

# Marion session provides chance for citizens, experts to work on economic development

Posted: Saturday, October 17, 2015 8:00 am

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development and Virginia Cooperative Extension this month will host open meetings to facilitate economic development planning with two rural Virginia regions, one of which is Mount Rogers.

The regions were selected in August for the Stronger Economies Together (SET) Phase V program. SET, a regional economic improvement program, enables communities and counties in rural America to work together in creating and implementing an economic development blueprint for their multi-county region that strategically builds on the current and emerging economic strengths of that region.

The meetings will allow residents and community leaders from the Mount Rogers Planning District – made up of Bland, Carroll, Grayson, Smyth, Washington, and Wythe counties and the cities of Bristol and Galax – to plan collaboratively and alongside experts who offer access to and analysis of economic data.

“We are eager to begin the SET process in these two regions,” said Basil Gooden, Ph.D., Virginia state director, USDA Rural Development. “As the counties and cities identify their collective strengths we expect to help them leverage opportunities that produce mutually beneficial outcomes that enable the regions to rise together.”

The first SET meetings will be civic engagement forums, which offer an opportunity for people to engage in discussions and deliberations about the assets of the local communities and the issues that are limiting their ability and the region to realize their full potential.

The Mount Rogers will be held Tuesday, Oct. 20, from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the Mount Rogers Planning Commission Conference Room, 1021 Terrace Drive, Marion.

For more information on the SET process, visit the SET overview webpage.

The SET technical support team in Virginia includes the Virginia Tech Office of Economic Development, the Virginia Rural Center, and various agencies from the Office of the Secretary of Commerce and Trade, including the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, Virginia Tourism Corporation, and Virginia Economic Development Partnership.

Launched in 2010 by USDA Rural Development, the nation’s four regional rural development centers, the Purdue Center for Regional Development, and its land-grant university partners, SET is now in place in more than 70 regions in 31 states.