

# **National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education and Economics (NAREEE) Advisory Board**

## **Report and Recommendations from a Focus Session on “Rural Economic and Community Development: Opportunities for USDA and Cooperative Extension” Conducted at the NAREEE Advisory Board Meeting held in Washington, D.C. on October 29-31, 2007**

### **Executive Summary**

The NAREEE Advisory Board received input from USDA representatives and external stakeholders on issues related to rural economic and community development. The Board commends USDA’s Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service (CSREES) and Economics Research Service (ERS) for focusing increased attention on entrepreneurship and rural entrepreneurial communities and identifying new directions for research.

Investments by USDA, private foundations, other federal agencies, state and local governments and non-profits in research and extension educational programs have increased our knowledge and demonstrated the positive impacts of entrepreneurship in rural economic and community development. Yet significant research questions and extension opportunities remain to overcome the problems of poverty, unemployment and out-migration of young and old from rural areas.

To address these topics, the NAREEE Advisory Board recommends the following:

1. USDA issue a “Grand Challenge” with respect to entrepreneurship development to expand research on entrepreneurship and its role in community economic development, and to increase Extension education programming to support this initiative.
2. USDA should request the resources to make a major investment in an Extension program of Rural Entrepreneurship and Enterprise Development. This investment should be at least \$50M and managed by the Regional Rural Development Centers with the goal of harnessing resources within the universities and other organizations to foster entrepreneurship.
3. NRI funding for Rural Development research programs should be increased so a Request for Proposals (RFP) could be issued every year on the role of entrepreneurship in rural community and economic development.
4. An external evaluation of the 1890 Entrepreneurship program should be conducted and if justified, consider this focused program as a model for a national program.
5. CSREES and ERS agencies collaborate with USDA Rural Development to use research findings on entrepreneurship to guide USDA Rural Development programs.

6. Cooperative Extension should develop the following: (a) targeted programs in financial literacy and entrepreneurship for diverse audiences, from 4-H youth to farmers and ranchers concerned about estate planning and transfer of wealth; (b) partnerships with others involved in rural small business development and education, such as community colleges and Small Business Development Centers, to provide value-added entrepreneurship programs for rural populations; and (c) expanded educational programs in the use of technologies for web-based businesses, such as e-commerce marketing and sales, and financial management tools required to start and grow businesses,.