

# Best Practices - Rural Sustainability Projects and Programs



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# About the National Association of Counties

The National Association of Counties (NACo) is the only national organization that represents county governments in the United States. Founded in 1935, NACo provides essential services to the nation’s 3,068 counties. NACo advances issues with a unified voice before the federal government, improves the public’s understanding of county government, assists counties in finding and sharing innovative solutions through education and research, and provides value-added services to save counties and taxpayers money. For more information about NACo, visit [www.naco.org](http://www.naco.org).

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## ✿ Sustainable Economic Development Initiative

### **Coconino County, Arizona**

Population: 116,320

In response to the 2004 state-wide initiative, “Moving Arizona Forward,” Coconino County leaders responded with Arizona’s first regional economic development effort in 2006. They named it the Coconino County Sustainable Economic Development Initiative, or SEDI. With representatives from all incorporated and unincorporated communities, Coconino County, Native American communities, state and federal agencies, educational institutions, conservation groups, and the business community, the SEDI was able to develop and implement a strategic action plan working to foster social equity, economic prosperity, and ecological health in Coconino County. Among the many projects completed by the SEDI, this past year’s tasks included the “Northern Arizona Workforce Training Center” and the “Zero Energy Neighborhood (ZEN) Homes Initiative.” The mission of the Workforce Training Center was to focus on practical training

and certification for the green jobs in the growing economy. The ultimate goal of the Homes Initiative was to dramatically reduce carbon emissions over the next 10-15 years while building community pride and neighborhood cohesion.

## ✿ Aspen Community Vision

### **City of Aspen, Pitkin County, Colorado**

Population: 14,872

The Aspen Area Community Plan was first adopted in 1993. The City of Aspen and Pitkin County joined together to create an area-wide program dedicated to the betterment of the greater Aspen Area. The Aspen City Council and the Pitkin County Commissioners together use this plan to oversee the planning for each year. In 2008, the City and County began work on an update to the community plan, and the creation of a 10-year community vision for the future, the Community Vision for the Aspen Area. The Community Vision focuses on 10 components that make up the “State of the Aspen





Area”: the Aspen Idea (the arts and culture), economics, environmental quality, governance, historic preservation, housing, managing growth, open space and trails, parks and recreation, and transportation. By using the Community Vision, the City of Aspen and Pitkin County have maintained and improved the overall sustainability and quality of life in their community.

## ❁ **Routt County Vision 2030**

**Routt County, Colorado**

Population: 22,980

In 2005, the citizens of Routt County came together to reevaluate the quality of their community and the direction it was going. With an already established model from their 1994 “Vision 2020” plan, Routt County felt it necessary to engage in an even broader county plan that would include diverse participation and collaboration focusing on affordable housing, agriculture, community character, and natural resources. Together, with the financial support of the City of Steamboat Springs and Routt County, Vision 2030 has been directed by a 30 person assembly named the Citizens Committee.

In the past year, Vision 2030 has developed project objectives and strategies to achieve the overarching goal of continuing a sustainable economy in Routt County. With a plan for the future, Vision 2030 will provide the guidance for Routt County to economically grow while maintaining its rural culture.

## ❁ **Southeast Georgia Regional Development Authority (SEGA RDA)**

**Appling, Bacon, and Jeff Davis County, Georgia**

Populations: 17,419; 10,103; 12,684

The Southeast Georgia Regional Development Authority was created in 1994 as a way to combat the sparse land opportunities and economic decline facing the tri-county area of Appling, Bacon, and Jeff Davis County. With an industrial park as the main objective of the Authority, each of the three counties contributed a one third share of the startup costs with the expectation of an equal revenue share. A key contributing factor to the success of the Authority’s cost and revenue sharing was that all revenues



deriving from a new project and any costs associated with attracting that project's firm would be divided equally regardless of which county landed physically housed the project. By 1997, the Authority had acquired enough funds to purchase its 125-acre site for the regional industrial park. Since then, SEGARD has demonstrated the advantages of regionalism in economic development and formulated a workable approach to resolving the significant difficulties facing any regional project.

