



# Sustainable University Outreach: IIRA as an Example

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[www.iira.edu](http://www.iira.edu)



# Overview of Presentation

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- Background and Reasons
- IIRA Mission and Goals
- Relatively Unique State-University Partnership
- Holistic Approach to Rural Development
- Focus on Management Metrics
- Results and Outcomes



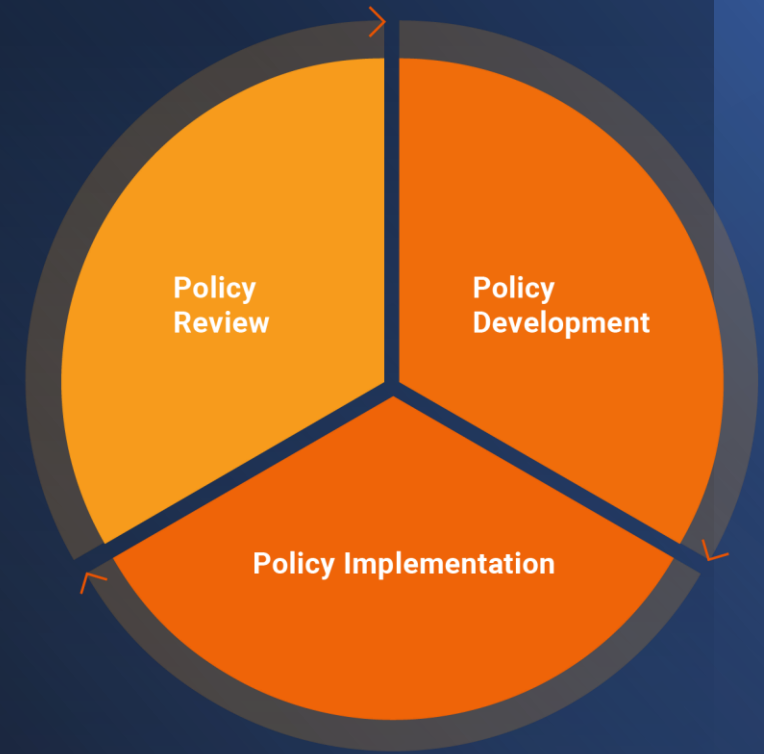
# Reasons and Need for Approach

- 1980s experienced major setbacks to farm economies & foreclosures
- Small towns relied on farm populations that were shrinking in number
- Long term population declines in rural areas
  - Graduates left for higher education and then on to larger areas
  - Increases in elderly
- Illinois is mainly an urban state with shrinking rural populations
  - One size fits all approach to policymaking
  - State policies were not coordinated
  - State agencies had many programs but not coordinated in delivery
  - State policies were not always based on research trends and issues
- Needed an agency to help provide a focus on rural issues



# Illinois Rural Statewide Policy Units

- **Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs**
  - Research and document best development practices and policies
  - Hold annual conference to bring promising practices to local officials
  - Publicize materials regarding development topics
- **Governor's Rural Affairs Council**
  - Evaluate policies for use in Illinois and implement them as needed
  - Submit legislation and create new programs as needed
  - Recommend changes to GA and Governor for implementation
- **Rural Partners**
  - Privately-funded statewide organization of *private and public* members
  - Statewide Government Coordinating Council
  - Document and help implement innovative development practices



# Policy Approaches Used

- Task Force on Future of Rural Illinois in 1986
  - Chaired by Lt. Governor with 25 Bi-Partisan members
  - Staffed by Faculty in Four Universities
  - Held more than 20 public hearings
  - Drafted a Joint Resolution of House, Senate and Governor's Office *emphasizing importance of rural*
- Created the Governor's Rural Affairs Council (1987)
  - Representatives from state agencies with rural programs
  - Meets quarterly & publishes annual report to governor & General Assembly
    - Status of rural with policy recommendations
    - Helps coordinate state programs dealing with rural issues
- Established the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs (IIRA) in 1989
  - Governor's initiative through the Board of Higher Education
  - State agency located at a university based on university commitment to funding
  - University academic mission reporting to Provost
  - Statewide data center and clearinghouse
  - Prepares annual GRAC report for governor and GA
  - Helps lead & coordinate non-state agency initiatives e.g., Rural Partners

# Funding Structure (1989)

## Startup Annual Funding

- \$250K in Lt. Governor's Office for staff and outreach programming
- \$250K in Ag Premium Funds (IL Dept of Ag) for discretionary projects to IIRA
- \$50K commitment from WIU as host agency



## IIRA Support --Federal Government and other Sources

- \$100K annually from US Economic Development Administration
  - Started the Rural Technical Assistant Center
- \$75K annually from US Department of Transportation
  - Started the Rural Transit Assistance Center
- Grants and contracts with state/federal agencies

# IIRA Organizational Structure

- **Design:** as *Holistic* and statewide approach to rural issues.
- **Purpose:** Be major statewide source for applied policy research on rural issues.
- **Vision:** To be widely-recognized for innovative research and policy applications with rural agencies to enhance rural economic development while maintaining the importance of small communities.
- **Mission:** To improve quality of life in rural areas by working with public and private agencies on key local development and enhancement issues.
- **Practice:** Build the capacity of community leaders and policymakers by providing technical support, applied research, policy evaluation, and training across the state. IIRA is a clearinghouse for information on rural issues, coordinates rural research, and works with state agencies on issues of importance to rural communities.

# IIRA Primary Goals

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- **Policy Development**
  - Promote Sound Statewide Rural Policy Development
  - Collaborate with Other Groups e.g., GRAC and Rural Partners
- **Research and Education**
  - Advance the State of Knowledge on Rural Issues through Applied Research and Educational Activities
- **Outreach**
  - Offer a Variety of Community and Economic Development Focused Programs
  - Work Directly with *and through* Local Leaders to Address Local Issues



