



## **Grand Challenge 7**

**Must Strengthen Individual, Family and  
Community Development & Resilience**

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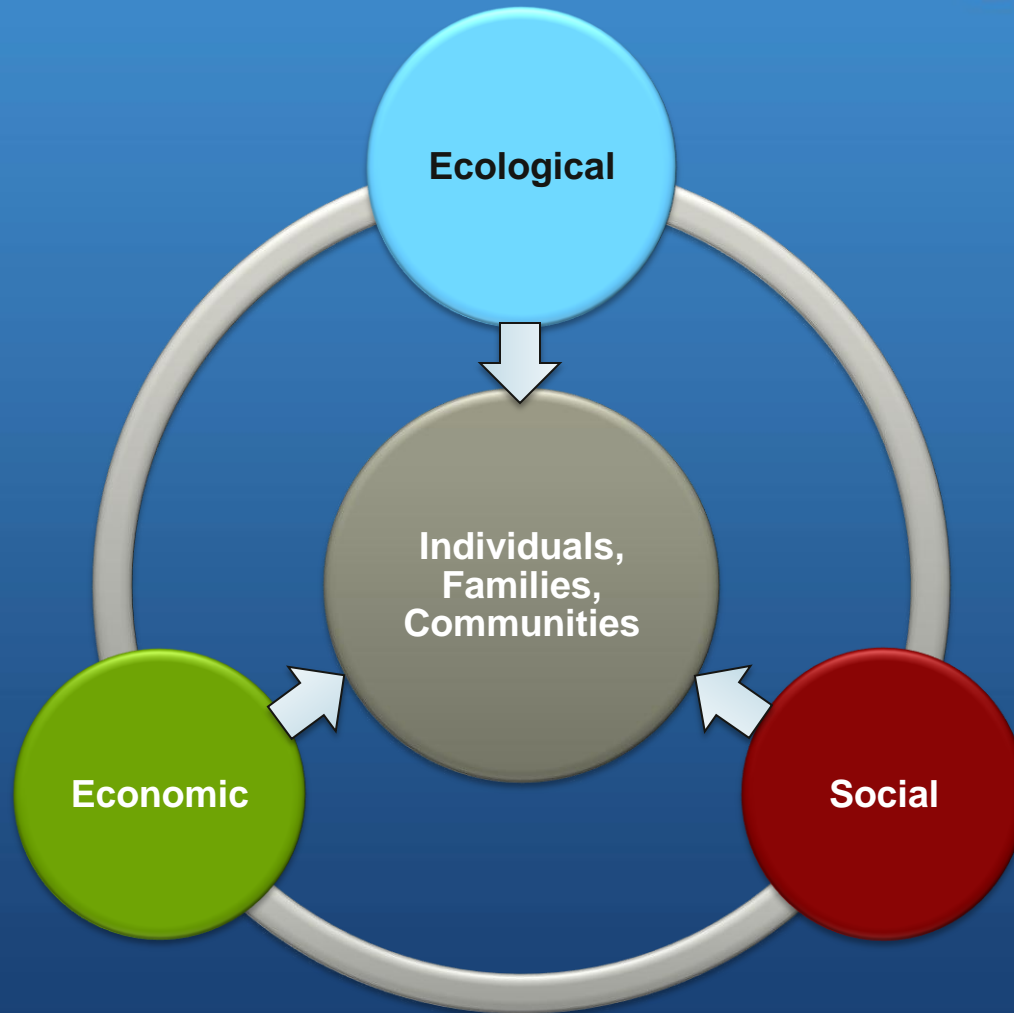
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# Issue Framing



Critical to explore the core challenges impacting individuals, families & communities in the context of these broad forces (economic, social, ecological) in rural America



# The Priority Issues



- 1 • **Creating Supportive Family Environments**
- 2 • **Fighting Obesity, Food Insecurity**
- 3 • **Changing Economic Drivers**
- 4 • **Still Left Behind: High Poverty Places**
- 5 • **Staying in Touch Through Broadband**
- 6 • **Understanding Ecosystem Change**
- 7 • **Overcoming Apathy: Civic Health of Communities**

