

Journal #2532

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Sagebrush Conversations

Call for Applications: Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services Program

Feds Will Team up on Digital Curation Residency Program

Library Conferences

AI/AN Education Summit

SBA Emerging 200 Initiative

Native Farmers in Mexico Help Drive Local Eco-Friendly Farming

Tracking How the World Guzzles Water

Interracial Marriage Rates Soar As Stereotypes Fall

One in four recent Nevada marriages interracial, third highest rate in the U.S.

GrantStation

Arizona tribe votes to manage Skywalk

Obama Administration Announces Steps to Boost the Rural Economy, Promote Job Creation

Discovery Museum is hiring! Check 'em out...

Employment opportunities | Terry Lee Wells Nevada Discovery Museum - A children's museum in Reno. <http://www.nvdm.org/about/employment.php>

Sagebrush Conversations

Local experts and authors discuss Nevada's physical and cultural environment with the current Special Collections exhibit Where the Sage Meets the Sky: Great Basin Landscapes

February 26 at 3 pm

Mapping the Great Basin

Linda Newman, UNR Geoscience & Map Librarian Emerita

February 29 at 7 pm

Collecting Testimonials About Wild Nevada

Scott Stovic, UNR Core Writing Program

Roberta Moore, Ranger (ret), Great Basin National Park

Programs are at the UNR Knowledge Center. There is no admission charge, but reservations are suggested:

Call for Applications: Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services Program

IMLS is accepting applications in the Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services grant program, with a deadline of April 2, 2012. [Read More](#)

Call for Applications: Native American Library Services: Enhancement Grants Program

IMLS is accepting applications in the Native American Library Services: Enhancement Grants program, with a deadline of May 1, 2012. [Read More](#)

The next **AI/AN Education Summit** is scheduled for **March 19 & 20, 2012** at the University of Nevada, Reno. The Summit offers training to Nevada's educators, and provides information and resources on our tribes in Nevada. Keynote speaker for the 2012 Summit is D. J. "Eagle Bear" Vanas, motivational storyteller, leadership expert, author and warrior. A link to the Agenda as well as each of the Summit Registration, Application and Nomination forms is found below. The Agenda will be reposted as updates are made.

This year, ten scholarships to attend the AI/AN Summit are available. If you are an educator or know of an educator who should attend the Summit but may not be able to afford it, please submit a nomination, using the Scholarship Nomination form. The Summit also features arts & crafts and informational vendors. Space is limited, but if you are interested in applying as a vendor, please complete and submit the Vendor Application form. Vendor applications are accepted on a first come, first served basis.

- [Agenda \(pdf\)](#)

Josephine Kelly-Lachner, M.S.W.

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SBA Emerging 200 Initiative

The Emerging Leaders (e200) Initiative is the only federal training initiative that specifically focuses on executives of established businesses, currently poised for growth, from communities across the country and provides them the organizational framework, resource network, and motivation required to build a sustainable business of size and scale. SBA's continued outreach in these historically challenged areas has resulted in entrepreneurial success that generates new jobs, attracts investment, and provides a more sustainable economic base in distressed areas. The e200 Initiative incorporates a proven curriculum that is research-based and nationally scalable (expanding from 10 to 27 communities since 2008) which enables the participating businesses to engage in focused development and expansion strategies for their business, including options for accessing new capital and securing government contracts. Over the course of seven months, participants will also have the opportunity to work with experienced mentors, attend specialized workshops and develop connections with their peers, city leaders, and the financial community. The e200 Initiative is based on available funding and currently hosted in 27 underserved and communities listed below:

[Watch a short video about the e200 program here.](#)

FY12 Participating District Office Websites

Native American E200 Communities:

- [Albuquerque, NM](#)
- [Farmington, NM](#)
- [Helena, MT](#)
- [Honolulu, HI](#)
- [Milwaukee WI](#)
- [Phoenix, AZ](#)

- [Rapid City, SD](#)
- [Santa Ana, CA](#)
- [Spokane, WA](#)
- [Tulsa, OK](#)

Contact the Emerging 200 Program by emailing e200@sba.gov.

Native Farmers in Mexico Help Drive Local Eco-Friendly Farming

By Emilio Godoy

The largely invisible work of small local groups of indigenous farmers in Mexico who are spearheading the defense of their territory and identity and of native seeds is strengthening ecologically sound family farming, experts say.

