable and free to researchers across the globe due to the work of AgEcon Search.

Help ensure our sustainability.

Give to AgEcon Search

AgEcon Search
<http://ageconsearch.umn.edu>
aesearch@umn.edu

*Papers downloaded from **AgEcon Search** may be used for non-commercial purposes and personal study only. No other use, including posting to another Internet site, is permitted without permission from the copyright owner (not AgEcon Search), or as allowed under the provisions of Fair Use, U.S. Copyright Act, Title 17 U.S.C.*

STATE EXPERIENCES IN AREA DEVELOPMENT

A. Alabama

*Ben T. Lanham, Jr., Head
Department of Agricultural Economics
Auburn University*

In 1955, selected counties in various parts of the country were designated as "pilot" counties for a national Rural Development Program. In Alabama, two pilot counties were selected, Chilton County and Fayette County. These two counties were selected for a number of reasons: They were already making progress in informal rural development programs of their own; they had opportunities and needs for further development; and they had experienced leaders in public and private agencies and organizations that were willing and able to cooperate and assist each other individually or as a group in carrying out county-wide objectives. These same things could have been said of many Alabama counties. But, in the beginning, the program was experimental, and the two counties selected as pilot counties were chosen as being representative of a large number of counties. These two counties were to serve as examples to other counties in the state of the success of the methods used and of the effectiveness of organization.

In the beginning, a State Rural Development Committee was organized to function as an advisory group for the two pilot counties. On the initial State Committee were representatives of the teaching, research, and extension divisions of the state's land-grant university; vocational and agricultural education; home economics education; farm organizations; the U. S. and Alabama forestry interest; SCS; FHA; ASC; Commissioner of Agriculture; State Public Health Office; State Employment Service; Social Security; Department of Pensions and Security; Alabama Bankers Association; FCA; State Planning and Industrial Board; Small Business Administration; Associated Industries of Alabama; State Chamber of Commerce; Alabama Power Company; REA; TVA; State Publicity Department; farm magazines; daily press; State Highway Department; State Parks Division; and State Campers Association.

In January 1960, progress reports on Alabama's Rural Development pilot counties, and reports from members of the State Committee relative to the future of Rural Development activities in the state, indicated the need for careful consideration of whether the program should be expanded to additional pilot counties or expanded from pilot counties to area programs. The State Committee agreed that

expansion of pilot county programs to area programs would be more efficient and profitable—provided the people in the new counties wanted the program.

The State Committee agreed initially to consider the possibilities of expanding the Chilton County program to selected adjacent counties. Based on the anticipated interests and the adaptability of physical, economic, and social conditions in adjoining counties, expansion appeared to be feasible in Autauga, Bibb, Coosa, and Elmore counties.

As a basis for determining interests in these four counties, the Chairman of the State Committee appointed a six-member subcommittee, charged with the responsibility of conducting meetings with the leaders in each county to explain fully what Rural Development involves, and the possibilities of being included in the program if requested by the local people. This subcommittee was also to obtain the reactions of local leaders in each of these counties to the program and their desires with respect to being considered for inclusion in the program on an area basis.

Reactions to the program were highly favorable, and the people approached in all four counties unanimously requested to be considered for inclusion in the program on an area basis. Following formal approval by the State Committee, each county organized its own Rural Development Committee. In addition, an Area Rural Development Committee was organized for the five-county area.

The Alabama State RAD Committee functions mainly through subcommittees, with major responsibilities vested in an executive committee (RAD Committee officers plus subcommittee chairmen). The subcommittees are: (1) Industrial Development, (2) Education and Trades Training, (3) Research and Information, (4) Recreation and Tourism, (5) Agriculture (including forestry), and (6) Social Services and Rehabilitation.

County and area RAD organizations are similar to that of the State Committee.

The State Committee does not operate the RAD program in Alabama. It is an advisory and coordinating group. It does educational work, and provides guidance and assistance to county and area groups in carrying out their programs.

