



NREDA News Brief | February 2026

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President's Message

By Karla Organist, President, National Rural Economic Developers Association



It is truly an honor to serve as President of the National Rural Economic Developers Association. I am sincerely grateful to Past President Lisa Hurley for her steady leadership and commitment to NREDA. She guided this organization with care and integrity and as Past President she will continue to support its work and provide much-needed advice for me as I lead the organization this year. I look forward to working closely with all our board members and committees in the year ahead to continue positioning NREDA as a critical partner and resource for your rural economic development efforts.

I am continually inspired by the work of NREDA members. You are on the front lines every day, building partnerships, supporting businesses, advocating for rural priorities, and moving projects from idea to action. The time, effort, and heart that go into this work are significant. In many cases, fellow NREDA members are the only ones who fully understand what it takes. That shared understanding is what makes this organization feel like a supportive professional family.

[Click Here to Read More](#)

Join one of NREDA's Committees

If you have any interest in being a part of an NREDA Committee, please complete the Committee Interest Form below and select one committee from the options listed below, and the committee chairperson will reach out to you for further discussion.

NREDA Committees

- Annual Conference Planning Committee
- Awards Committee
- Membership Committee
- Professional Development Committee
- Publications & Marketing Committee
- Rural Issues Committee
- Sponsorship Committee

To learn more about each committee, please [CLICK HERE](#)
2025 NREDA Award Winners

The 2025 NREDA Awards were handed out at the Annual Conference in Nashville. Congratulations to the 2025 NREDA Award Winners! Thank you to everyone who submitted nominations, and thank you to our award winners for their contributions to rural economic development.



Dan Boysel
Consolidated Cooperative
*NREDA's 2025 Rural
Economic Development
Leadership Award*



Bruce Nuzum
Iowa Area Development
Group
*The NREDA Organization
Excellence Award*



Brittany Dickey
Corn Belt Power
Cooperative
*The NREDA President's
Award*

Rural Issues Committee Update

NREDA Annual Washington, D.C. Fly-In

Each year, NREDA's board of directors, past chairs, and members of the Rural Issues Committee travel to Washington, D.C. to engage directly with federal policymakers and partnering organizations on issues impacting rural communities. Formerly held every other year, the Fly-In recently transitioned to an annual event to strengthen long-term relationships and partnerships at the federal level. This year's visit will take place April 29–May 1 and will include representation from across the rural landscape.

[Read More About the D.C. Fly-in Here](#)

New Member Spotlight

Learn more about NREDA's new members, and welcome **Allee Crabb** to the NREDA community!

Allee Crabb is an Economic Development Specialist with Associated Electric Cooperative, Inc. (AECI), where she provides economic development support to transmission and distribution cooperative staff serving rural communities across Missouri, southeast Iowa, and northeast Oklahoma. While she is not currently involved in any NREDA committees, Allee was drawn to NREDA because of her deep commitment to rural people and places—both professionally and personally—as she grew up in a rural community and now supports regions like the one that raised her.



AECI serves predominantly rural areas rooted in strong cooperative values, and in her role, Allee helps connect private, local, state, and federal resources that equip cooperatives to better serve their communities.

Upcoming Webinars

A promotional graphic for a webinar. The background is a purple-tinted image of a small town street with brick buildings, including a diner and a bookstore. The text is overlaid in white and yellow. Three circular portraits of speakers are arranged vertically on the right side, each with a name tag below it.

Webinar

Success in a Small Town: Proven Marketing Strategies That Drive Rural Growth

with Mike Espiritu, Bethany Quinn,
and Justin Sommer

 12 PM EST/11 AM CST
February 17, 2026

 nreda.org/webinars

Mike Espiritu

Bethany Quinn

Justin Sommer

[Get More Info and Register Here](#)

"Success in a Small Town: Proven Marketing Strategies That Drive Rural Growth"

Tuesday, February 17, 2026
12:00 p.m. EST / 11:00 a.m. CST

Join **Mike Espiritu**, President and CEO, Roswell-Chaves County Economic Development Corporation, **Bethany Quinn**, President, Golden Shovel Agency, and **Justin Sommer**, Economic Development Director, Preble County Economic Development Partnership for a panel discussion on driving rural growth.