### ☼ **Fay-Penn Economic Development Council**

**Fayette County, Pennsylvania**

Population: 148,644

The Fay-Penn Economic Development Council was incorporated in 1991. It was formed to assist in the economic revitalization efforts of Fayette County. As a membership based organization with over 146 members, funding comes from various local, public, and private contributors and foundations, in addition to grant support from Pennsylvania and the federal government for specific projects. All contributions are used to support the economic development revitalization efforts including providing administrative assistance for other economic development organizations and initiatives. The mission of the Fay-Penn Economic Development Council is to maintain and increase employment opportunities in Fayette County in an effort to improve the quality of life for all of its residents. This mission is met through a comprehensive strategy of specific economic development objectives and by providing services to its clients. The organization primarily focuses on the manufacturing sector in addition to a concentration on tourism and infrastructure development.

### ☼ **South Dakota State University Innovation Campus**

**Brookings County, South Dakota**

Population: 30,000

The South Dakota University Innovation campus was created through regional planning and innovative partnerships in Brookings County. This is the first research park developed in the state of South Dakota and it incorporates 125 acres located next door to South Dakota State University. The SDSU Innovation Campus provides a place where people and ideas come together to combine the experiences of university, business, industry and government in an environment



that uses innovation and critical thinking to generate new ideas, promote research, entrepreneurialism, and business mentoring. All together, this provides opportunities to keep the best and brightest in South Dakota.

The South Dakota Innovation Campus is a product of the SDSU Growth Partnership, a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation whose partners include Brookings County, the City of Brookings, Brookings Economic Development Corporation, South Dakota State University, the South Dakota State Foundation and a State Representative. The startup costs for this project were provided through the County, City and EDA funding. The site includes retail and support services, a locally developed 120 unit housing complex called “The Innovation Village,” walking, jogging and biking trails, and open green spaces. All of the private development on the innovation campus becomes a part of our local tax base and is also accessible via public transportation.

## 🌿 Rural Learning Center

**Miner County, South Dakota**

Population: 2,884

Beginning in 1996, a small grassroots campaign for community development led by a group of students from Howard High School helped to serve as a catalyst for the local government creation of the Miner County Community Revitalization. Today, the MCCR is called the Rural Learning Center, and it continues to lead a broader rural movement for sustainability in small rural communities. Since receiving funds from the Northwest Area Foundation in 2001, the Rural Learning Center has produced incredible results in its attempt to improve the Miner County community. Of note, poverty levels have begun to decrease while economic growth is showing throughout the county. An increased amount of living wage jobs have helped to attract and retain younger families leading to the first projected population growth in over 80 years.





Miner County has also begun growing green industries and creating green jobs. Through these initiatives, over 150 living wage jobs (with benefits) have been added to the local economy. Besides job growth, essential services and businesses are returning to Miner County, too. This includes a growing health-care industry that provides career opportunities for local residents and a strengthened economic base.

## ✿ Sustainable Development Action Strategy /STIPS

### **Northampton County, Virginia/Port of Cape Charles**

Population: 13,093

In 1993, Northampton County established its Sustainable Development Action Strategy as a model for economic and environmental sustainability for its community. The anchor of Northampton's sustainable eco-

nomie redevelopment strategy was the Port of Cape Charles Sustainable Technologies Industrial Park (STIP). This site centered on the redevelopment of former industrial land surrounding the town's harbor. The specifics of the plan included roads, utilities, water, sewers, storm water management, and wetland tertiary treatment for water recycling. Economically, the park has helped build a strong and diversified economic base by attracting and growing new companies and by retaining and expanding existing businesses. The companies in the park provide quality jobs with competitive wages, benefits, and opportunities for training and advancement. Environmentally, the park has preserved natural and cultural resources. It has also protected the habitat and water quality while helping to eliminate waste and pollution. Since its creation, Northampton continues to improve the Sustainable Development Action Strategy through green initiatives and sustainability practices.



*For your notes:*

