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Agricultural Outlook Forum
U.S. Department of Agriculture

Presented: February 26-27, 2009


Converging Forces Strengthen a Larger Rural Community

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Kansas Department of Commerce

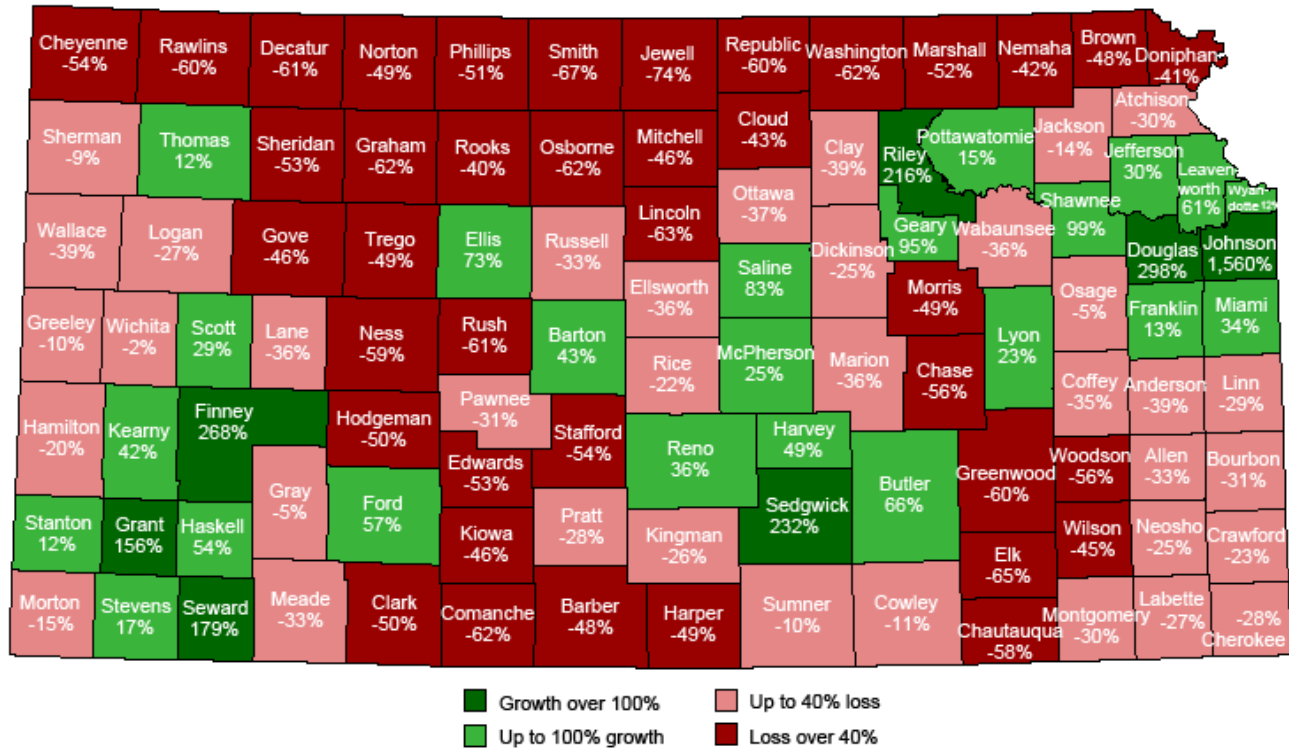


Converging Forces
Strengthen a Larger Rural
Community

Problems Exist—of Course

- Population Loss
 - Depletion of Wealth
 - Loss of Businesses
 - Loss of Support Services
- 