When additional counties or areas petition the State Committee for inclusion in the RAD program, a subcommittee of the State Committee meets with local leaders (50 to 100 per county) and discusses with them the concept, objectives, problems, opportunities, and limitations of a RAD program. In this way local leaders are

made aware of what they can expect in the way of outside guidance and assistance, of what they must contribute themselves, and of the potential results of the program. If after reconsideration the county or area still wishes to have a RAD program, it advises the State Committee of its decision. The State Committee will then pass upon the request.

If approved, the State Committee sends a different subcommittee to the county or area to work with local leaders in organizing its RAD Committee. This is essentially a job of extension education, guidance, and leadership. Subcommittees are usually not set up until after major problems have been identified and the over-all RAD Committee has decided in what areas it wishes to concentrate its efforts.

The identification of problems involves inventorying and analyzing availability and use of resources and the wants and attitudes of the people. This is accomplished cooperatively by local leaders and the State Committee (through the appropriate state RAD subcommittee).

Requests for assistance are forwarded to the Chairman of the State RAD Committee and are then transmitted to the appropriate subcommittee for study and action. In this case, the Subcommittee on Research and Information would receive the request and would meet with local leaders to determine what they want included in their surveys.

To assure building on a sound base, complete, accurate, and current data are needed on a large number of items. In addition to data relative to the people themselves, data are needed on such items as soils and water; land utilization and its productivity; agricultural production and marketing; industrial development and its potential; schools, churches, and recreation; business, government, and related activities; labor force and its characteristics; transportation and communications; capital and financial situation; and a number of other items. The solution to many of the current problems in rural areas can best be found outside of rural areas. As resource data are collected, therefore, both rural and urban areas must be considered.

Questionnaires and sampling procedures are then developed by the agricultural experiment station and given to local leaders for checking and use. Local leaders serve as enumerators and collect the data according to instructions developed by the experiment station.

The data collected are turned over to the experiment station for editing, coding, analysis, and interpretation. The survey data are supplemented with data from urban areas and other sources. The findings and interpretations are summarized in individual county or

area reports, which are then presented and discussed in the county or area.

Local leaders study the results, identify their major problems, and select those on which they wish to initiate action. At this point Extension has a key role to play in guiding and assisting local leaders with the organization of subcommittees and the development of specific programs for action.

As problems are identified and selected for intensive study and solution, local groups may again find it advantageous to request assistance through the State Committee. If they do, their requests will again be forwarded to personnel on the appropriate state RAD subcommittee for necessary action.

If a Rural Area Development program is conceived to be entirely a program of education and action, it will have a very difficult road ahead. On the other hand, if Rural Area Development relies on research and other agencies and organizations affiliated with the State Committee for assistance, it offers one of the best opportunities currently available for helping rural people to make the most effective use of their resources, to increase their over-all productivity, and to raise their levels of income and living.

For any county or area that is contemplating the initiation of an area development program, certain basic factors should be recognized. The program to be developed, whatever it is, should:

1. Start from the present resource base. This calls for a complete and accurate inventory and analysis of currently available resources—both physical and human.
2. Take into account the present use of resources—both physical and human.
3. Be realistic in terms of the quantity and quality of potentially available resources—both physical and human.
4. Take into account the attitudes and opinions, and the wants and desires of the people involved.

A major part of the professional worker's job is to guide and assist local groups in laying a sound foundation upon which they can build or rebuild their communities, counties, and areas. The professional workers who are assigned major roles in area economic development program work should have training for the work. They should be interested in devoting time, thought, and effort to the area and should have new ideas and plans. They should be capable of commanding the confidence of those with whom they work and should be able to

stimulate and guide others in moving toward their objectives.

Unless the individuals involved at the local level are aware of their opportunities and problems and are willing and able to assume responsibilities and to exert the proper leadership in working toward problem solutions, resource adjustment, factor mobility, and area economic development at the local level will be difficult to achieve. This means that one of the major efforts needed for optimum area economic development is the education, training, stimulation, and guidance of local people.

At Auburn University, Alabama's land-grant university, this has been accepted both as a challenge and as an opportunity.

B. Arkansas

Earl F. Pettyjohn

*Extension Rural Development Coordinator
University of Arkansas*

In the fall of 1958, the Arkansas State Rural Development Committee recommended initiating a Rural Development Program involving several counties. Eight representatives of the State Rural Development Committee visited Kentucky to study the Area Rural Development Program in that state.