"For thousands of years, indigenous people have been responsible for developing agricultural biodiversity," Narciso Barrera, a researcher at the public Autonomous University of Tlaxcala in southern Mexico, told IPS. "However, these efforts remain basically invisible, and they should be highlighted and linked with other local movements."

Since 2000, Barrera has worked on mapping Mexican political ecology, a discipline that studies the relationships between political, economic and social factors and environmental issues and changes.

By this means he has been able to identify, for instance, the actions of at least 50 local indigenous or mestizo (mixed ancestry) groups, and at least 150 corn festivals celebrating maize, a staple food that is traditionally revered in Mexico and Central America.

Barrera has identified the main leaders of community projects, including women, Catholic Church social action groups and elders.

"We have won the confidence of the people, who are receiving technical advice and information about their rights, for both men and women," Claudia López, an accountant for a coalition of community organizations in the southern state of Oaxaca, told IPS.

"We are concerned about food security and sovereignty, so that people can grow what they eat, and about water, gender issues and natural resources," she said, with respect to the focus of the activities of the [Sierra de Juárez Union of Organisations](#) (UNOSJO).

UNOSJO, founded in 1992, is made up of 12 indigenous communities, whose members have learned agroecological practices and apply them in coffee, vegetable and maize cultivation as well as in rearing small livestock like pigs and chickens.

The producers export certified organic coffee to Germany, as well as meeting their own needs.

The basis of these initiatives is the [family farm](#), regarded as essential for weathering the environmental, economic and nutritional crisis affecting this Latin American country.

In Mexico, family farms with an average area of six hectares apiece provide the livelihood of five million people, out of a national population of over 112 million. They supply 39 percent of total national agricultural and livestock production and provide 70 percent of agricultural jobs, according to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

In December 2011, the United Nations General Assembly declared 2014 the International Year of Family Farming, in recognition of the key role of small farms for supplying food and incomes to billions of peasant farmers all over the world.

Securing a supply of healthy food, free from chemical additives and other pollutants, is the focus of a group of women who created the [Comida Sana y Cercana](#) (Healthy Local Food) Network of Responsible Farmers and Consumers in San Cristóbal de las Casas in the southern state of Chiapas in 2005.

The organization comprises 32 families producing coffee, maize, vegetables, wheat, and small livestock.

"We decided to take action to ensure that the food we brought home was healthy," Lourdes Pérez, one of the group's leaders, told IPS. "We started to investigate and we found that some farmers were growing crops organically, using spring water and no chemical inputs.

"Then we started the organic food basket, a system for people to place orders from a list of products that the group markets collectively," she explained.

Members of the network set up their stalls on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays at a market established in 2007, to sell their food to local consumers. At first they had 15 products for sale, but the variety has now increased to over 50 kinds of food.

In 2011 the Comida Sana y Cercana network started a participative certification process to validate the agroecological practices of its members. As a result, this February they are about to issue their first endorsement, to a family that produces avocado pears and other fruits, and raises small livestock.

The producers and consumers' organisation also belongs to REDAC, the Mexican Network of Organic Markets and Tianguis (street markets), founded in 2004, which has 20 markets throughout Mexico that foment close links between rural producers and urban consumers.

These organizations promote markets that drive local production and consumption of organic foods, and contribute to raising awareness of the ecological and social importance of responsible production and consumption.

Another 18 markets are in the process of joining REDAC.

"Agroecology is the key, because it encompasses social aspects, education, economics and farming practices," said Barrera, who has published the results of his studies in the Spanish journal *Papeles de Relaciones Ecosociales y Cambio Global* (Papers on Eco Social Relations and Global Change).

One of the driving forces behind the local organizations has been their opposition to the use of genetically modified seeds, especially maize.

Since 2009, the ministry of agriculture has received 110 applications to plant [genetically modified maize](#) in experimental plots, 67 of which have been authorized, along with 11 pilot projects on a somewhat larger scale. Transgenic crops of cotton, soy and wheat are also being grown, with wheat so far only being planted in experimental plots.

On his ecopolitical map of Mexico, Barrera has identified 22 priority regions for native maize cultivation, of which 11 are threatened by signs of transgenic contamination.

"Our concerns are issues like mining and protecting natural resources," said López, whose organization belongs to the Network for the Defence of Native Maize.

In four Oaxaca communities, UNOSJO is building rainwater collection systems to help cope with drought. The Sierra de Juárez Union has received funding from two U.S. groups, the CS Fund and Warsh-Mott Legacy and Grassroots International, and from the German agency Brot für die Welt (Bread for the World).