Historical Population Trends in Kansas, 1930-2000



Map from RUPRI and the courtesy of Kansas Farm Bureau

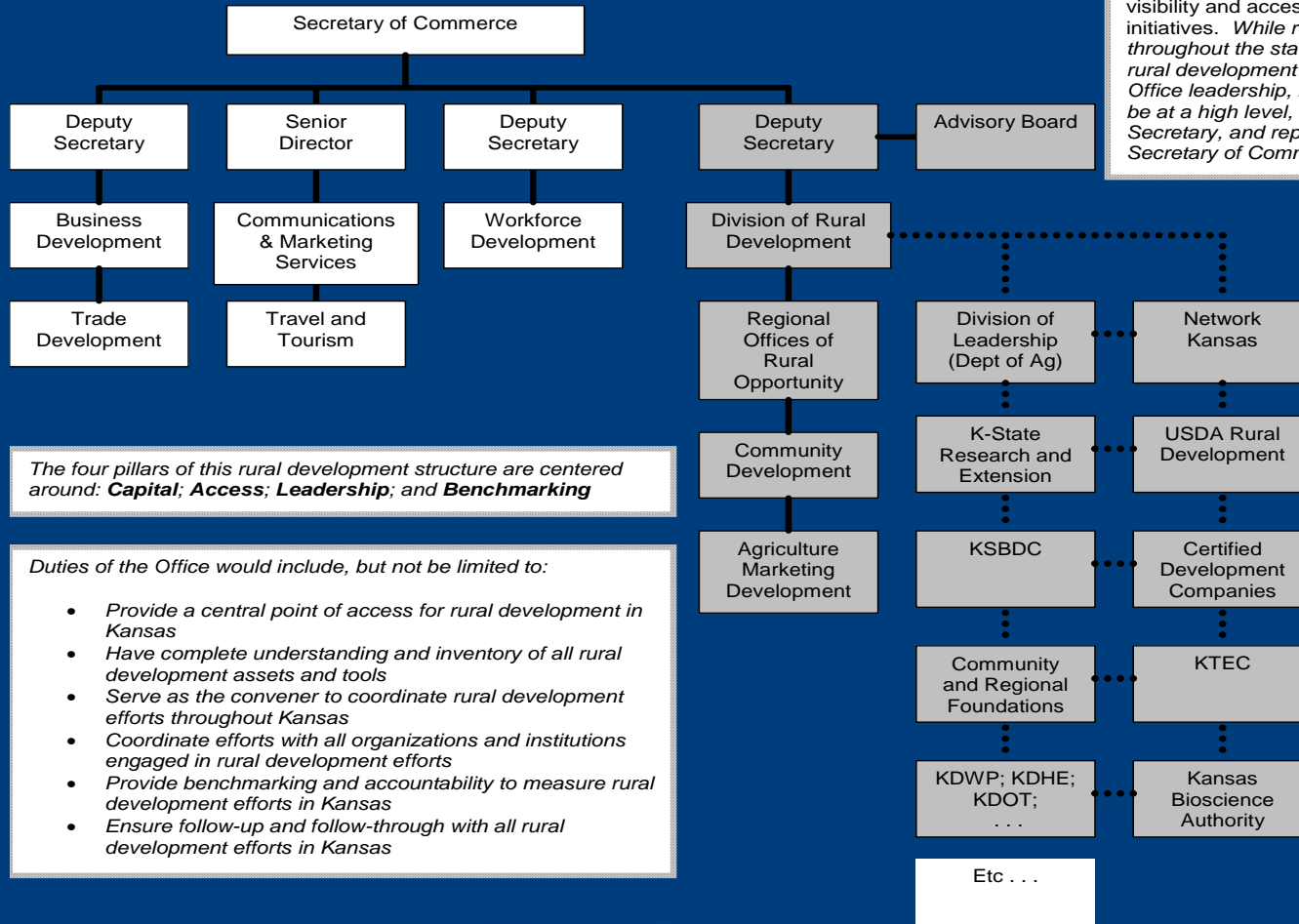
Family farmers feed the
community, and the community
sustains the farm family.



Rural Development in Kansas— A Confluence of Factors Caused Change

- Kansas, Inc., strategic planning document of 2007
 - Kansas Communities LLC—helping towns plan
 - Governor's Rural Development Initiative
 - Offices of Rural Opportunity
 - Kansas Farm Bureau involvement
 - 2008 Farm Bill
- 

Figure 1. Conceptual Structure of Rural Development Model



The Office of Rural Opportunity would be positioned at the highest possible level to denote the prominence of the Office as the centerpiece of Kansas' rural development structure. This would help facilitate visibility and access to rural development initiatives. While regional outreach throughout the state will be critical to the rural development structure and efforts, Office leadership, based in Topeka, should be at a high level, such as Deputy Secretary, and report directly to the Secretary of Commerce.

The four pillars of this rural development structure are centered around: **Capital; Access; Leadership; and Benchmarking**

- Duties of the Office would include, but not be limited to:
- Provide a central point of access for rural development in Kansas
 - Have complete understanding and inventory of all rural development assets and tools
 - Serve as the convener to coordinate rural development efforts throughout Kansas
 - Coordinate efforts with all organizations and institutions engaged in rural development efforts
 - Provide benchmarking and accountability to measure rural development efforts in Kansas
 - Ensure follow-up and follow-through with all rural development efforts in Kansas

Enhancing the Structure of Rural Development in Kansas

Four Pillars:


- Capital
- Access
- Leadership
- Benchmarking

From the statewide strategic planning process of Kansas, Inc.



Rural Development Division

Includes community development, ag marketing, office of rural opportunity.