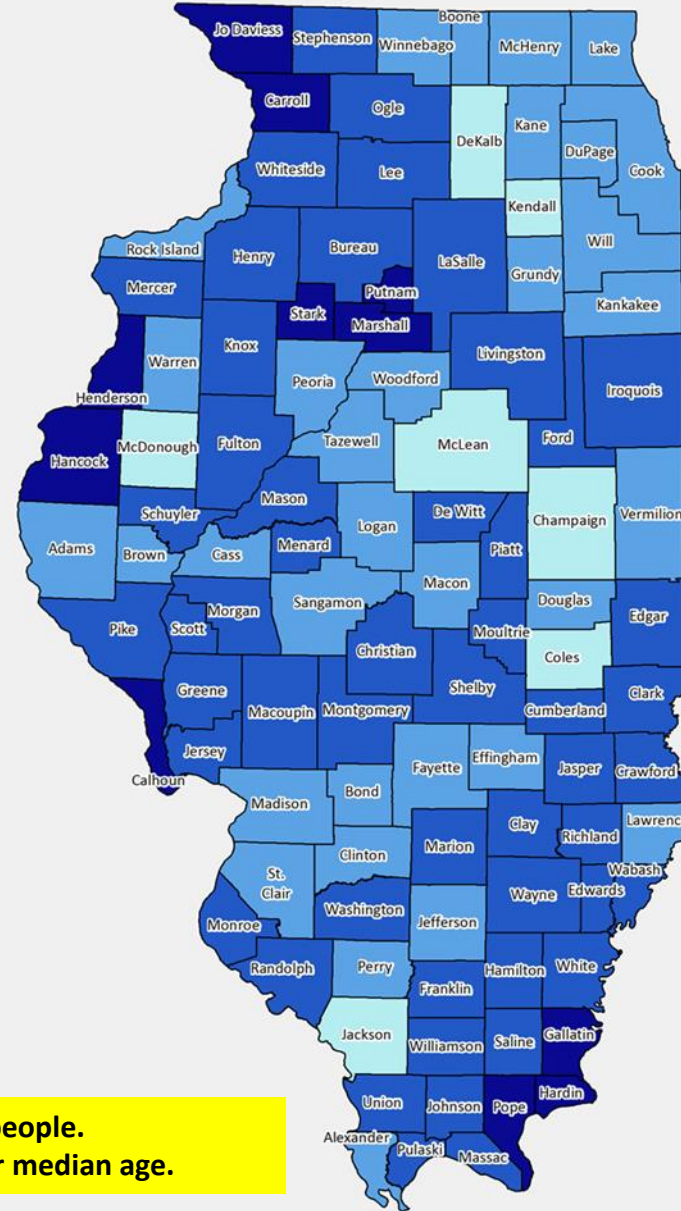
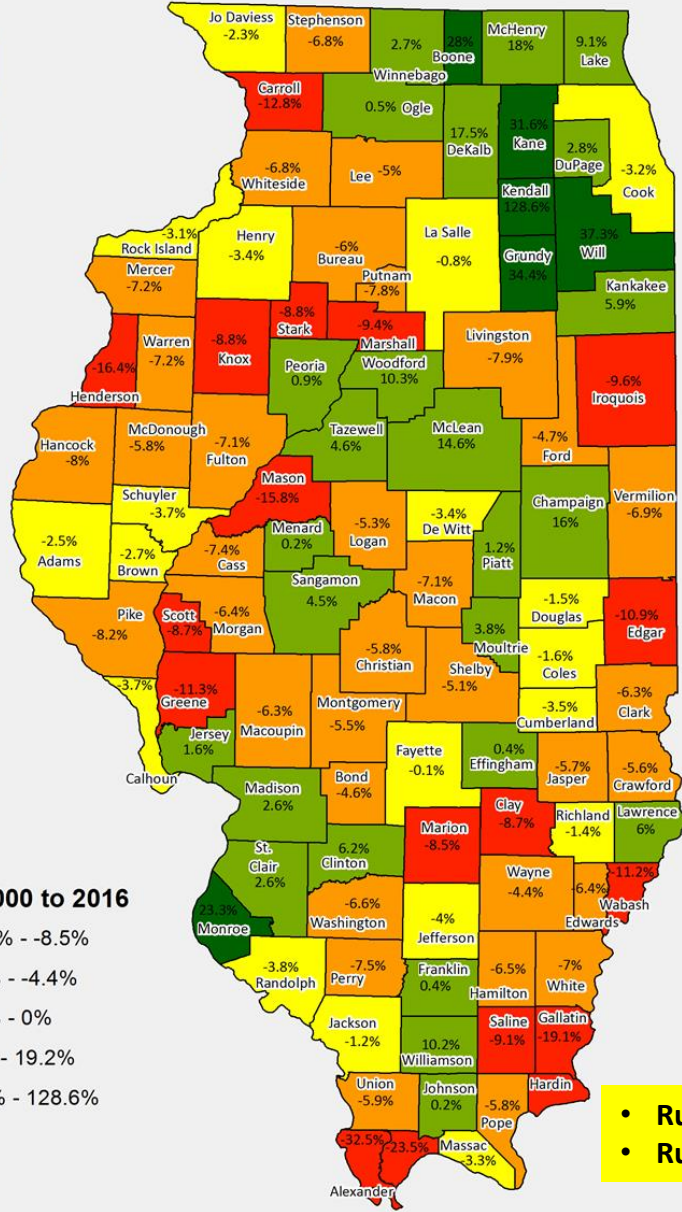


# Rural communities have needs. Do they have assets?

- **It is easy to be pessimistic when we focus on rural Community Economic Development (CED) *needs*.**
  - Rural depopulation and youth outmigration.
  - Loss of anchor institutions (e.g. grocery stores, schools).
  - Digital divide is real (i.e. both broadband and cell phone coverage).
  - Education gap (e.g. funding and student performance).
  - Emphasis on both farm and rural non-farm economy – Farmers need off-farm jobs!
  - Quality of life issues (e.g. recreation, health care).
- **Can we help rural places identify their assets? YES.**
- **ABCD or AssB-Based Community Development.**
  - **Goal:** Help rural places design and implement CED strategies.
  - **Strategy:** Build on community assets rather than on community needs.
    - Help communities identify their own assets.
    - IIRA MAPPING program represents one strategy to implement ABCD.
    - CED is a process not an objective or endpoint.



# The Basis of the Negative Narrative Surrounding Rural CED



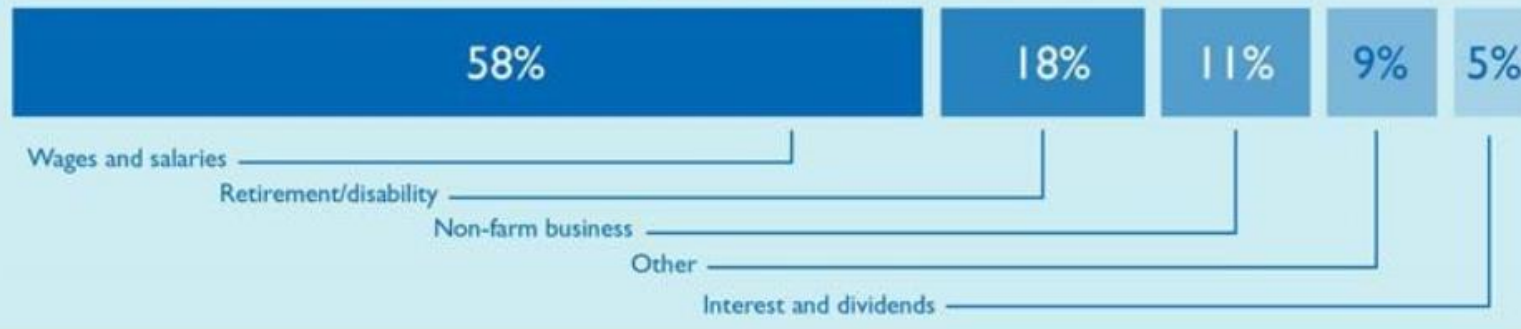
- Rural regions are losing people.
- Rural regions have higher median age.

