



Rural Development Leadership Network

EARN A DEGREE WHILE WORKING IN RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The Rural Development Leadership Network is a national multicultural organization that supports community-based development in poor rural areas through hands-on projects, education and skills building, leadership development and networking. Through RDLN, emerging leaders from poor rural areas spearhead development projects and design related study through which they may earn a certificate or academic credential.

THE PROGRAM

Duration: 18–36 Months. Demanding curriculum includes: Field Project implementation, related independent study, RDLN Rural Development Institute (4½ weeks) for intensive study, exchange and networking. Qualified participants may earn a certificate or master's degree. (We are willing to work with schools for bachelor's or PhD.)

Each RDLN Leader works with the guidance of a Field Advisor and Study Advisors. Each has a Sponsoring Organization, which serves as an umbrella for the Field Project and contributes financially to RDLN. The amount required is \$3,500 (Certificate) – \$20,000 (M.A. option, subject to change). Travel, accommodation, textbooks and other miscellaneous costs are not included in this cost.

RURAL DEVELOPMNT INSTITUTE

RDLN Leaders work with teams of field and study advisors and participate in RDLN's month-long Rural Development Institute, which is held at the University of California at Davis, sharing knowledge, culture, regional experience and programmatic expertise. The Institute experience parallels a curriculum in Community Development. The seminars include four mini-courses: Macro and Microeconomics and Economic Development, Overview of Rural Areas, and Tools for Rural Development. The RDLN Institute is held approximately every other year.

CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

Applicants must demonstrate the following:

1. Proven dedication to community-based rural community development.
2. Completed a B.A. degree for the master's program.
3. Commitment to building relationships with other rural people and communities.
4. Willingness to report regularly to RDLN.
5. Ability to work cooperatively and in a self-directed, self-motivated way.
6. Presentation of a feasible and valuable RDLN Community Development Project.
7. Sponsorship by an organization which can make the required programmatic & financial contribution to RDLN.

APPLY NOW

The application is available on our website: www.ruraldevelopment.org/rdlninstitute2026.html. While your application is being processed, you may continue identifying funds for the Sponsoring Organization contribution.

Contact: Rural Development Leadership Network, P.O. Box 241246, Montgomery, AL 36119

(334) 261-9320 • rdln@ruraldevelopment.org • www.ruraldevelopment.org

Rural Development Leadership Network

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Submit your application to RDLN and include: autobiographical essay describing previous work in rural community development, outline of proposed RDLN Field Project and study program, resume, other background material, three letters of recommendation, and academic transcripts. RDLN will conduct a virtual interview with finalists.

SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS

Sponsoring Organizations will be asked to commit programmatic, financial, and logistical support for the RDLN Leader you sponsor. Please write to RDLN with the organization name and contact; and name of the person you are sponsoring. RDLN will send an agreement form to the sponsoring organization. We will brainstorm and cooperate with interested people about possible funding sources.

ACADEMIC PARTNERS

RDLN's academic partners for the master's degree are Antioch University and Kansas State University. Applications to the schools can be found here: Antioch University: <https://www.antioch.edu/apply/apply-to-auonline/>, Kansas State University: <http://www.online.k-state.edu/programs/community-development-masters/>. Tuition ranges from approximately \$15,000 to \$20,000 for the master's degree.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Moises Loza (Chair), Former Executive Director, Housing Assistance Council (DC)
Shirley Sherrod (Vice Chair), Co-Founder and Executive Director, The Sherrod Institute (GA)
John Zippert (Treasurer), Program Director Emeritus, Federation of Southern Cooperatives (AL)
Mily Treviño-Sauceda (Secretary), Executive Director, Lideres Campesinas (CA)
Twila Martin-Kekahbah (Parliamentarian), Former Chair, Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa (ND)

FUNDING SOURCES

RDLN has received support from the United States Department of Agriculture, New Communities, Maya & Kit Miller/Orchard House Foundation, Network for Good, Fund4Democratic Communities, Wells Fargo Housing Foundation, Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, Ms. Foundation, Ford Foundation, CHS Foundation, W. K. Kellogg Foundation, Presbyterian Hunger Program, Southern Partners Fund, Hitachi Foundation, Veatch Fund, BankAmerica Foundation, Hearst Foundation, Theodore R. & Vivian M. Johnson Foundation, Avon Foundation, Public Welfare Foundation, Funding Exchange, New World Foundation, Campaign for Human Development, Foundation for the Mid South, Sister Fund, Pandey & Pim Goodbody, Dominican Sisters, Xerox Foundation, John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, James Irvine Foundation, Joyce Mertz-Gilmore Foundation, Sascha Rockefeller, AT&T Foundation, Apple Community Affairs, Marianist Sharing Fund, Church Women United, ACBE, National Rural Funders Collaborative, Sponsoring Organizations, and individuals.



RDLN Rural Development Institute Application

Full Name *

First Name

Last Name

Mailing Address *

Street Address

Street Address Line 2

City

State / Province

Postal / Zip Code

Phone Number *

Please enter a valid phone number.

Email Address *

example@example.com

Date of Birth *

Month Day Year

Organizational Affiliation Project *

Focus Name of Community (geographic area) *

Major Population Group *

Major Economic Activity *

Who are the Poor People here? *

Percentage in Population *

Sources of Income *

Major Problems/Issues/Obstacles *

Please attach your resume and list of references(at least 3).

