

[Sample Nomination]
NACDEP Awards Cover Sheet

Include all information below Please note we have eliminated the 1-page limit for the cover sheet, you must still adhere to all word limits. Reset margins to 1” on all borders.

Person Nominating (name, email, institution):

Rachel Welborn, Rachel.welborn@msstate.edu, Southern Rural Development Center

Award Category: NACDEP Diversity Award

Team or Individual: Team

Geographic Region (North Central, Northeast, South, West): South

NOTE: If your project spans multiple regions, select the one with the most involvement from team members (most people). If regional participation is equal, the team may select its region from among those states with highest participation.

State(s): Mississippi, New York, Michigan, South Dakota

Title of Program/Initiative (Limited to 70 characters including spaces):

Coming Together for Racial Understanding

50 Word Abstract (for use in the awards script)

Twenty state teams attended the first Coming Together for Racial Understanding workshop, designed to build Extension capacity to facilitate community dialogues around race. Through in-state trainings, these initial participants are advancing the national team from 60 to 300 rapidly. These teams will then engage communities in meaningful dialogues around race.

Person(s) Being Nominated (name, institution, NACDEP membership using the format below)

| Name | Institution <i>(Please spell out completely - No acronyms or abbreviations)</i> | NACDEP Member (yes/no) |
|-----------------|---|------------------------|
| Mary Emery | South Dakota State University | Yes |
| David Kay | Cornell University | Yes |
| Dionardo Pizaña | Michigan State University | No |
| Cade Smith | University of Mississippi | No |
| Rachel Welborn | Southern Rural Development Center | Yes |

Community Partners or Outside Collaborators (name, organization)

| Name | Organization |
|------------------|--------------------|
| Carolyn Abdullah | Everyday Democracy |
| Gwen Whiting | Everyday Democracy |

Coming Together for Racial Understanding: NACDEP Diversity Award Nomination

Background: In late 2016, the Extension Committee on Operations and Policy (ECOP) charged a small team of Cooperative Extension Service (CES) and non-Land Grant University professionals (referred to as a Rapid Response Team) to examine the current capacity of CES to respond to the need for dialogue to promote racial understanding and healing, and to provide recommendations to build CES capacity in this area. Following the April 2017 report to ECOP, the Rapid Response Team explored training options for civil dialogue on race relations to meet the need to expand capacity.

Purpose: On August 27-31, 2018, teams of three from 20 states participated in the first cohort group of Coming Together for Racial Understanding. The purpose of the training is to build capacity within Cooperative Extension Service (CES) to help communities engage in civil dialogues around racial issues, and then to expand capacity to communities they serve. The week-long training was designed to prepare participants to build capacity within their home states' CES, working across the borders of the Land-Grant Universities (LGU) within a given state (where there are multiple LGUs within a state) as a first step, thus doing our own work. Following this step, the larger CES team is charged with advancing dialogue efforts in communities within their respective states using one of the two dialogue processes embedded within the initiative.

Efforts to Foster Diversity: The initiative's organizing team was intentional in the design of participating teams. Each participating state was asked to identify a team that reflected racial/ethnic diversity. Additionally, states that had more than one LGU were asked to put together teams with representatives from each of the LGUs in the state. Eleven states sent teams with dual LGU representation. At the training, there was a near 1:1 match between people that identified as white and people of color.

Significant Change: While this pilot effort will be continuing over the remainder of 2019, the post-workshop evaluation responses indicate that participants saw significant growth, empowering them to serve as catalysts within their respective states. In the post-evaluation, participants indicated growth in each of the 17 competency areas targeted in the training:

- How dialogue can positively impact complex issues
- Communicating effectively w/ someone from a dif. race/ethnicity
- My comfort with conversations across racial differences
- How target/non-target identities influence perspectives/realities
- Identifying relevant assets and potential barriers to pilot efforts
- My commitment to work on civil dialogue for racial understanding
- How civil dialogue efforts fit within the Extension Service mission
- My comfort in training my state's CES on race relations dialogue
- Organizing a community dialogue
- Attitudes and beliefs held by people from different backgrounds
- Identifying the role most appropriate for me in a dialogue

- Facilitating a dialogue on race relations
- Four levels of oppression and change
- Working with my Coming Together state team members
- How to engage racially diverse audiences in important dialogues
- Principles/process of Facing Racism in a Diverse Nation approach
- Principles/process of Community Dialogues for Racial Healing

Most frequently noted strengths of the training were: (1) Two days of doing their own work on racial equity principles before beginning on training materials for others; (2) Connections made among the cohort group across state lines and across race/ethnicity; (3) Experiencing a safe place for intentional, difficult conversations; and (4) Having two dialogue approaches to implement which allows flexibility for meeting community needs. A few key quotes reflective of responses are: (1) "This was such a personally and professionally enriching training. I'm leaving feeling like I've been enlightened and empowered to know the next steps to start to address tough issues of race and racism." (2) "Bringing people across state lines felt incredibly activating, to see people grappling with similar issues and with similar passions." (3) "Great job to all organizers and participants. This gathering really opened my eyes to the need for this work, and the many opportunities to bring it home." (4) "I think this training was absolutely amazing and very, very eye-opening. The feeling I have walking away is that this can be done. I think that is the purest and most necessary thing for someone to have, with such deep content." (5) "I have a new purpose in life."

Methods to Continue to Promote Retention of Diversity

Since the training, cohort teams continue to engage in monthly web-based meetings to discuss efforts to expand the numbers engaged in this effort. The pilot teams were specifically charged with hosting at least one multi-session dialogue process with colleagues within the LGU system in order to expand capacity to serve communities. Where multiple LGUs exist in a state, these trainings will be jointly conducted to promote growth in diversity within the initiative. Then each state team is charged with hosting at least one multi-session dialogue process in a community they serve. To date, each pilot team is actively working to prepare for their LGU dialogue sessions, most of which are scheduled for spring 2019. In addition, a second workshop is being planned for fall 2019 due to the high demand for the initiative. Plans are to position the event geographically so it is more easily accessible to the Western states. (The first event was in DC.) Additionally, John Phillips (FALCON) will be joining the planning team to assist in engaging 1994 institutions. So far 11 other states have indicated interest in the next event.

Already, the Coming Together team has grown from 30 (Rapid Response Team and initial planning team) to almost 100. Through the state-level training that will be happening over the coming months, we anticipate this number to exceed 300 in a short time. Once these training teams expand efforts in communities, these numbers will grow exponentially. The ripple-effect of these investments will continue to enhance the capacity of communities to sit down together to work through differences around race issues by engaging in meaningful, respectful dialogue leading to lasting positive change.