# Farmers need off-farm employment, too.

For most farm households, the majority of their income came from non-farm sources in 2017

- ▶ Fifty-two percent of farm households made at least \$10,000 from off-farm wages, salaries, and tips.
- ▶ Family farm households earned 79 percent of all their income from non-farm sources.
- ▶ At the median, farm households received \$67,500 from non-farm sources.

Sources of off-farm income earned by family farms in 2017 (share of total):

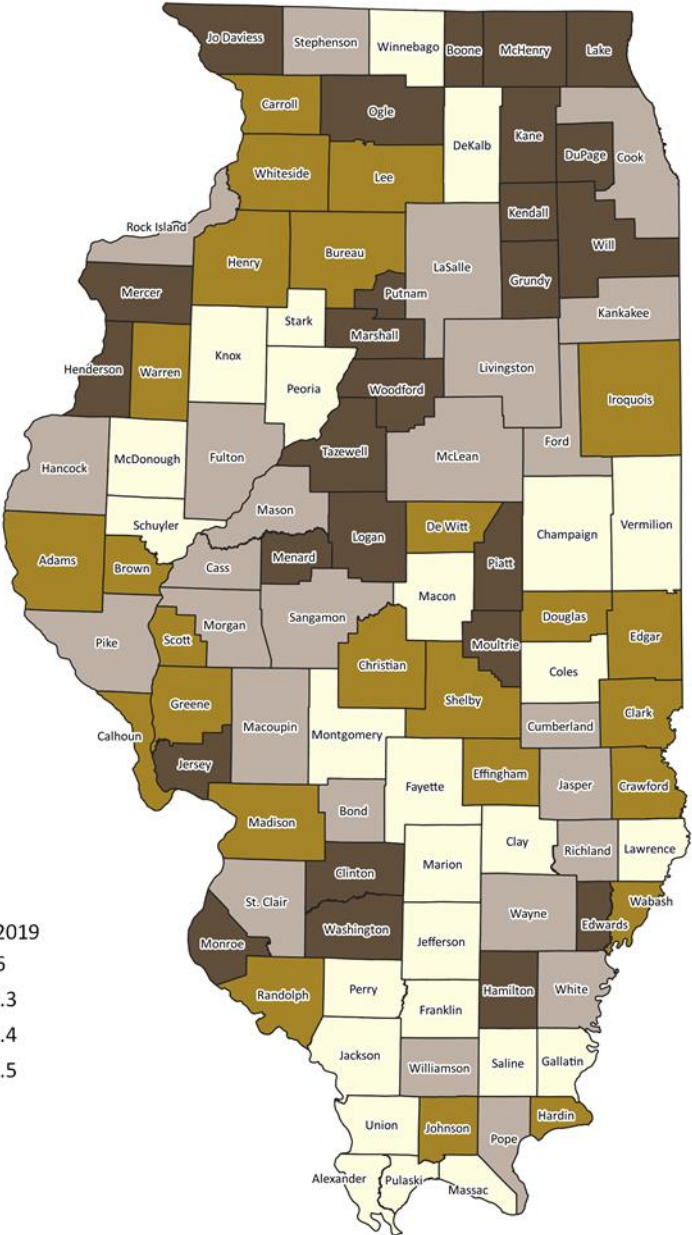


Note: Wages and salaries include all off-farm wages and salaries, excluding income from operating another farm or off-farm business. Retirement/disability includes income from private pensions and private disability, as well as public sources such as Social Security, public disability, and veteran's benefits. Other income refers to income coming from sale of assets and miscellaneous income.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service and USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2017 Agricultural Resource Management Survey.



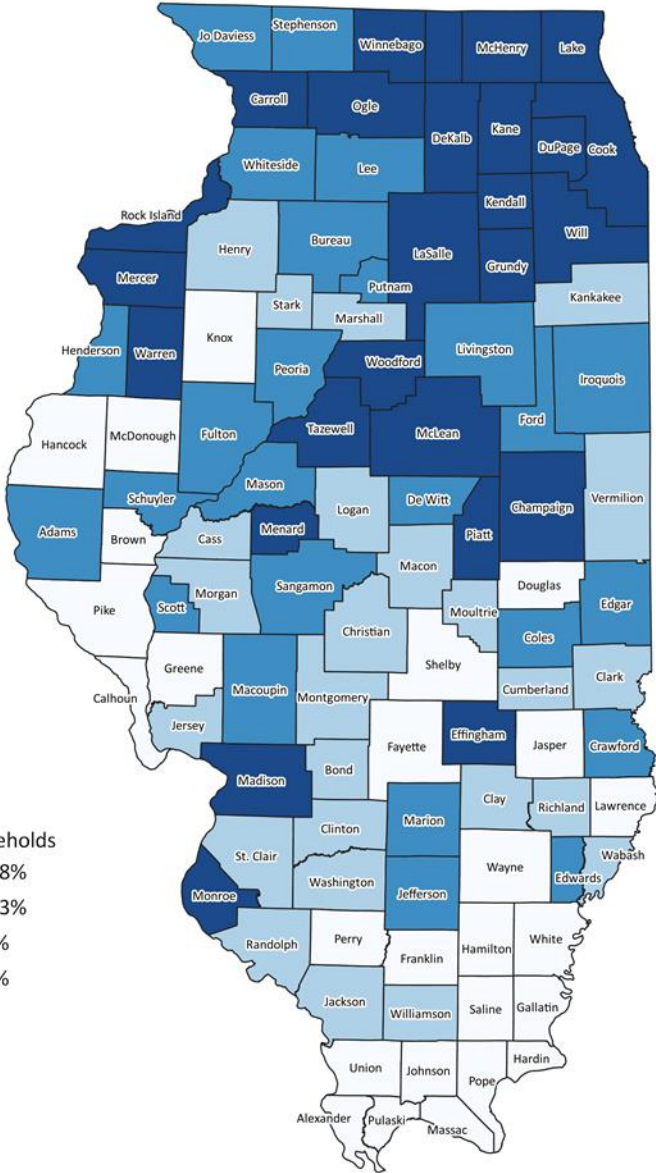
### Poverty Rate by County, 2019



**Poverty Rate 2019**  
 ■ 4.1 - 10.6  
 ■ 10.6 - 13.3  
 ■ 13.3 - 15.4  
 ■ 15.4 - 26.5

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, table S1701-Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months, downloaded July 27, 2021.