"Our aim is to help strengthen local markets, economic development and food sovereignty," said Pérez, who joined the Comida Sana y Cercana Network of Responsible Farmers and Consumers in 2006. "Steady demand has been ensured for farmers and, for consumers, healthy food."

"The toughest challenge is to redirect demand so as to elicit ecologically sustainable production," she said.

This article was published at NationofChange at: <http://www.nationofchange.org/native-farmers-mexico-help-drive-local-eco-friendly-farming-1329755460>. All rights are reserved.

[Tracking How the World Guzzles Water](#)

[Joanna M. Foster, New York Times](#)

With the world's freshwater supplies under mounting pressure from pollution and galloping consumption, understanding the how, where and why of water use is more important than ever.

Interracial Marriage Rates Soar As Stereotypes Fall

Carol Morello, The Washington Post

Morello reports: "The prevalence of intermarriage in and around the Washington area reflects demographic changes that are pushing interracial marriage rates to an all-time high in the United States while toppling historical taboos among younger people." [READ MORE](#)

One in four recent Nevada marriages interracial, third highest rate in the U.S.

NYT Feb. 16, 2012

One in four recent Nevada marriages is interracial or interethnic, the third-highest rate in the nation, according to a Pew Center report released ...

GrantStation

National Funding Opportunities

Support for Physical Activity Programs for Youth [Active Schools Acceleration Project](#)

The Active Schools Acceleration Project (ASAP) Innovation Competition seeks to increase quality in-school physical activity by identifying the best strategies to motivate quality youth physical activity programs and technologies. The following two competition categories are offered: The School Programs category is open to teams of K-12 educators who are involved with an innovative physical activity program in their school or district. Up to ten regional winners will receive \$25,000 to support their programs, with two national winners receiving \$100,000. The Technology Innovation category supports technology applications that motivate and support daily physical activity at school and beyond. Public and private companies and individuals are eligible to apply. Two Grand Prize Winners will work with researchers to have their technology piloted in a school-based environment. In addition, the winners each receive an award of \$50,000. The application deadline is April 2, 2012. Visit the ASAP website for application details.

Sustainable Society Initiatives Funded [Charles Stewart Mott Foundation](#)

The mission of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation is to support efforts that promote a just, equitable, and sustainable society. The Foundation provides grants through the following four programs: The Pathways Out of Poverty program supports national initiatives that strive to move low-income people along the road to self-sufficiency through access to education and economic empowerment. The Civil Society program supports efforts to assist in democratic institution-building and ensure respect of rights and diversity both in the U.S. and internationally. The Environment program promotes models of development that protect the diversity of selected ecosystems in North America and around the world. The Flint Area program provides support to local community organizations in the Foundation's hometown of Flint, MI. Each of these four programs has clearly stated guidelines, and grantseekers are strongly encouraged to visit the Foundation's website to review this information before submitting an online letter of inquiry.

Grants Promote Youth Baseball [Baseball Tomorrow Fund](#)

The mission of the Baseball Tomorrow Fund (BTF), a joint initiative between Major League Baseball and the Major League Baseball Players Association, is to promote the growth of youth baseball/softball in the United States and throughout the world by funding programs that encourage youth participation in the game. Grants may be used to finance a new program, expand or improve an existing program, undertake a new collaborative effort, or obtain facilities or equipment necessary for youth baseball or softball programs. Grants average around \$40,000. Letters of inquiry may be submitted throughout the year. Invited grant applications are due January 1, April 1, July 1, and October 1, annually. Visit the BTF website to learn more about the grant criteria and application process.

Language Preservation Projects Supported Worldwide [Endangered Language Fund](#)

The goal of the Endangered Language Fund is to support endangered language preservation and documentation projects throughout the world. The Fund provides grants of up to \$4,000 for

language maintenance and linguistic field work, with emphasis on work that serves both the native community and the field of linguistics. The language involved must be in danger of disappearing within a generation or two. Researchers and language activists from any country are eligible to apply. Institutions are eligible to apply for grants, but no administrative costs are covered. Applications must be received by April 20, 2012. The request for proposals is available on the Fund's website.

Regional Funding Opportunities

Funds for Children's Programs in New England

[Boston Bruins Foundation](#)

The mission of the Boston Bruins Foundation is to assist nonprofit organizations that demonstrate a strong commitment to enhancing the quality of life for children throughout New England. The Foundation concentrates its grantmaking on the following four areas: The Athletic category focuses on nonprofit youth sports organizations. The Academic category supports programs that provide homework assistance and a safe learning environment to develop social and learning skills for pre-school, primary, and middle school children. The Health category addresses research, healthcare, and prevention issues. The Community Outreach category enhances organizations that are working with at-risk youth, including after-school activities. The application deadline is April 1, 2012. Visit the Bruin's website to learn more about the Foundation and to download the application form.