Data were assembled by extension, labor, and industry economists on six different trade areas in Arkansas. The four-county area around the trade center of Batesville (population 6,800) in north central Arkansas was selected for the first Area Program.

At this time, Arkansas had been selected as one of four states to initiate an experimental Manpower Resources Study. This was a joint project by the U. S. Department of Labor (Employment Security Division) and the U. S. Department of Agriculture (Cooperative Extension Service). The State Rural Development Committee recommended that the special manpower inventory be made in the four-county area in which the Area Rural Development Program was to be initiated. This was agreed upon at the state and national level.

The objective of the Area Rural Development Program was to assist local county and area groups in speeding up desirable changes for economic growth and improvement in the area.

The objectives of the special manpower inventory were: to develop methods for more effectively providing basic employment service to individuals in rural labor surplus areas; to determine current and

potential manpower resources of the areas; to determine the skills and potential skills of the areas; and to assist in utilizing these data in the development of a program for economic adjustment in the areas.

In February of 1959, representatives of the State RD Committee as a team met with people in each of the selected four counties in public meetings. The counties all agreed to participate in an Area RD Program and the special labor inventory. Then, representatives from each of the four counties were brought together in Batesville to make sure they wanted to work together in this Area Program. At this meeting, twelve members of the State RD Committee met with the group, and each agency and organization explained its contribution to the Area Program.

The four counties agreed to work together, and at this meeting each county elected two persons to serve temporarily on the Area Committee. The local representatives from each of the four counties expressed willingness to work on an Area Program, but emphasized the need for a strong county organization in each county. The Agricultural Extension Service assigned an area representative to assist with organizational and educational work. The Employment Security Division employed qualified personnel to initiate the special Manpower Resources Study.

Beginning in March of 1959, the four counties established County RD Committees and appropriate subcommittees. Most counties had county-wide subcommittees on Agriculture and Forestry, Industry and Labor, Education, Health and Welfare, Home and Family Living, and Tourism. An Area RD Committee was established in the fall of 1959, and area subcommittees were also established.

In the meantime, the Employment Security Division teamed up with extension personnel and other agencies and organizations (home demonstration clubs, parent-teacher associations, civic and farm organizations, and others), in establishing testing centers in twenty-one different locations in the four-county area. Generally, the school district was used as the organizational unit. Approximately 7,000 persons filed applications for the labor inventory with over 6,000 taking the tests (GATB), administered by the Employment Security Division. Most of these people were also interviewed and counseled by Employment Security Division personnel.

The Employment Security Division compiled the economic and labor data into economic base reports for the area and for each county.

The area manpower inventory and reports were completed in September of 1960. At a series of area meetings held in October and

November of 1960, representatives of the State RD Committee, including extension economists, helped interpret the area data as they related to opportunities and limitations for area development. Similar meetings have been and are now being held in counties for interpreting the county data as they relate to the Area Development Program.

Arkansas' experience would suggest that several factors should be recognized in Area Development Programs.

1. Counties can work together on area programs. However, it should be recognized that the people are first interested in their county and then the area.

2. Bringing leaders together from different counties helps them learn more about economic development and the relation of the county to the area.

3. The area should be a natural trade area or economic area, recognized by all counties.

4. Diverse interest groups such as agriculture, education, industry, health, credit, and others have learned more about the interdependence and the importance of considering the total economy of the area.

5. Special assistance on an area basis should be available to help groups in individual counties and at the area meetings.

6. The State RD Committee must make resource persons available for county-wide or area meetings, and also must be willing to provide and analyze data.

Some of the weaknesses should be recognized early:

1. Arkansas had very little experience in counties working together on social and economic development.

2. The agency personnel and the lay public had limited understanding of the principles of economic development.

3. Effective communication between counties in an area program is difficult to develop.

4. Getting lay people to select areas of opportunity on an area basis is difficult.

5. County and area groups who know what they want to do but cannot find the means to reach their goal have many disappointments. Many low-income counties need more technical assistance and funds to help them do what they know needs to be done.