- Provide a central point of access
 - Understanding and inventory of assets
 - Convene and coordinate efforts
 - Measure needs and efforts
 - Ensure follow-up and follow-through
- 

Governor's RD Initiative

2007 Budget Initiative funds for:

- Creation of an Office of Rural Opportunity
 - Community Capacity Building Grants
 - Small Community Improvement Program
 - Dollars for entrepreneurship, small business and Main Street communities
- 

Offices of Rural Opportunity

- Four cover the state
 - Based in rural areas
 - Focus on towns 5,000 and below
 - Gather data on connections made and needs unmet
- 



Office of Rural Opportunity representative Renee Lippincott works with members of the historical society in Morris County, Kansas.


Needs Met and Unmet

Data gathered over the last year by regional offices tell us several things.

- Communities benefit from the connection.
- Housing, infrastructure and health care are concerns across the board.
- Modern communication—high speed internet—is basic, vital infrastructure.

Partnering

It's simple but it's true...it helps to talk to each other. So we meet regularly by phone and face to face with academic, state, private and federal partners. That includes USDA RD, SBDC, KU and KSU, other agencies, Kansas Farm Bureau, community foundations and others.



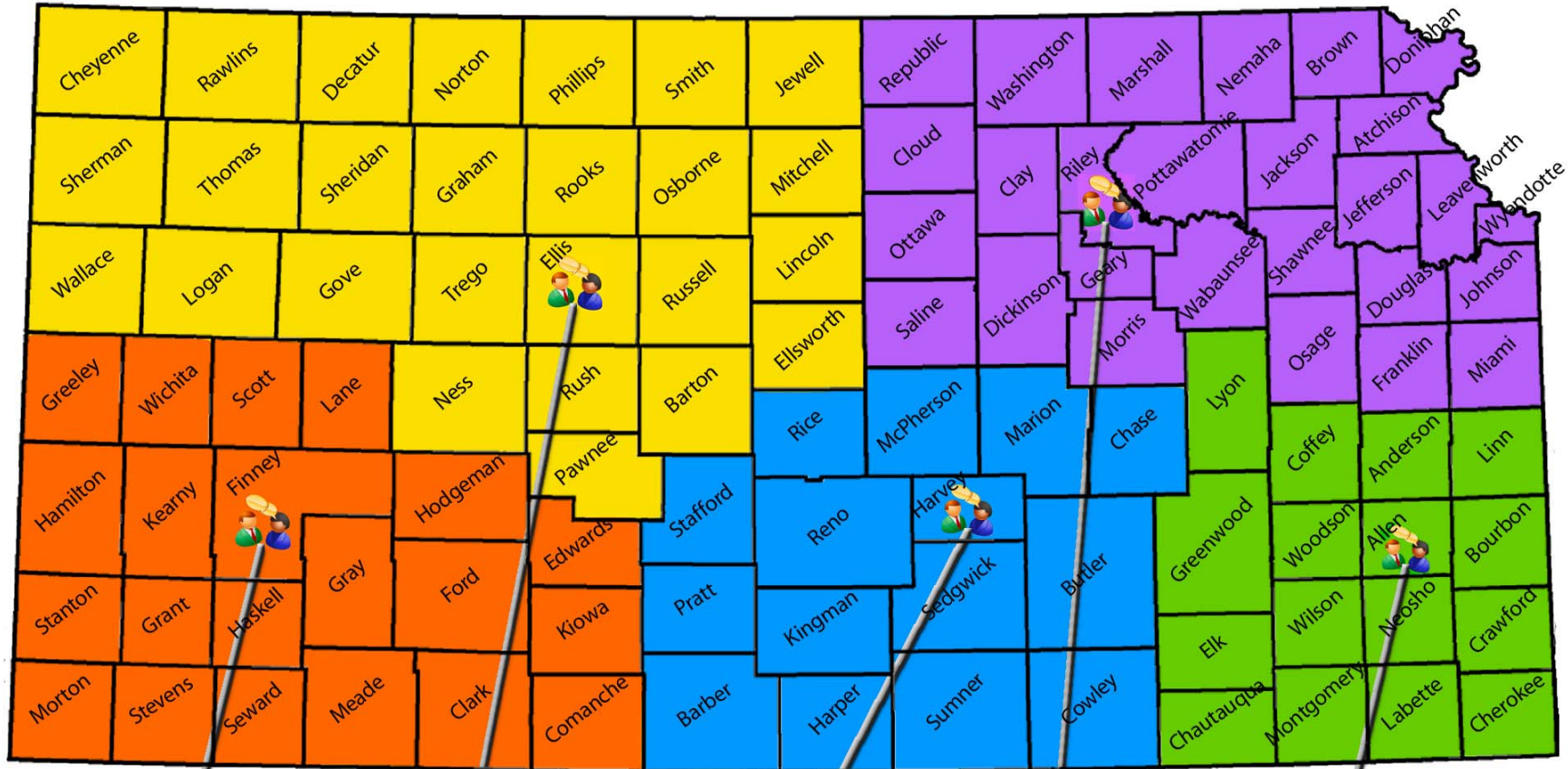
USDA Rural Development Area Offices Effective March 1, 2008



Committed to the future of rural communities.