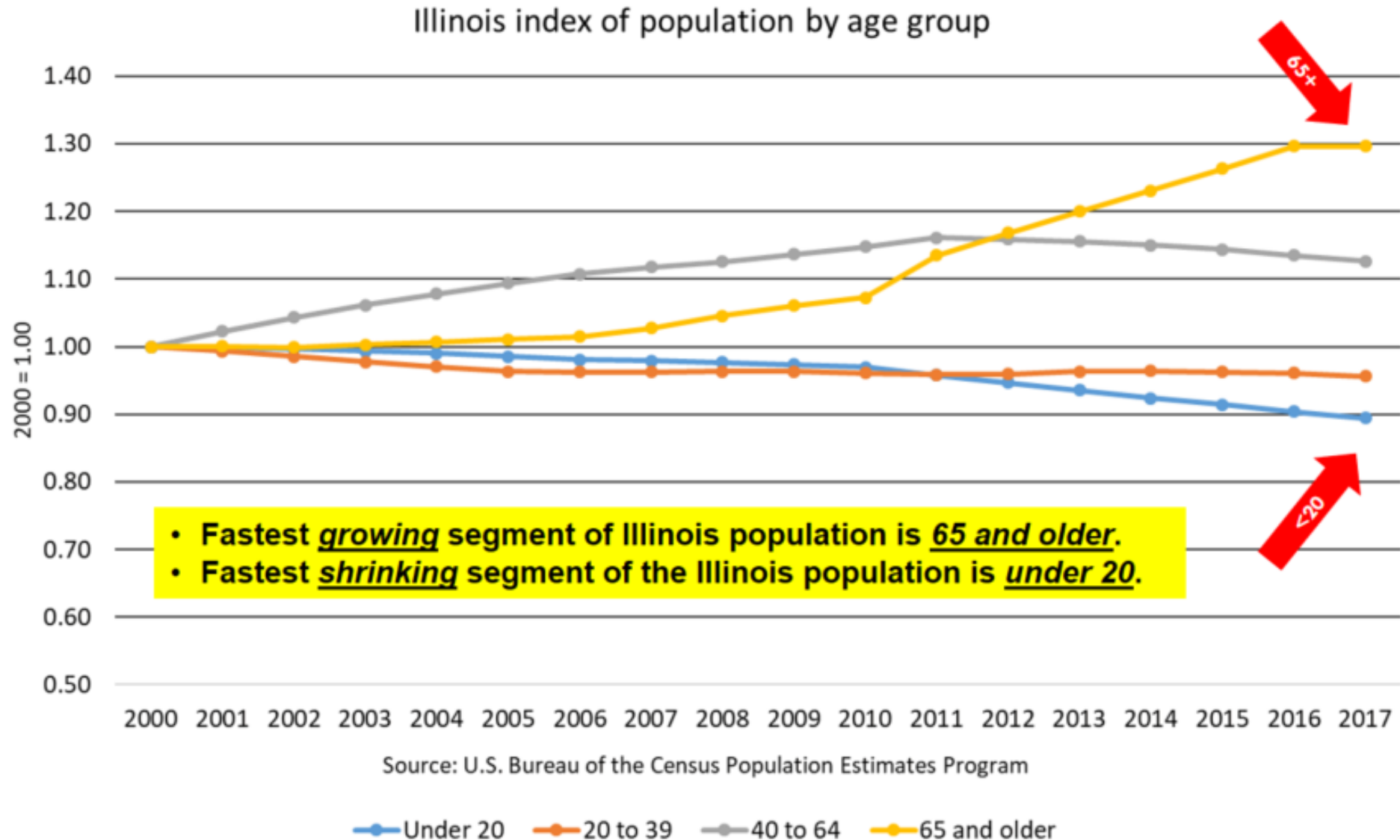
### Households with Internet Subscriptions



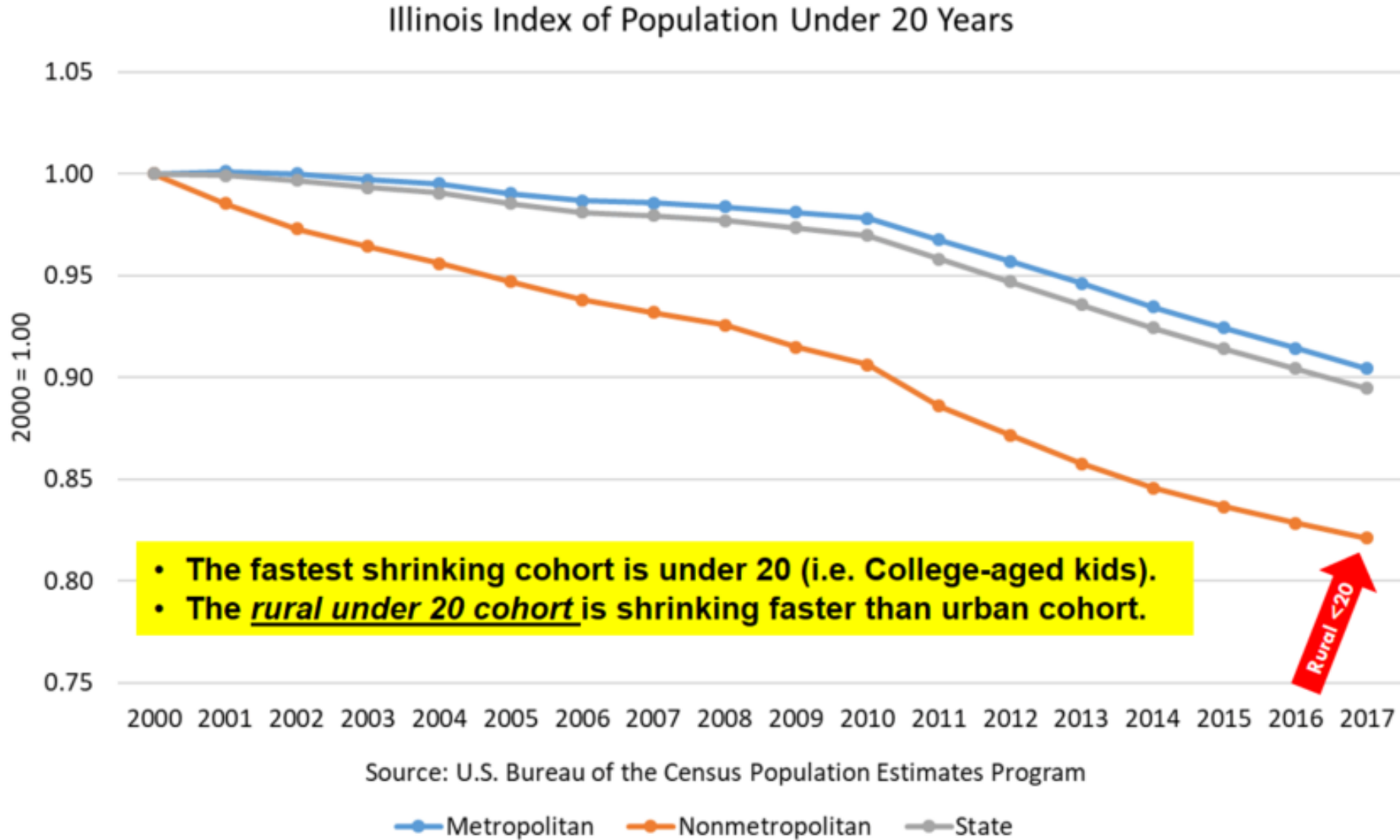
**Percent of Households**  
 □ 51.6% - 75.8%  
 ■ 75.8% - 78.3%  
 ■ 78.3% - 81%  
 ■ 81% - 92.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, table B28011-Internet Subscriptions in Household, downloaded July 27, 2021.