Grants Enhance Open Spaces in Selected States

[Laura Jane Musser Fund: Environmental Initiative](#)

The Laura Jane Musser Fund encourages collaborative and participatory efforts among citizens in communities in Colorado, Hawaii, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wyoming. The Fund's Environmental Initiative supports projects that enhance the ecological integrity of publicly owned open spaces, while encouraging compatible human activities. The goal is to promote public use of open space that improves a community's quality of life and public health, while also ensuring the protection of healthy, viable, and sustainable ecosystems by protecting or restoring habitat for a diversity of plant and animal species. Grants of up to \$35,000 are awarded for new or existing programs, programs in the planning or implementation phase, and capital expenses. Applications must be postmarked by March 21, 2012. Visit the Fund's website to review the application guidelines.

Support for Organizations that Serve Kentuckians

[Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels Grant Program](#)

The Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels Grant Program supports nonprofit organizations that provide services to the citizens of the state of Kentucky. Areas of grantmaking interest include: arts and culture; services for the handicapped and needy; the preservation of documents, history, and environment; educational programs; humane societies; senior citizen services; day care services; life enrichment services; and scouting and youth programs. Requests for application forms for the 2012 funding cycle may be submitted through March 25, 2012. Grant guidelines are available on the Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels website.

Watershed Protection Programs in Pennsylvania Funded

[Water Resources Education Network: Watershed Education Grant Program](#)

The Water Resources Education Network (WREN) is a nonpartisan collaboration among

organizations and public officials working for the protection and management of Pennsylvania's water resources, both surface and ground water, through grassroots education and informed policymaking. The WREN Watershed Education Grant Program supports projects that educate Pennsylvania citizens and local officials about how to protect, improve, or remediate the watershed from the impacts of nonpoint source pollution. Grants of up to \$5,000 are awarded to partnerships of local or regional organizations, such as watershed associations, civic groups, community water systems, governmental entities, and other public interest organizations. The application deadline is March 23, 2012. Visit the WREN website to download the application instructions and forms.

Federal Grant and Loan Programs

Funds for a Membership Organization of Nonprofit Missing Children's Organizations

Department of Justice

The Membership Support Services for Nonprofit Missing Children's Organizations Program provides support to develop or sustain a membership organization of nonprofit organizations that serve the families of missing and exploited children, provide resources to law enforcement and community agencies that serve missing and exploited children, improve public awareness and education about child protection, and coordinate and improve strategies for recovery and investigation of cases involving missing and exploited children. The application deadline is March 19, 2012.

Collaborative Efforts Addressing Youth Substance Abuse Funded

Department of Health and Human Services

The Drug Free Communities Support Program provides support to activities with a primary focus on establishing and strengthening collaboration in support of the efforts of community coalitions working to prevent and reduce substance use among youth (individuals 18 years of age and younger). In addition, proposed activities should have a primary focus on reducing substance abuse among adults over time by addressing the factors in a community that increase the risk of substance abuse and promoting the factors that minimize the risk of substance abuse. The application deadline is March 22, 2012.

Grants Support Innovative Practices to Enhance the Public Workforce System

Department of Labor

The Workforce Innovation Fund provides support for innovative approaches to the design and delivery of employment and training services that generate long-term improvements in the performance of the public workforce system, both in terms of outcomes for job seeker and employer customers and cost-effectiveness. Specifically, the objective of support is to facilitate changes in structures and policies that enable a closer alignment and integration of workforce development, education, human services, social insurance, and economic development programs. The application deadline is March 22, 2012.

Public Transportation Asset Management Activities Supported **Department of Transportation**

The State of Good Repair Initiative provides support for the recapitalization of buses and bus facilities in order to improve the condition of transit capital assets. Priority will be given to the replacement and rehabilitation of intermodal facilities that support the connection of bus service with multiple modes of transportation, including rail, ferry, intercity bus, and private

transportation providers, as well as the development and implementation of new, or improvement of existing, transit asset management systems. The application deadline is March 22, 2012.