6. The educational process is slow. It requires patience and persistence. This has been demonstrated in the area.

The accomplishments in the area include the locating of two industries in the area on the basis of the labor data. Several other industries are considering the area as a location.

An Area Tourist Committee is requesting a technical study of the area for potential tourist development. An area vocational training school has been requested.

Another county has joined the area program based on the cooperative work in the area.

The people are beginning to recognize the advantage of an area program. They are getting acquainted and are working together.

The extension personnel believe the real benefits of the educational program will be reflected during the next five years.

Some of the needs include: more research on economic areas and regions; more training for personnel to work in small economic areas; and funds to assist local groups on a county and area basis to do those basic things they know should be done.

C. Michigan

*Uel Blank, District Extension Director
Upper Peninsula Extension Center
Marquette, Michigan*

This is a report of progress resulting from five years of work aimed at putting a new face on the extension program in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. The Upper Peninsula was selected as a special area for a development program for several reasons.

First, its isolation gives both the general populace and extension workers a unique regional sense. For some time it has had a somewhat separate administration and a small staff of specialists assigned to work in the area out of a district center.

Second, the area is in need of development. In decades past the economy of the Upper Peninsula boomed due to its mining and lumbering industries, both of which have declined in recent decades. From 1940 to 1950 the area lost about 7 percent of its population. It about maintained its own in the last decade, but in this same period the population of Michigan as a whole grew 22 percent and the United States population increased 18 percent. The twelve-year unemployment averages 8.1 percent—the highest in Michigan.

Third, the farm-nonfarm dichotomy is no longer useful as a basis for an extension program in the Upper Peninsula. An extension

program oriented toward the agricultural economy made little sense when the economy of the Upper Peninsula showed figures such as the following in 1955:

	<i>Millions</i>
Gross income from agricultural products	\$ 20
Forestry products sales	150 (1958 figure)
Gross retail sales due to tourist industry	130
Value of mining products	100 (rough estimate)
Plus the value of retailing, service trades, miscellaneous manufacturing, etc.	

Fourth, the national Rural Development Program was started in 1956, and three counties of this area were designated as rural development counties.

Finally, reorientation of the program in the Upper Peninsula appeared politically possible because of the lack of vociferous agricultural groups in the area.

It was agreed that the extension program in the Upper Peninsula should service all industries, and that the total population would be considered the extension clientele. The total resources of the land-grant university were made available to the area through the Extension Service. The Extension Service serves as the coordinator for other non-land-grant college resources and brings them to bear upon social and economic problems of the area. The new program was to be woven into the entire extension operation in the area instead of having rural development agents to carry out separate educational programs.

How do you go about adding new competencies to a staff, changing its image of its job, and changing the public image of an organization so it can operate effectively with a broader clientele?

1. **ADMINISTRATION.** In the Upper Peninsula broad responsibility for program was vested in the director in addition to the usual administrative functions. A key point is that the work of agents is evaluated and recommendations for salary adjustments made on the basis of their progress in putting developmental programs into operation. A consultation system has been established to communicate this to agents.

2. **STAFFING.** Primary emphasis in the Upper Peninsula has been upon a training program and the counseling procedure mentioned above. Agents need to be equipped with procedural tools for taking the "management approach" and for working effectively as motivators, catalysts, and initiators of action. Agents must acquire new areas of subject matter competency; an agent does not work with resort operators unless he knows how!

All workers have been encouraged to work toward advanced degrees. At present 15 out of 26 field workers have an M.S. degree. In-service training and agent consultation assume major importance. In-service training has included many new dimensions in addition to the conventional areas. Examples of these are courses in resource development, inventorying the human resources of the area, zoning of land for optimum use, tourist and resort operations, and forestry management.

Another method of assisting a staff to assume a new role is to add personnel with new competencies. One person who has been added as a county director has a master's degree in education and another was formerly a speech teacher. More attention will probably be given to the type of person hired in the future. Actually county staffs have undergone little change in numbers. However, additions and changes have been made in the specialist staff located at the Extension Center in Marquette. Additions include an assistant director, a general education specialist, a vocational education specialist, a community development specialist, and an information specialist. The staff already included specialists in soils, forestry production, agricultural economics, dairy, home economics (two specialists), and youth.