## The Basis of the Negative Narrative Surrounding Rural CED



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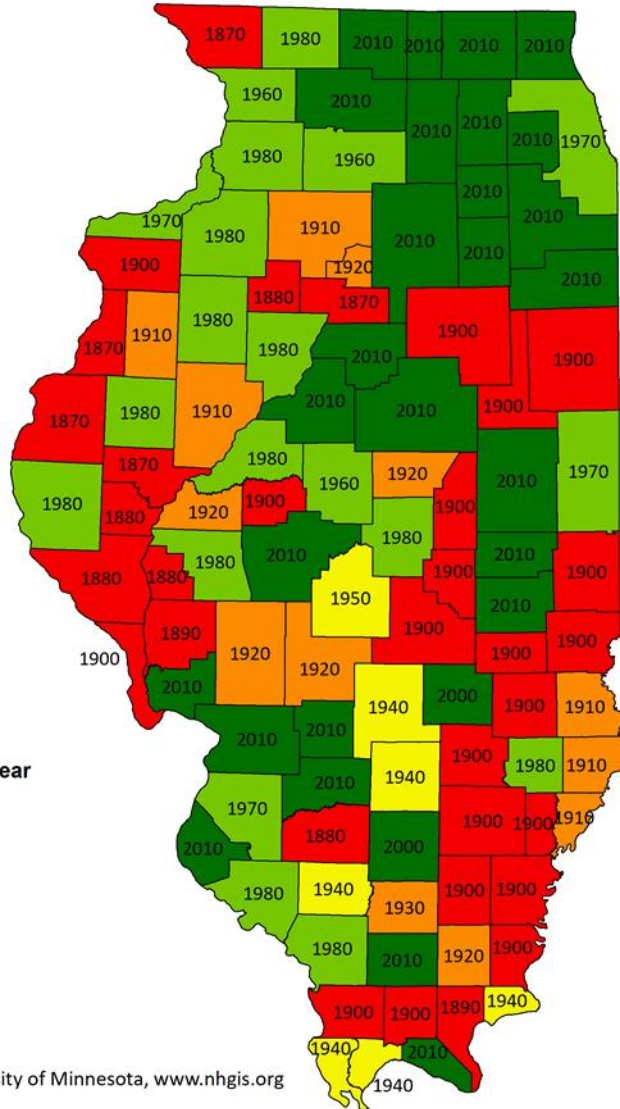


# The Basis of the Negative Narrative Surrounding Rural CED

# New York Times Editorial

The New York Times

## Census Year of County Peak Population



Opinion

## Getting Real About Rural America

Nobody knows how to reverse the heartland's decline.



By Paul Krugman  
Opinion Columnist

March 18, 2019



Yikes! Do we give up?



Politically, rural America is increasingly a world apart. Maddie McGarvey for The New York Times

Things clump together; the periphery cannot hold.



ECONOMY & BUSINESS

# If Your Town Is Failing, Just Go

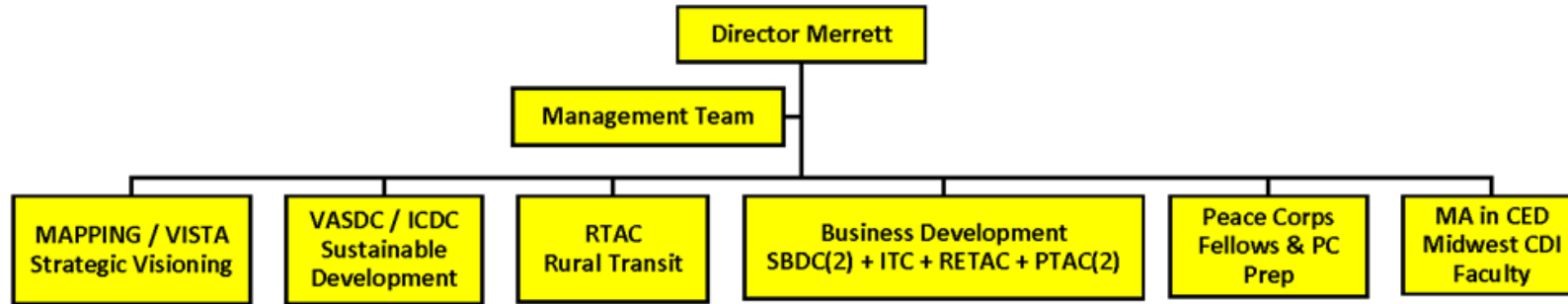
By KEVIN D. WILLIAMSON | October 6, 2015 8:00 AM



