

Partnerships for Success – Texas Communities and Texas AgriLife Extension Service

Communities throughout Texas and the nation are facing economic challenges as they experience the loss of jobs, incomes and population. Improving local economies by addressing these issues is complicated largely because it is difficult for volunteers to access knowledge and resources necessary for improvement.

CET overcomes these hurdles by matching the needs of communities with the research-based educational programs of Texas AgriLife Extension Service, The Texas A&M University System.

The first workshop initiates action in one or more of five economic development strategies that are proven methods to improve local economies through job and business venture creation and the enhancement of related community resources. Subsequent annual workshops will focus on community success stories, lessons learned and project planning.

Support for CET communities includes providing data and analyses, assisting with implementation of best practices, providing technical assistance and sharing resources. Specialists and community participants will work as teams to formulate strategies that will help grow local economies. Two participants from each community will attend the following workshops:

Economic Strategies

Entrepreneurship:

Topics include the benefits of supporting entrepreneurs; venture development and types of assistance needed; currently available support; making your community entrepreneur ready; building local capacity for support; asset-based approaches to entrepreneurship; working with entrepreneurs; and available resources. Coverage also includes the benefits and importance of supporting youth entrepreneurship.

Diversified and Value-added Agribusinesses:

Topics include evaluating value-added business and income opportunities for farms and ranches, strategic planning and goal setting, and a comparison of organizational business models.

Business Retention and Expansion:

Topics include job growth by helping communities identify the concerns and barriers to survival and growth facing local businesses. This approach focuses on existing businesses rather than the recruitment and creation of brand new jobs, given existing economic resources. Specific proven techniques and practices for retaining and expanding jobs in existing businesses will be the focal point for this strategy.

Economic Strategies

Tourism:

Topics include assessing potentials, costs and benefits of tourism as an economic development strategy. Specific areas of potential may encompass local natural, historical or cultural resources. Events and festivals associated with the community or the region can also be initiated or further developed to extract maximum economic benefit using research-based information and best management practices developed through long and extensive experience.

Community Resources and Workforce:

Topics include identification and employment of relevant workforce and community resources (i.e., human, social, and physical capital). Diverse strengths and weaknesses shape and affect the eventual success of communities as they pursue development. Critical factors unique to each community will be covered as well as methods and means for their coordinated employment.

What is a CET “Community?”

Communities can be described in part by geography, but more importantly they are defined by the actions of citizens that share a sense of identity while working towards improving the quality of life and the local economy. A CET community can include a local town, neighboring municipalities or county. A community in transition is characterized by residents that are developing deliberate, planned and continuous proactive approaches to local economic development.

The CET Approach

Consistent with its learning and action mission, CET supports:

- Community self-study and planning for economic diversification;
- Informational materials and technical assistance to help communities implement local plans;
- Local and inter-community workshops and discussion forums;
- Local and project progress monitoring;
- Networks of contacts with a wide variety of groups.



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Communities In Economic Transition (CET)

A Partnership for Progress
Between
Texas Communities
And
Texas AgriLife Extension
Service



CET encourages community-centered planning, learning and action for economic diversification and local-area entrepreneurship. Communities experiment with several economic diversification strategies to address rural concerns for jobs, income and public revenues.