Area Office Locations



AREA 5
2106 East Spruce
Garden City, KS 67846
620-275-0211
Fax 620-275-4903

AREA 1
2715 Canterbury Drive
Hays, KS 67601
785-628-3081
Fax 785-625-6065

AREA 4
1405 South Spencer Rd
Newton, KS 67114
316-283-0370
Fax 316-283-2379

AREA 2
3705 Miller Parkway,
Suite A
Manhattan, KS 66503
785-776-7582
Fax 785-539-2733

AREA 3
202 W. Miller Road
Iola, KS 66749
620-365-2901
Fax 620-365-5785

Partnering

Workshops on Developing Community Coaches are being developed by the Department of Commerce, USDA Rural Development, KSU and the Farmers Home Loan Bank.

Communities must create their own goals.

Community Capacity Building helps them do that. The state also is working with USDA to create better use of resources like 9007 energy funds.

Community Capacity Building


We can encourage communities to work together to build roadmaps to success but only they can really do that. Several other entities are working hard to help our communities build capacity to help themselves.

Partnering again

Kansas Farm Bureau came to the decision that the health of rural communities depends on agriculture and their farmer/rancher members. Farmers and ranchers in turn depend on healthy communities. Farm Bureau decided to get involved.

Hometown Prosperity

Kansas Farm Bureau understands the connection between agriculture and rural communities. Their HTP initiative was created to ensure vibrant communities for the future with the necessities and amenities that make for a good life. KFB has been creative and proactive in this effort.



Sedan– An HTP Community



Principles of HTP

- Youth retention
- Entrepreneurship
- Wealth retention
- Leadership

Current communities are Atwood, NW Kansas; Onaga, NE Kansas; and Sedan in the southeast.

Public Square Process-- Kansas Communities LLC

Greensburg was all but destroyed by a May 2007 tornado. In the aftermath, this process helped unite the community to create a shared vision for rebuilding. The result is a Green Community rising from the prairie. Greensburg has enlarged its vision to include two neighboring towns and is exploring county unification.


Public Square Process



05/09/2008

Another Example

Greeley County has also used the process. Through community conversations begun under the Public Square process, the community itself decided to consolidate government to improve efficiency of tax-funded services....and 73 percent of the voters agreed.



The Public Square


- Business, Government, Schools and Health Providers form the Public Square.

“If we invest in leadership development, strategic planning and communications, then we probably don’t need new programs and grants because the current programs and grants will be used more effectively and efficiently.”—Governor Kathleen Sebelius

Other Capacity Building Endeavors

Kansas Communities and HTP are notable efforts. Other such efforts are out there quietly doing good work—the Kansas PRIDE program, the Main Street program, Kansas Health Foundation, Kansas Leadership Foundation, Center for Community Support and others.

In Sync with the Farm Bill

- Secretary Vilsack recently referred to healthy, rural 21st Century communities comprised of agriculture and towns together. That would be our vision, too.
- The 2008 Farm Bill maintains a safety net for farmers but also recognizes the need to extend a safety net to rural communities.
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Farm Bill Recognizes Rural Communities and Ag

- Community and economic development initiatives, entrepreneurship.
 - Renewables and Energy Efficiency.
 - New farmers.
 - Conservation.
 - Production for new markets—specialty crops, local foods, organics.
 - Creating healthy communities.
- 

A Double Focus

Kansas Farm Bureau has said it feels it important to focus energy both on ensuring the future of production agriculture in Kansas AND the hometowns of their farmers, ranchers and rural residents.

Astronauts and Presidents

The rural areas of Kansas have been home to future astronauts and physicists, presidents and public servants.

“Pessimism never won any battle.”

--Dwight D. Eisenhower




Partnerships Again

I believe that partnerships such as ours in Kansas, and the policies expressed by the administration and in the 2008 Farm Bill, will lead to healthier rural communities. By sustaining those communities, and all the kids and the adults and the seniors living in them, we develop the astronauts and presidents, entrepreneurs and teachers, pharmacists and family farmers of the future.

In Conclusion

Family farmers feed the community, and the community sustains the farm family.

Recognition of this at all levels, from federal policies to state government, from private business to farm groups, will sustain rural America.





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