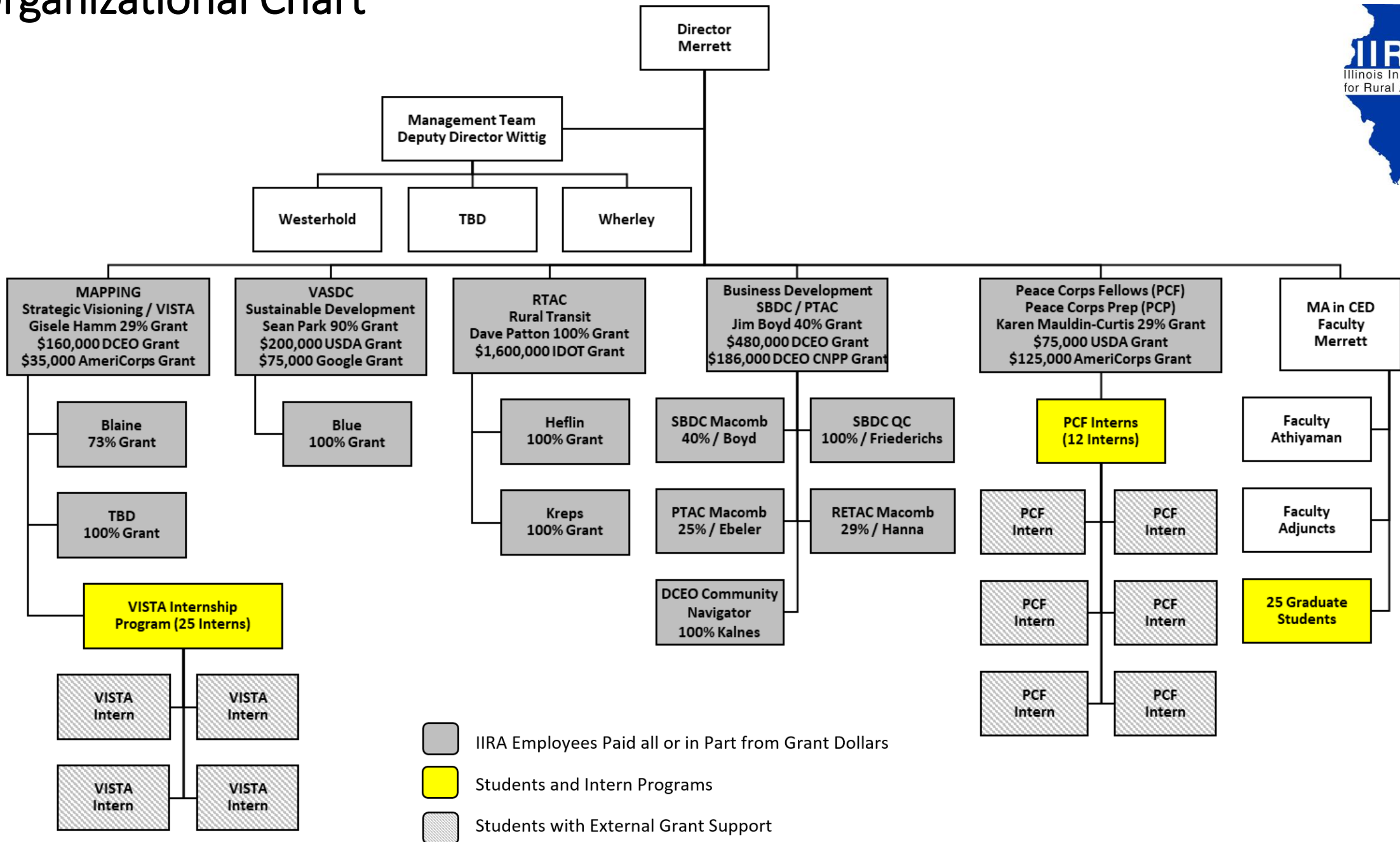
Downtown Booneville, Ky., in 2012. (Mario Tama/Getty)



How can we push back against the negative narrative and psychology of decline?  
 How can we help communities thrive? ABCD  
 We take communities through a planning and a plan implementation process.

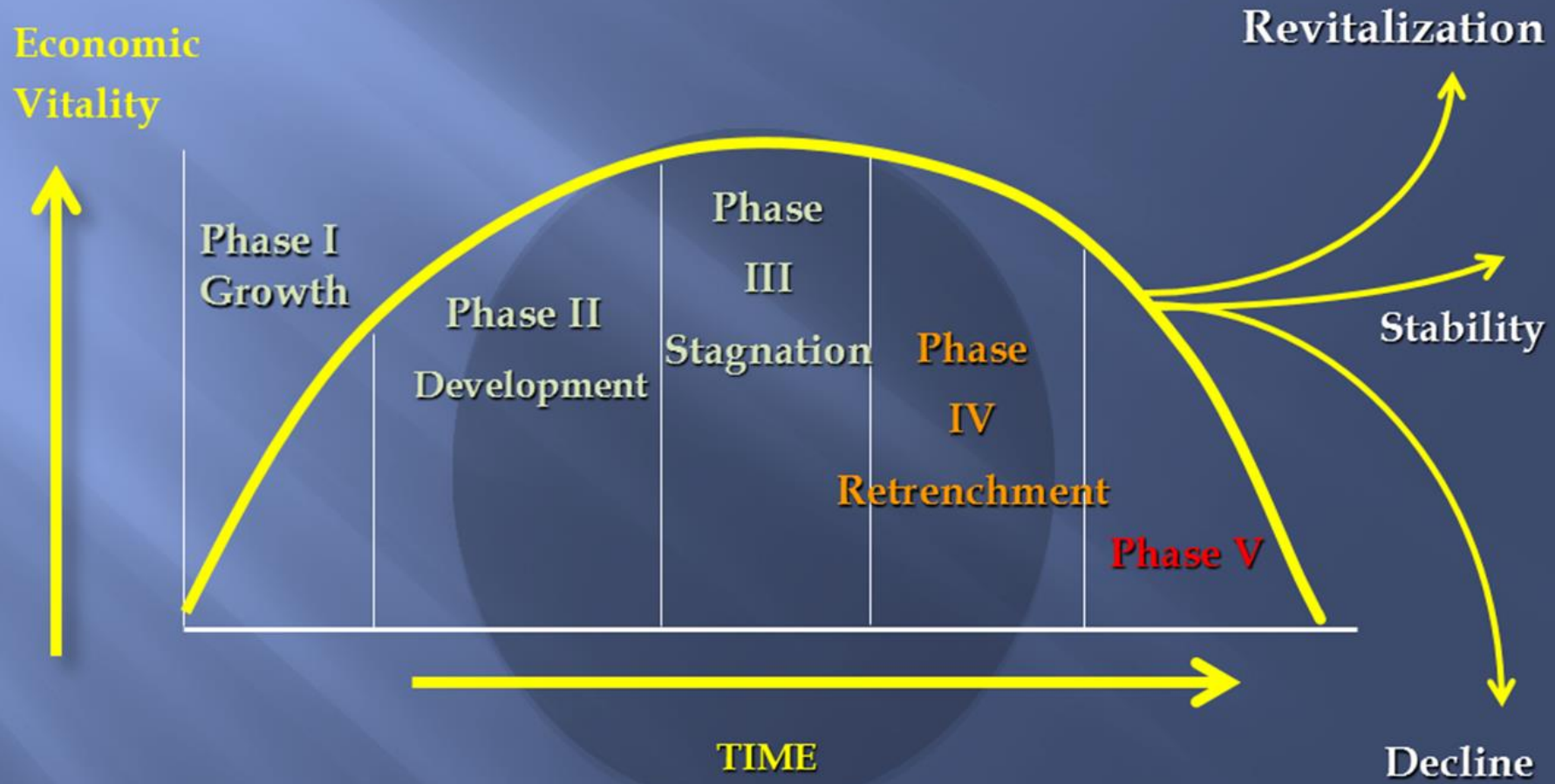


# IIRA Organizational Chart



- IIRA Employees Paid all or in Part from Grant Dollars
- Students and Intern Programs
- Students with External Grant Support

# Community Life Cycle Model



Many rural communities have experienced decades of population and quality of life decline.