Webinars are a member-benefit to current (2026) NREDA members, and \$25 for non-members.

Webinar

Rural Opportunity Zones 2.0 — Unlocking Private Capital for Community Transformation

with Mike O'Mara, Partner at
Ascension OZ Advisors

 2 PM EST / 1 PM CST
March 19, 2026

 nreda.org/webinars

Mike O'Mara

Get More Info and Register Here

"Rural Opportunity Zones 2.0 - Unlocking Private Capital for Community Transformation"

Thursday, March 19, 2026
2:00 p.m. EST / 1:00 p.m. CST

Rural communities face unique challenges in attracting private investment, yet they possess distinctive assets that make them ideal candidates for the enhanced Opportunity Zone program. This webinar, presented by Michael O'Mara, Partner at Ascension OZ Advisors, explores how the permanent extension of Opportunity Zones under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act creates unprecedented opportunities for rural economic development.

Webinars are a member-benefit to current (2026) NREDA members, and \$25 for non-members. Podcast



NATIONAL. RURAL. CONNECTED.

Introducing NREDA podcasts! The new podcast series will be featuring thought-provoking discussions on rural economic development from those in the industry. This is a fantastic resource for economic development professionals, community leaders, and industry members ready to dive further into the rural world of economic development.

Each episode will explore the unique challenges and opportunities shaping rural economies. We bring you candid conversations with industry experts, NREDA members, and inspiring leaders who are driving real-world growth.

Whether you are a veteran of the profession or new to the field, the NREDA Podcast will equip you with the knowledge, tools, and inspiration to create immediate and lasting impact in your region.

NREDA podcasts will be recorded every other month beginning February 2026. Visit <https://www.nreda.org/podcasts> for On-Demand podcast recordings.

NREDA Regional Workshop

Registration will be launching soon! Come join us for 2 days to hear about rural Ohio, even experience TWO mobile classroom sessions to Marysville and Bellefontaine, Ohio.

Keep an eye on our site here for updates on the agenda and registration:
<https://www.nreda.org/regional-workshops>

NREDA Retiree Recognition

NREDA would like to recognize our members for their service! If you will be retiring this year, or know someone who is retiring from the industry, please complete the form below by October 16, 2026 to be recognized during the NREDA Annual Conference November 4-6, 2026 in Salt Lake City, Utah! (Annual Conference registration will open Summer 2026, so be sure to look for that information and register to attend the conference).

[Retiree Recognition Form](#)

Job Listings

Did you know you can view and post job listings right to the NREDA website?

NREDA provides current members space to post a position on the NREDA website at no charge. Visit the [NREDA Job Postings page](#) for submission guidelines, or email NREDA@AssnOffices.com to submit a job posting today!

Newsletter Submissions

Call for Newsletter Articles

NREDA would love to share your unique stories, industry trends, best practices, white papers, and - of course - your successes in our bi-monthly e-newsletter!

Guidelines:

- You must be a current NREDA member to submit an article.
- Please email your article to Sydney Spears at sydney@assnoffices.com by the 15th of each e-newsletter month. Please include the subject line **NREDA Newsletter Article Submission**
- Please submit your article in an editable format (Microsoft Word or text in the body of an email preferred). Feel free to include a photo with your article.
- Please send information, educational, and/or newsworthy items. Please no ads or sales/marketing articles. NREDA reserves the right to exclude submitted articles as deemed necessary by the leadership.

[Submit a Newsletter Article](#)

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#NREDA Don't forget when posting on social media to use the hashtag #NREDA when sharing your stories! This way we can spread it to all of our members!



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