3. WORK WITH OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AND PRIVATE AGENCY GROUPS. A Rural Development Council, similar to that described by other states, was formed to serve as an advisory group and to coordinate various efforts. The Michigan Department of Economic Development has proved to be an extremely important ally in getting the job done in the Upper Peninsula. Other state and federal agencies that are cooperating closely include the U. S. Department of Commerce, the Forest Service, Small Business Administration, and the Michigan Department of Public Instruction. The Secretary-Manager of the Upper Michigan Tourist Association and employees in the chambers of commerce are important cooperators.

The extension services of the four institutions of higher learning operating in the Upper Peninsula have formed a Field Services Committee. Joint efforts under this committee range from school studies to the sponsorship of field credit courses in which the student has the option of applying for credit in the institution of his choice.

4. ADVISORY GROUPS. An early problem was that only agriculture was well represented on local advisory councils. Typically the name has been changed from "Agricultural Advisory Council" to "Extension Advisory Council." In one county the chamber of commerce is serving as the main advisory body.

Now let us look at the results of the effort to implement a broad extension effort.

Perhaps the best evidence of changed images on the part of agents and the public is the way in which extension agents in the Upper Peninsula have been accepted by county groups and are able to work with county governing bodies and others in writing over-all economic development programs for the Area Redevelopment Administration.

Examples include the development of a county fact book by the community development specialist which is designed to provide comprehensive information about the total population, government, economy, and land use of the area. In Luce County the information provided stimulated the chamber of commerce to do a full-fledged industrial survey. A direct result has been an investigation by a new wood industry, and the local development organization is now completing arrangements for the establishment of this industry.

A new tool, still in the development process, is a county key sort index for mechanical sorting of various kinds of clientele groups. This has been used in one county in a church reorganization study. It is also being used to develop specific mailing lists for special clientele groups, and in providing a quick appraisal of job skills to prospective industries.

As a result of demonstrated skills in conducting studies, the Extension Service was asked by a large church group of the Upper Peninsula to provide leadership for a study to decide the location of a home for the aged. Our community specialist assisted with this, but the main job was performed by consultants who were paid a substantial fee by the church group. Arrangements for obtaining the consultants were made by our staff.

Municipal studies are another large area of a newly directed effort. Gladstone, a city of about 5,000, made a study last year of a highway relocation problem with which it is faced. Streets, services, and industries will need to be relocated and zoned in order to provide for future growth of the city.

Historically, the Extension Service has steered clear of school controversies. However, we have found that through the aid of educational specialists we can assist communities in studying their educational problems and find sound and reasonable answers. In the case of Delta County a school study was completed two years ago which has culminated in a new 3.5 million dollar consolidated high school. The county extension director was a key factor in this because of his abilities and superior over-all knowledge of the area.

The tourist and resort industry is another large field of our extension activities in the Upper Peninsula. Educational work here has ranged from individual assistance in business management to conducting tourist hospitality schools for employees of tourist businesses. This phase of our work will expand even more in the future.

In the areas of more traditional extension concern, several years of work by extension marketing and economics specialists in the Upper Peninsula culminated in the consolidation of several cooperative dairy plants. We have instituted "depth" training with people who have specialized concern. The extension dairy specialist plans to proceed beyond a simple one-year series in 1961 by holding another course for 12 to 15 people who took last year's course. This year the group will study in greater detail the physiology of digestion and milk production. In a number of counties new crops and markets for products such as cranberries, strawberries, and birdsfoot trefoil are being developed. Investigations of various kinds of processing plants for potatoes have been instituted in Delta and Houghton counties.

In order to insure continued emphasis and direction to planning for action, most counties are now establishing official planning councils. Agents need to work closely with county governments in organizing these councils.

Another dimension of the work is the need for a district body to view area problems in over-all context. This is being done through the several county governments. It is hoped that the result will be a quasi-governmental body which, at the same time, will serve as the advisory body for RAD, for ARA, and as a district planning council.

While entirely informal, the Upper Peninsula extension operation appears to be evolving toward a relationship as a quasi-staff arm of local government. Problems of county government efficiencies are recognized, but orientation to the total society could thus be effected.