## Community Outcomes for Strasburg, IL

- 10 years elapsed, 2007 to 2010.
- ***CEd is hard work. Maybe Sisyphian?***
- Not every CED design project works.
- Heavily reliant on volunteers.
- Need widespread community buy-in.
- Strasburg emphasis on local assets:
  - TIF district to raise funds.
  - 24-hour gym is former school gym.
  - Launched a community fund.



## ACCOMPLISHMENTS 2007 TO 2017

Project	Project Progress
Housing survey	Surveyed homes in preparation for the development of a subdivision
TIF District	Established a Tax Increment Financing district.
Recruited a convenience store	Leveraged TIF district to attract a convenience store/gas station
Gym	TIF district helped a 24 hour gym start up
Develop trademark	Adopted the garden gnome featured on website, banners, new logo, and special gnome themed merchandise
Develop online marketing	Launched a new village website and started the Strasburg IL Facebook page
Flower sale	Host a flower sale every spring as an annual fundraiser and beautification initiative
Hog Roast and Gnome Fest	Hosted a fall hog roast fundraiser to, among other things, fund improvements to the community building
Renovate the community center	Refurbished the exterior of the community center
Volunteer recognition	Started an annual end of the year event to recognize volunteers
Santa Brigade	Developed an annual event to create painted santas to place around town as well as a vendor fair
Seasoned Citizens	Launched the Seasoned Citizens monthly activities for senior citizens
Calendars	Sold Strasburg 2013 calendars as a fundraiser
Community Fund	Launched a community fund with an area foundation and developed giving guidelines. Started accepting proposals in 2014
York Acres Subdivision	Subdivision established and lots sold. Multiple houses now exist there
Gnome News	Established a monthly newsletter for the community
Letter campaign	Completed a letter writing campaign to solicit funds for the community fund.
Welcome program	New residents to town receive a welcome packet
Hometown Award	2013 recipient of a Governor's hometown award for their renovations of the community building
Christmas Lights Competition	Held "Light up Strasburg" Christmas lights contest.
Downtown beautification	SCAN planted and maintained flowers around town and at the park





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TOP STORY

# Mattoon in Motion project makes great strides

ED DOWD Executive Director Mattoon Chamber of Commerce Sep 14, 2018 0

source: [https://jg-tc.com/business/local/mattoon-in-motion-project-makes-great-strides/article\\_3313a2da-8acc-5048-8308-74395612333e.html](https://jg-tc.com/business/local/mattoon-in-motion-project-makes-great-strides/article_3313a2da-8acc-5048-8308-74395612333e.html)

TRY 1 MONTH FOR 99¢



Dowd

The Mattoon in Motion project, developed through a collaboration with the MAPPING program at Western Illinois University and the Illinois Institute of Rural Affairs, has been ongoing for over a year and continues to make great strides toward its mission as follows: "Mattoon is in motion with a well-trained and skilled workforce fueling a thriving local economy. Youth are provided opportunities of self-discovery and are encouraged to get involved in the community. Residents and visitors enjoy an affordable, high-quality of life with world-class healthcare and educational systems; a variety of cultural attractions, parks and recreation opportunities; and an array of housing options to meet the needs of a diverse population"

One big win of the program is securing a Peace Corps Fellow for community development through AmeriCorps Illinois and the Illinois Institute of Rural Affairs. Carlos Ortega is living and working in Mattoon as an intern for community development for the next 11 months. He officially started September 1st of this year. The Peace Corp Fellow Program places individuals in the community based on a successful application and recruitment process. Mattoon was in competition with several other communities to utilize the services of the Peace Corp Fellow. Based on the quality of the application submitted, letters of community support and a very pleasant personal tour of Mattoon, we were chosen as the location by Carlos and The Illinois Institute of Rural Affairs.

Peace Corps Fellow helping with Mattoon community development

MATTOON -- The community's new Peace Corps Fellow intern, Carlos Ortega, is helping with eff...



# CHICAGO SUNTIMES

The Hardest-Working Paper in America

Our Pledge To You

NEWS

02/17/2019, 02:26pm

## Google reveal: Downstate group wins \$250K

By Maudlyne Ihejirika

Source: <https://chicago.suntimes.com/news/google-reveal-downstate-group-wins-250k-tech-giant-expanding-workforce-here/>

Chicago wasn't the winner of the \$250,000 up for grabs in Google's "Shark Tank" for economic development ideas, but the city won in another way: the tech giant is expanding its footprint and workforce capacity here.

Google on Friday held its big reveal for [Impact Challenge Illinois](#), announcing which finalist won the bonus in its first statewide competition to bolster nonprofits offering bold economic stimulus ideas for disadvantaged communities.

It was [Mattoon in Motion](#), a Southeastern Illinois community development organization that plans to launch a Cross-County Innovation Center with the grant, a collaborative workspace where entrepreneurs can receive resources, training, mentoring and coaching.

The competition, Google's version of TV's "Shark Tank," was judged by a dream team panel that included former Illinois Gov. Jim Edgar, former Chicago Bear Matt Forte and Tina Tchen, former chief of staff to former first lady Michelle Obama; as well as Joyce Foundation President Ellen Alberding, Chicago Community Trust's Chief Operation Officer Andrea Saenz and Illinois State University President Larry Dietz.

Chicago winners included North Lawndale Employment Network (NLEN), creating transitional jobs for formerly incarcerated; After School Matters, providing wrap-around services for disconnected Chicago youth; True Star Foundation, teaching digital skills and entrepreneurship to youth; Cara Chicago, providing job training and placement to low-income families; Future Founders Foundation, nurturing young adult entrepreneurs; and Manufacturing Renaissance, preparing underserved youth for manufacturing jobs.

Three other Downstate winners were the Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois, offering a S.T.E.M. program for girls in rural counties; [Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs, creating community-owned grocery stores in small towns](#); and the YWCA of McLean County, providing job training for formerly incarcerated women.



