



NEWS RELEASE

175 BRAVE SUBZERO WEATHER TO ATTEND JOBS FORUM IN ST. LOUIS



The Illinois, Iowa and Missouri offices of USDA Rural Development (RD) and the Farm Service Agency (FSA) hosted a jobs and economic development forum on January 9, 2010 in St. Louis, MO. The forum was incorporated into the three-day Missouri Governor's Conference on Agriculture, hosted by the Missouri State Department of Agriculture.

Missouri State RD Director Janie Dunning welcomed the 175 people in attendance to the Jobs Forum and introduced a video with remarks from USDA Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan. She also highlighted that the forum was a follow-up to the Jobs and Economic Growth forum that President Obama held in the White House on December 3, 2009.

Iowa State RD Director Bill Menner introduced five panelists who made short presentations on jobs related issues: Dr. Jon Hagler, Director of Missouri Department of Agriculture; Elisabeth Buck, Director of Iowa Workforce Development; Randy Harris, Program Director Laborers' International Local 338; Brian Bauer with Business Banking Market Manager for National City Bank; and Sharon Gulick, Director University of Missouri Extension's Community Economic and Entrepreneurial Development (EXCEED) Program.

Illinois State RD Director Colleen Callahan moderated a free-flowing discussion with the audience, speakers, panelists and state directors. Those offering input were: Rob Denson, President, Des Moines Area

Community College; Jerry Courtney, small business owner and member, Iowa Department of Economic Development board of directors; Frank Barnitz, Missouri State Senator; a representative of Pioneer Hi-Bred; Jim Lindenmayer, President Indian Hills Community College in Iowa; Brian Munzlinger, Missouri State Representative; Mark Edelman, Professor of Economics and Director of the Community Vitality Center, Iowa State University; a Workforce Investment Area employee from Western Illinois; the owner of a soybean milling company from Missouri; a Missouri small business owner who has struggled to get bank financing; a Mount Pleasant, Iowa small business owner and entrepreneurship advocate; and, a college student/Missouri state 4H treasurer.

Some of the “key” things presented on the impact of jobs and the economic conditions centered around enhanced opportunities to promote the “spirit of entrepreneurship” through incentives, technical assistance and capital; more use of collaboration on a regional basis to attract businesses; streamlining of government regulations and red tape for start up businesses plus improvements in tax code; more lenders willing to utilize government guarantees or other programs to help new or expanding businesses; more funding for jobs training to help with “skilling up” the workforce; more funding for summer youth programs; expansion of high speed rural broadband access; more funding for ethanol and bio-diesel programs; continued high levels of funding for RD infrastructure programs to sustain rural communities and provide for a high quality of life in rural areas to help maintain and attract businesses and jobs for skilled workers.

USDA heard a wide array of comments from representatives of local government, non-profit and community organizations, organized labor, small business, education, and agriculture, as well as economic, business and workforce development. A report of the ideas will be submitted to USDA Secretary Vilsack and President Obama.

Others with ideas can share their comments by posting on the USDA Blog website at www.usda.gov/blog/usda or submitting via e-mail to jobsforum@ia.usda.gov.

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