



MICHIGAN RURAL NETWORK

The Michigan Rural Network (MRN) links individuals and organizations in rural communities to develop a unified voice around common concerns, share resources and expertise, and promote a rural policy agenda that benefits all of Michigan.

Any organization, individual, or municipality is encouraged to become involved in the Network.

Benefits include:

- *Opportunities to participate in local and statewide trainings;*
- *Providing input to shape a rural public policy agenda;*
- *Sharing best practices and funding opportunities; and*
- *Connecting to similar communities in other parts of the state.*

The Network began in 2002 as the Rural Caucus Committee of the Community Economic Development Association of Michigan (CEDAM). Initially, community economic development and housing organizations recognized common frustrations within the state and the industry surrounding rural issues. Conversations were convened among stakeholders across the state, and a series of town hall meetings, dubbed "Rural Road Shows," were created in 2007 to establish a list of issues important to rural Michigan. These conversations were the seed for the Network's current policy agenda. The parties involved at that point realized that there needed to be a structure to bring interested parties together around rural issues. In May 2008, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation awarded grant funding to Michigan to become part of the Rural People, Rural Policy Initiative. This grant led to the formation of the Michigan Rural Network as we know it today. In 2010, the Network made another stride forward with the hiring of the first full-time Coordinator.

Currently, MRN has a two-pronged approach for effecting change in rural Michigan:

Rural Network Work Groups

MRN has initiated a model of working groups, based on our policy agenda topics, to help the Network share resources and expertise. The groups and their members set goals, choose projects specific to their topic areas, and relay information to the Network as a whole. Currently, the following work groups have been formed:

- Economic Development
- Broadband
- Education
- Renewable Energy and Energy Conservation
- Health
- Infrastructure and Transportation
- Rural Philanthropy
- Housing

Rural Caucus

MRN has convened a Rural Caucus in the Michigan Legislature with gatherings scheduled periodically to share information on pending rural legislative matters. The Caucus is made up of four bi-partisan chairs; two from the House and two from the Senate. All legislators and their staff members are welcome and encouraged to be a part of the Caucus.

2011 MRN Goals & Strategies

MRN is committed to the following principles to help guide the development of its goals and outcomes, as well as the planning and implementation of its strategies:

- > Promote regional planning and inter-governmental collaboration
- > Advocate for funding priorities building upon the strengths and assets of rural and urban communities to enhance their interdependence and mutual success
- > Use best practices and proven models of success to enhance rural planning and development
- > Involve individuals and organizations in rural communities in the planning and development of policy and program initiatives designed to benefit their communities
- > Help build an entrepreneurial culture promoting self-employment, small businesses, and development of thriving local economies, while also promoting the preservation of farmland, recreational areas, and open space to maintain the unique nature and charm of rural communities
- > Foster and promote a vision of rural communities as friendly places to live, work, shop, and play by building upon cultural, economic, educational, and recreational assets

Connect with the Michigan Rural Network!

Visit us online at www.michiganruralnetwork.org to:

- Sign up for our monthly e-newsletter
- Get the schedule for bi-monthly Network meetings
- Follow us on Twitter
- Find us on Facebook
- Subscribe to our blog



To learn more, please contact:

Kari Marciniak, Coordinator

marciniak@cedam.info

517.775.4840

Charlie Kelley, Program Assistant

kelley@cedam.info

517.775.1312