



CICEP

INNOVATION AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY UNIVERSITIES  
AWARDS PROGRAM

CASE  
STUDY  
2013

## **San Joaquin Valley Rural Development Center**

## OVERVIEW

The San Joaquin Valley Rural Development Center (SJVRDC) was established by the Office of Community and Economic Development at Fresno State in 2010 to serve as a one-stop resource center and technical assistance provider for rural communities in the San Joaquin Valley. SJVRDC is aligned with the principal of community engagement and public service that is a pillar of Fresno State. Many of the rural communities in the region are confronted with limited resources, staff, and time that impede their ability to carry out projects that are vital to the socio-economic well-being of their residents. SJVRDC addresses these challenges by connecting rural communities to a wide range of indispensable resources, services, and expertise that helps ensure community and economic development needs are met efficiently, effectively, and affordably.



SJV Rural Development Center

## TARGET COMMUNITIES

SJVRDC targets its services to San Joaquin Valley communities with populations of 50,000 or less. This includes both incorporated cities and unincorporated census-designated places. Tribal communities and nonprofits serving rural residents also are eligible for SJVRDC services. *Since its inception, SJVRDC has provided its services to 23 rural cities, 12 unincorporated census-designated places, 10 nonprofits and 1 tribal community.*

## SERVICE AREAS

Between its own direct services and those of the more than 40 partner organizations, SJVRDC is able to facilitate a diverse set of expertise, resources, services and trainings to the region's rural communities in order to address challenges and maximize opportunities confronting them. SJVRDC collaboratively builds relationships. We listen to what rural communities need, discuss options with them and, together, reach long-term solutions. SJVRDC can provide assistance in the following areas:

- Capacity Building
- Community Gardening
- Community Planning
- Digital Literacy
- Economic Development Planning
- Entrepreneurship
- Farmers' Market Development
- Financial Literacy
- Financing
- Grant Writing & Management
- Housing
- Internship Placement
- Land Remediation
- Nonprofit Incorporation & Reinstatement
- Public Health & Wellness
- Renewable Energy
- Small Business Development
- Strategic Planning
- Transportation
- Water and Wastewater Infrastructure

## SERVICE HIGHLIGHTS

The services SJVRDC provides directly or facilitates are done at no cost to a rural community; however, there are instances when nominal fees are applied to the services it provides because of the amount of time involved in delivering assistance. These fees are meant to cover a fraction of costs and provide a level of revenue that will sustain further activities in other rural communities. As a result, SJVRDC has generated over \$75,000 in revenue from its fee-based services, which include grant-writing services and contracted rural projects.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

In conjunction with the Taft District Chamber of Commerce and members of the Greater Taft Economic Development Authority (GTEDA), SJVRDC facilitated an economic development strategy for the City of Taft which was adopted for implementation by its City Council. The strategy was developed over an 8-month period and consisted of 13 educational and planning sessions that culminated with a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis and implementation steps. The economic development strategy includes input from GTEDA's 30-member advisory committee comprising various community stakeholders in Taft, Calif., from both public and private sectors.

## TECHNOLOGY: DIGITAL LITERACY AND SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

SJVRDC has delivered 3 different training modules to low-income, Spanish-speaking residents and business owners in the City of Firebaugh that have totaled a combined 96 hours of instruction. The first module was held in the spring of 2012 and offered basic digital literacy training to a group of 20 community members. A second group comprised of 12 residents and small business owners participated in a module that introduced elements of small business technology integration, such as e-commerce, digital photography, Adobe Photoshop, and social media. For example, one participating student applied the skillsets he learned to begin selling his vehicles on Craigslist and PayPal. The third module provided QuickBooks training to 15 small business owners and residents.



## WATER AND WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE

SJVRDC assisted the City of Farmersville in conducting surveys of households in the unincorporated census-designated place of Cameron Creek Colony to assess water and wastewater infrastructure and quality. A total of 85 households were contacted with 54 percent agreeing to have the City of Farmersville test the quality of their private well for contaminants. The level of residents' interest in having the City of Farmersville provide water utility services also was assessed, and 46 percent of residents were in favor of a sub-regional infrastructure solution. SJVRDC also assisted the City of Farmersville in identifying an affordable lab to analyze the water well samples collected in Cameron Creek. The goal of these services was to provide a credible, third-party entity (Fresno State) as the face of important community data collection process that will affect local planning.



## GRANT WRITING & MANAGEMENT

nonprofits from all 8 counties in the San Joaquin Valley. Its no-cost training module has been delivered to more than 140 individuals using an interactive approach that includes online database research. The goal of these training modules is to build local grant writing capacity in rural communities in order to increase fundraising activity and reduce expenses associated with consultants. Helping rural communities maintain scarce resources locally is essential to their sustainability.

Tag: Rural development, technical assistance