Arizona tribe votes to manage Skywalk

Related Content

- [Tribe seeks apology from Skywalk developer](#)
- [Tribal judge dismisses Grand Canyon Skywalk lawsuit](#)
- [Another side to Skywalk dispute](#)
- [Grand Canyon tourist attraction beset by legal wrangling](#)
- [Fear and Loafing: Replacing Glass at Skywalk](#)
- [Grand Canyon Skywalk faces rocky path](#)
- [Grand Canyon Skywalk glass floor being replaced](#)
- [Skywalk and Grand Canyon West](#)
- [Workers replace glass panels on Skywalk at Grand Canyon](#)
- [Grand Canyon Skywalk's glass bottom being replaced with panes from Spain](#)

By FELICIA FONSECA THE ASSOCIATED PRESS Feb. 9, 2012 | 1:59 a.m.

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. -- A northwestern Arizona tribe has voted to take over management of the Grand Canyon Skywalk from the Las Vegas developer who built it.

David Jin partnered with the Hualapai Tribe to build the horseshoe-shaped glass bridge that juts out from the Grand Canyon on the reservation. But the two sides have been locked in a contract dispute for the past year over revenue shares and an incomplete visitor center.

The Tribal Council voted Tuesday to declare eminent domain over the management contract and provide \$11 million in compensation to Jin. The amount is about one-tenth of what Jin has said is fair market value for his \$30 million investment.

Mark Tratos, Jin's attorney, said the tribe terminated the contract to avoid an arbiter's order issued last week to produce financial documents and relevant witnesses by Friday.

"Clearly, this is an effort to sidestep any type of judicial oversight," Tratos said in a statement. "They want all decisions to be made only by tribal judges that they hire, fire and pay; and have resisted all efforts to have an independent judge or arbiter fairly review the facts."

Tratos said the tribe's decision to exercise eminent domain was made despite a 2003 agreement in which the tribe waived its right to declare eminent domain. Disputes would instead be settled through binding arbitration, he said.

The tribe said the action was taken because of Jin's refusal to meet his contractual obligations.

"The Tribe did not ask for this dispute," Hualapai Tribal Councilman Charles Vaughn said in a statement. "But we have made a sincere effort through private negotiations with Mr. Jin, and he still refuses to make the most basic concessions and complete the work he promised. His participation has been unproductive and created countless delays. At this point, there are simply no other options."

The Tribal Council passed an eminent domain ordinance last year that Jin suspected was aimed at him. He went to federal court to try to keep the tribe from severing the Skywalk contract under the ordinance, but the judge said the tribe had not sought to enforce it and told Jin he must first exhaust tribal court remedies.

Jin approached the Hualapai Tribe in 1996 with a plan to build the Skywalk with his own money. The attraction just west of Grand Canyon National Park has about 300,000 visitors a year and is a major tourist draw for the tribe.

The Skywalk extends 70 feet from the canyon rim about 4,000 feet above the Colorado River. It is designed to withstand 100 mph winds and has shock absorbers to keep the walkway from wobbling as people pass over.

Under an agreement with the tribe, Jin is supposed to split revenues with the tribe for 25 years in exchange for his investment.

Jin has said in court documents that he believes the tribe's motivation in passing the ordinance is to avoid the embarrassment of explaining how ticket revenues evaporated under its watch and to keep from paying him what he is owed.

"The taking vote reinforces our belief that the tribe is terrified of having the truth revealed to the public of the mismanagement of its own funds and un-willingness to account for the reasonable or fair value of the highly successful Skywalk operations," Tratos said.

The tribe denied that was the case and reiterated its stance Wednesday that Jin hasn't fulfilled contractual obligations to complete a visitor center that tourists must pass through to access the Skywalk and failed to account for funding.

Tratos said: "Mr. Jin has not received an adequate accounting or distributions for management fees for his operation of the Skywalk" since 2008. He said the vote was "a desperate attempt to avoid paying Mr. Jin the millions of dollars of management fees he is presently owed and break his 25-year management contract."

Las Vegas Review-Journal reporter Doug McMurdo contributed to this report.

THE WHITE HOUSE *Office of the Press Secretary* FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 2.21.12

We Can't Wait: Obama Administration Announces Steps to Boost the Rural Economy, Promote Job Creation

WASHINGTON, DC – As part of the Obama Administration’s “We Can’t Wait” efforts to strengthen the economy, create jobs and support business growth, Administration officials announced three significant actions to expand the government’s purchase of biobased products, promote regional rural job creation efforts, and develop a rural healthcare workforce, all of which build on the historic investments the Administration has made in rural America over the past three years. Today’s announcements are the latest in a series of executive actions the Obama Administration is taking to strengthen the economy and move the country forward because we can’t wait for Congress to act.

