

Rural Business Innovation and Economic Development Workshop Call for Presentations and Hold the Date Request



The Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development (NERCRD) is pleased to announce a new conference in its acclaimed What Works workshop series. The conference theme this year is *Rural Business Innovation and Economic Development*, and the event will be held in conjunction with Create West Virginia's Universal Design conference, at the Civic Center in **Charleston, WV on May 15-17, 2017**.¹ The conference seeks to answer the question, How do we (re)create buildings, communities, learning places, programs and products to better meet needs of 21st Century people?

As international competition and knowledge intensity in economic activity have increased, innovation in new products, services, and ways of doing business has emerged as a key driver of productivity and growth. Rural areas have proven to be places where such innovation can occur successfully, and there is great value in examining the role of place and local communities in increasing innovators' chances for success. Our goal is to bring together practitioners, educators, scholars, policymakers and students to share new knowledge and insights about innovation, especially in rural areas.

To this end we seek presentations that may include papers, posters or educational (Extension) programs addressing some aspect of new or innovative product development in a broad sense. Topics may include new products, services (such as agri-tourism) or business processes, including those based in the arts, or creative ways of valorizing while preserving natural assets, including wilderness trails, whitewater rafting and the development of other nature-based recreational opportunities. The submission deadline is December 13, 2016

Three keynote presentations (invited) will report on new research that uses the USDA's Rural Establishment Innovation Survey (REIS). This new and rich array of data on innovative practices and technologies allows researchers to address questions about the ways in which business innovation is happening in rural areas, and its dependence and impact on rural communities and regional economies.

The Universal Design: Live & Learn conference is a collaboration offered in partnership with Partnerships in Assistive Technologies (PATHS), West Virginia University CED, RL Mace Universal Design Institute, CAST Professional Learning, Create West Virginia, and the Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development. In addition, West Virginia State University Extension is a co-sponsor. The expected registration fee is \$150, and additional details about the conference will be provided in the near future. For further information or to be added to an email distribution list, please write to Kristen Devlin, krd111@psu.edu with the subject line: WW UD conference Charleston.

¹ As defined by the National Endowment for the Arts, Universal Design goes beyond the mere provision of special features for various segments of the population. Instead it emphasizes a creative approach that is more inclusive, one that asks at the outset of the design process how a product, graphic communication, building, or landscape can be made both aesthetically pleasing and functional for the greatest number of users. Designs resulting from this approach are more likely to serve a wider array of people: individuals who have temporary disabilities, people with permanent disabilities, and everyone whose abilities change with age.
<http://www.humancentereddesign.org/resources/art-universal-design>