# Great Scott Market, Winchester, IL



Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/05/us/rural-farm-market.html>





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## Forgottonia Brewing Opens in Macomb with Help of SBDC

June 14, 2019

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MACOMB, IL -- Forgottonia Brewing, the first craft brewery in Macomb, has launched its business with a series of soft openings during the past week, officially opening Wednesday, June 12.

The 2018 Downtown Macomb Retail Competition winners developed their winning pitch with help from the Illinois Small Business Development Center (IL SBDC) at Western Illinois University (WIU). Forgottonia Brewing won the grand prize, offering incentives totaling over \$28,000.

"The SBDC, and the competition, really kicked off our publicity and gave us validity," said Sean West, Forgottonia's brewer. "We've had a huge following waiting for us to open ever since."

## WIU PTAC Center Director Wins State Small Business Award

May 28, 2019

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MACOMB, IL – Theresa Ebeler, director of the Central Illinois Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC), a unit of the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs (IIRA) at Western Illinois University, was recently presented with the Roger Luman Program Excellence Award during the Illinois Entrepreneurship and Small Business Growth Association (IESBGA) state conference.

The award recognizes outstanding, innovative and best practices in the programs and services. It is named in honor of Roger Luman, the managing director of the Turner Center for Entrepreneurship in the Foster College of Business Administration at Bradley University and is meant to embody his dedication to supporting small businesses.

"We are honored to be the first PTAC in Illinois history to receive this esteemed award," said Ebeler. "The HUBZone outreach event exemplifies how the University and the Illinois Small Business Network maximizes its resources for educational and economic development across the state."



[\[Download Print-Quality Image\]](#)



Pictured, from left, are Melissa Duff Brown, president of IESBGA and director of the SBDC at the Joseph School of Business in Chicago; JoAnn DiMaggio May, the director of the SBDC at SIU Edwardsville and Theresa Ebeler, director of the Central Illinois Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC), a unit of the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs (IIRA) at Western Illinois University.

# IIRA Metrics 1990 to 2020

IIRA Metrics Fiscal Year	1990	2000	2005	2010	2014	2015	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
<b>Inputs</b>											
<i>Faculty and Staff</i>											
Full-time/Part-time	9/0	21/4	28/1	36/1	35/0	29/1	22/1	19/3	19/2	19/2	-
Peace Corps Fellows on campus	-	17	20	14	9	14	15	13	14	15	
Graduate Students	-	-	-	-	10	8	5	8	11	3	-
Student Workers	5	13	2	9	13	11	15	8	11	6	-
Peace Corps Preps							18	16	12	6	
VISTA Volunteers beginning 2019									25	26	
<b>Grants</b>	5	26	46	49	37	30	31	33	33	28	849
Indirect Cost Dollars (000's)	-	-	-	257	197	202	122	164	144	138.7	2,444
Appropriated Dollars (000's)	250	943	1,124	1,612	1,663	1,643	1,625	814	724	605.7	31,477
Grant Dollars (000's)	480	1,227	1,974	2,673	1,858	1,703	1,407	1,510	1,760	1,466	45,646
Total Dollars (000's)	730	2,170	3,098	4,285	3,521	3,346	3,031	2,324	2,484	2,072	77,162
<b>Leverage Ratio (Grant \$ ÷ Appropriated \$)</b>	<b>1.92</b>	<b>1.30</b>	<b>1.76</b>	<b>1.66</b>	<b>1.12</b>	<b>1.04</b>	<b>0.87</b>	<b>1.86</b>	<b>2.43</b>	<b>2.42</b>	<b>1.45</b>
% Grants Received	100	94	94	82	91	92	91	94	100	90	92%
Toll Free Number	601	3,484	2,560	1,184	1,008	804	388	N/A	N/A	N/A	62,133
Miles Traveled (000's)	31	136	216	273	148	130	96	89	93	19.6	4,234
<b>Outputs</b>											
Conference Presentations	15	41	42	23	75	143	109	113	47	21	1,378
Presentations Non-Conference Beginning 2019									43	45	88
MAPPINGS	-	11	5	4	5	4	4	6	7	3	258
Mailings (000's)	10.4	40.3	23.2	9.3	7.6	10.0	4.5	6.8	7.4	2.5	706.0
Surveys	2	9	8	59	54	71	25	7	1	1	703
Teaching - # of Students Taught in all WIU Depart	260	273	719	219	140	176	119	161	108	98	8,464
Teaching - Total # of Students in MA CED Program	0	-	-	-	-	-	16	20	26	20	--
Training Programs	-	26	92	195	121	186	150	62	94	62	2,557
Books	-	2	-	-	-	1	1	2	-	-	20
Chapters/Articles	24	22	11	22	18	10	4	9	14	24	533
Rural Research Reports	3	10	10	6	4	3	2	2	2	2	224
Trade Publications	-	8	7	17	19	19	-	1	2	3	361
Total Publications	27	42	28	45	41	33	7	12	18	29	1,114
<b>Outcomes</b>											
Conference Participants	1383	2,697	5,879	7,764	4,847	6,838	7,235	12,371	12,646	5,561	160,120
Awards	1	5	5	1	1	-	2	2	2	2	77
Jobs Created/Retained*	-	-	-	684	130	353	497	112	369	402	7,017
SBDC Debt and Equity Funding (Loans) (000's)	-	-	-	5,303	2,652	3,356	1,000	2,248	3,009	3,900	57,474
PTAC Government Contracts (\$000's)				19,671	-	-	33,162	141,467	202,264	199,400	645,545

## Key Issues:

- Coping with budget cuts (\$1M cut 2017 to 2021).
- Sustaining capacity to secure external funding.
- Maintaining research productivity.
- Program expansion despite cuts (SBDC and MA in CED).
- Maintaining IIRA visibility and reputation in the face of university and state leadership turnover.
- Are we tracking the right metrics?

# Concluding Thoughts

- What distinguishes the IIRA from other rural development centers?
  - Partnerships with state executive branch (GRAC) and other agencies.
  - Linking research, outreach, and teaching in one academic unit that reports to Provost
  - Emphasis on plan implementation.
  - Other?
- Local community and economic development efforts are a necessary but incomplete part of a rural development strategy in Illinois and elsewhere.
  - IIRA represents an ongoing (32 year) effort to promote rural local development efforts.
  - Also need state-level policy change and program support.
    - (e.g. funding for higher education, community foundations)
  - Also need federal policy change and program support.
    - (e.g. immigration policy, USDA-RD funding)
- **Are we sustainable?** IIRA succeeds to the extent that it has partnerships with communities, as well as support from state and federal agencies.
  - Subject to the whims of federal and state politics (e.g. program funding, \$ for Higher Ed).
  - Challenge of operating research and outreach programming at a regional teaching university.

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