How to Submit Your Application

Online (preferred): <https://form.jotform.com/260984412631053>

By Mail: RDLN, P.O. Box 241246, Montgomery, AL 36119

Phone: (334) 261-9320

Email: rdln@ruraldevelopment.org

RDLN LEADERS AND SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS

Group I: Leticia Carreón (Housing Assistance Council), Yvonne Hampton (Southern Rural Women's Network), Earnest Johnson (Federation of Southern Cooperatives), Birgil Kills Straight (First Nations Financial Project), Kathy (Murray) Supernaw (Delaware Tribe of Western Oklahoma), Shirley Sherrod (Federation of Southern Cooperatives), Ben Tafoya (Rio Grande Center), Shoua Vang (Hmong/Highlander Development Fund/Indo China Resource Action Center), and Jadine Whitaker (Institute for Community Education and Training).

Group II: Francisca Cavazos (Maricopa County Organizing Project), Hector Correa (Institute for Community Development Education and Training/Producir), Jack Guillebeaux (FOCAL), Robert Jackson (Quitman County Development Organization), C.J. Jones (The Mendenhall Ministries), Winona LaDuke (Seventh Generation Fund), and Teri Vautrin (Dungannon Development Commission).

Group III: Cleo Askew (PLBA Housing Development Corporation/Federation of Southern Cooperatives), James Banks (Self-Help Enterprises), Minnie Bommer (Community Resource Group), Cynthia Ellis (Agricultural Missions/Belize Rural Women's Association), Humberto Fuentes (Idaho Migrant Council), Julie Moss (Cherokee Nation), Diane Padilla (Merced County Office of Strategic and Economic Development/Mexican-American Chamber of Commerce), and Anna (Wright) Huff (Boys, Girls, Adults Community Development Center).

Group IV: Hector DeLeon (Idaho Migrant Council), Meredith Dean (Appalachian People's Service Organization), Linda Maria Hedstrom (Rural Communities Housing Development Corporation), Shirley Ortega (Saguache County Community Council), and Marilyn Savage (Gwandak Broadcasting Corporation).

Group V: Beverly Brown (Highlander Center), Jorge Diaz (Housing Assistance Council), NKwanda Jah (Central Florida Community Action Agency/Cultural Arts Coalition), Carol Jorgensen (Native American Fish & Wildlife Society/Alaska region), Alice Paris (Federation of Southern Cooperatives), and Mily Treviño-Sauceda (California Rural Legal Assistance/CRLA Foundation).

Group VI: Leon Clark (Boys, Girls Adults Community Development Center), Karen Derry (Karuk Community Development Corporation), Sylvia Joyner (Voice of Calvary Ministry), Trong Dang Khoa (Nordic Assistance to Vietnam), Anita LaRan (Helping Hands/La Jicarita Enterprise Community), Shirley McClain (North Carolina Hunger Network).

Group VII: Mike Acosta (Community Council of Southwest Texas), Martha Beatty (North Carolina Hunger Network), Meredith Coleman (Federation of Southern Cooperatives), Nancy Warneke (Salish Kootenai College).

Group VIII: Evelyn Conley (Cherokee Nation), Emma Dixon (Third Baptist District), Suzanne Kinkade (Salish Kootenai College), Zana McDonald (Blackfeet Community College), Arlene Valdez (Ganados del Valle).

Group IX: Monica Caye (Ktunaxa Community Development Corporation), Lillie Fields (National Museum of Voting Rights), Geraldine Hewankorn (Ktunaxa Community Development Corporation), Rose Hill (Coalition of Alabamians Reforming Education), Carol Judy (Woodland Community Land Trust), Naida Lefthand (Ktunaxa Community Development Corporation).

Group IX (cont.): Clarissa Nichols (Ktunaxa Community Development Corporation), Edith Richardson (Maine Coalition for Food Security), Lillie Webb (Center for Community Development), Gayle Zapeda (Northern Circle Indian Housing Authority).

Group X: Michelle Cole (Cole Evangelical Ministries), Scherri Greene (ONOBEN, Inc.), Sarah Hidalgo-Cook (Community Council of Southwest Texas); Angie Main (Native American Development Corporation), Tirso Moreno (Farmworker Association of Florida), Chukou Thao (National Hmong American Farmers).

Group XI: Trina Cunningham (Maidu Summit Group), Yolanda Garibay (Big Valley Rancheria), Theresa Isley (Sanford Arts Coalition), Tony Jack (Big Valley Rancheria), Maria Moreira (Heifer Project), Euneika Rogers (Black Freedmen's Living Historical Farm for Children), Lydia Villanueva (CASA del Llano).

Group XII: Mapy Alvarez (Rural Coalition), Maya Crooks (Mississippi Association of Cooperatives), Oleta Fitzgerald (Southern Rural Black Women's Initiative – SRBWI), Dorothy Grady-Scarborough (Mississippians Engaged in Greener Agriculture – MEGA), Darnella Winston (Mississippi Association of Cooperatives).

Ph.D. Graduates: Michele Lansdowne and Lisa Little Chief Bryan



APPLICATION
DEADLINE
**APRIL 17
2026**

RECRUITING RURAL LEADERS

Earn a Degree While Working in
Rural Community Development

*Are you a rural leader looking to strengthen
your impact while investing in yourself and
your community?*

The Rural Development Leadership Network (RDLN) is recruiting rural Leaders for the 2026 Rural Development Institute at the University of California, Davis from May 22–June 20, 2026.

QUALIFIED PARTICIPANTS MAY EARN A CERTIFICATE OR A MASTER'S DEGREE BY:

- ✓ Implementing a practical field project in their community
- ✓ Pursuing related independent study
- ✓ Participating in the month-long Rural Development Institute

ACADEMIC PARTNERS:

Kansas State University
and Antioch University

COSTS:

Degree tuition is approximately **\$20,000**. The Institute fee is **\$3,500**, plus travel and accommodations.

PROGRAM DURATION:

18-36 Months.

*Participants receive mentoring
and work under the umbrella
of a sponsoring organization.*



Apply to be an RDLN Leader

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- 🌐 www.ruraldevelopment.org

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