“My Administration is committed to using every tool available to promote economic growth and create good jobs in rural America,” said **President Obama**. “Today’s announcements reflect our continued focus on expanding opportunity for rural Americans and all Americans, including supporting new and innovative businesses, and improving rural health care and education. And the actions we’re taking today are possible thanks to the feedback and ideas I’ve received from hardworking Americans across rural America, including the participants at the White House Rural Economic Forum.”

“President Obama understands that a strong American economy is tied to a healthy, vibrant rural economy,” said **Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack**, who chairs the White House Rural Council. “The actions we are taking will bring new economic investments to our rural communities, to ensure the people who live in these towns have a better, brighter future.”

The three announcements were recommended by federal agencies participating in the White House Rural Council, and leverage existing programs and funding, but the new actions will expedite job creation in rural parts of the country.

“This Administration will not be satisfied until everyone who wants a job, has a job – both in rural and urban communities,” said **Commerce Secretary John Bryson**. “Today’s announcements are just the latest example of federal partners aligning all of their efforts and resources to help businesses grow, create jobs, and ensure that our economy is built to last.”

“Health information technology has the potential to improve the quality, access, and efficiency of health care delivery, especially in our nation’s rural areas. To achieve this aim, it is essential that we have a skilled health IT workforce,” said **Mary Wakefield**, PhD., R.N., Administrator of the Health Resources and Services Administration. “This memorandum of understanding with our colleagues at the Department of Labor will build on existing collaborations to help ease the challenges of geographic isolation and staff shortages faced by rural communities and help move us toward our mutual goal of Health IT workforce development.”

“There is a real need to expand the rural health IT workforce and our MOU with the Department of Health and Human Services will help ensure that job training programs are quickly and effectively addressing this need,” said Assistant Secretary for Employment and Training Administration **Jane Oates**.

New initiatives being announced today include:

- ***Promoting A Bioeconomy:*** President Obama issued a Presidential Memorandum today directing the Federal Government to take decisive steps to dramatically increase the purchase of biobased products over the next two years, which will create jobs and drive innovation where biobased products are grown and manufactured. The Memorandum will also result in a 50 percent increase in the number of new products that are designated as biobased. Biobased products include items like paints, soaps and detergents and are developed from farm grown plants, rather than chemicals or petroleum bases. The biobased products sector marries the two most important economic engines for rural America: agriculture and manufacturing.
- ***Rural Jobs Accelerator:*** The Rural Jobs Accelerator is a national competition that will provide about \$15 million for projects that promote innovation-fueled regional job creation. The competition will combine funding from the USDA, the Economic Development Administration (EDA), Delta Regional Authority and the Appalachian Regional Commission. Additionally, this approach will require multiple agencies to coordinate technical assistance and grant / loan programs so that potential rural customers have a single access point within the Federal government to mobilize the resources of the government to help a region of the country. USDA will utilize the Rural Community Development Initiative (RCDI) program to support this effort and provide technical assistance and training funds to qualified intermediary organizations to develop their capacity to undertake housing, community facilities, and community and economic development projects in rural areas. The Federal Funding Opportunity will be released in the next few weeks.
- ***Rural Health IT Workforce:*** The Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Labor signed a memorandum of understanding to connect community colleges and technical colleges that support rural communities with the materials and resources they need to support the training of Health Information Technology (HIT) professionals that work in rural hospitals and clinics. The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that the needed HIT workforce will increase by 20 percent by 2016.

Over the last month, the Obama Administration has made several additional announcements resulting from the White House Rural Council's efforts, including an initiative to help rural homeowners refinance their mortgages at lower interest rates and a new forest restoration framework to drive economic growth and job creation through timber restoration and harvest. The new plan would place federal agencies on a path toward increasing federal timber harvests to 3 billion board feet.

Since August 2011, the White House Rural Council has supported a broad spectrum of rural initiatives including a \$350 million commitment in SBA funding to rural small businesses over the next 5 years, launching a series of conferences to connect investors with rural start-ups, creating capital marketing teams to pitch federal funding opportunities to private investors interested in making rural investments, making job search information available at 2,800 local USDA offices nationwide, making HHS loans available to help more than 1,300 Critical Access Hospitals recruit additional staff, and helping rural hospitals purchase software and hardware to implement health IT. USDA and Navy also announced a partnership to advance the use of next generation biofuels in Navy operations.