# Research Needs and Priorities



## Supportive Family Environments

Many Stresses Impacting Today's Families

### Key issues. . .

- Links between community vitality and strong healthy families
- How diverse families differentially experience economic & social opportunities in rural areas
- The key mix of family supportive programs/policies

## Obesity & Food Insecurity

Child/adult obesity rates highest, food deserts most prevalent in rural areas; low rate of participation in federal child nutrition programs

### Key Issues. . .

- Barriers to food security & access to healthy foods
- Impediments to local food production and direct marketing
- Effectiveness of local food systems

# Research Needs and Priorities



## Changing Economic Drivers

Economic Base is Changing; Major Debate on the Merits of People-, Sector-, and/or Place-Based Strategies

### Key Issues. . .

- Determining the communities' comparative advantages (assets, niche markets)
- Factors that advance sustainable regional economic development strategies
- Links between urban and rural prosperity
- Attracting creative/knowledge workers
- Role of entrepreneurship and self-employment
- The move of resource-dependent communities from extraction/manufacturing to redevelopment based on resource stewardship

## High Poverty Places

Approx. 9 of every 10 high poverty counties in the U.S. (20%+ of individuals in poverty) are in rural America (416 counties). Many geographic pockets of high poverty are in rural America

### Key Issues. . .

- Impacts of globalization on rural poverty
- The chronic poor (Who are they? How do they differ from urban poor? What community factors affect poverty?)
- Types of work supports needed by the rural poor
- How population shifts influence poverty outcomes

# Research Needs and Priorities



## Straying in Touch Through Broadband

New rural economic development strategies will require access to information and communications technologies. But, broadband penetration and use are lowest in rural areas

### Key Issues. . .

- Factors impeding/facilitating broadband adoption by individuals, families, local governments, businesses, etc..
- Link between broadband access and local economic expansion. Does broadband promote growth of creative/knowledge-based workers and firms?
- Economic and social benefits to rural communities
- Role of BTOP in accelerating broadband deployment and use by people and communities in unserved/underserved rural areas

## Ecosystem Change

Human systems have contributed to environmental changes; human systems must adapt to predicted as well as uncertain environmental conditions/shifts

### Key Issues. . .

- Effects of bio-fuel demand on rural communities; policies to ensure that costs/benefits are equitably distributed across the urban/rural continuum
- Vulnerability of agricultural regions to climate change; potential for economic adaptation.
- Factors increasing the vulnerability of rural communities to climate change. Policy changes that might increase community resilience to global warming.
- Impact of increased urbanization and amenity growth on local ecosystems & land use activities



# Research Needs and Priorities



## Civic Health of Communities

The civic fabric of American communities is declining. New paradigms for restoring the civic health of communities are needed

### Key issues. . .

- The value/benefit of civic capacity-building investments by local institutions
- How new modes of civic-centered engagement result in a broader array of people contributing to community improvement efforts
- The role of sustained youth engagement in reducing youth outmigration
- The value of social media strategies in deepening citizen awareness and increased input on key local issues





# Value, Opportunities, Challenges



## Social & Behavioral Sciences

### Value:

- Informed the life choices of individuals and families
- Generated information on the advantages/disadvantages/consequences of economic, social and environmental decisions on individuals, families, communities
- Developed important theoretical frameworks and powerful empirical analytic tools
- Provided policy guidance and analysis

### Opportunities:

- Great potential for research discoveries on resilience related to rural people and places
- A social/behavioral sciences lens is vital to addressing Science Roadmap issues
- Need faculty who can work in a trans-disciplinary environment (bridge builders); provide incentives for such teams
- Investments will produce solid policy-relevant information
- Work is crucial to shaping Extension-relevant programs targeted to rural people, families, places

### Major research challenges:

- Declining financial support
- Lack of good data on rural people and places
- Qualitative studies are crucial – but expensive