**CED4: Broadband Deployment & Utilization Area Advisor**

**DESCRIPTION**

The general disciplinary focus of this position is on community and economic development with an emphasis on the expansion of broadband adoption, implementation, policy, and evaluation. The position will also include a community and economic development component, working closely with regional economic development, academic, industry, and governmental organizations to promote regional prosperity through collaborative efforts. ((2) The preferred educational and professional background requirements include a minimum of a master’s degree in community development, agricultural economics, public policy, social studies, rural sociology, agribusiness, or related fields (3) Located at UCCE Butte County Director, this position will coordinate with UCCE county offices in adjacent counties. The advisor will develop their own program and will work collaboratively with other advisors and specialists working in Community and Economic Development.

**JUSTIFICATION**

While ANR has long focused in technical fields such as agricultural and plant sciences, and environment-related issues such as nutrient and water use efficiency, as well as work on community development and rural assistance, these areas have tended to work separately. The lack of affordable, uniform broadband connectivity in rural communities is a key challenge inhibiting rural prosperity and equitable economic growth across California. Community residents and organizations such as farms, schools, healthcare providers, and rural businesses all suffer from lack of broadband access; lack of broadband even harms the capacity of communities to form micro-grids, to protect against power shut off events Given the vital importance of high-speed Internet connectivity to all aspects of modern life, broadband connectivity and the economic vitality of rural regions are tightly linked. For agricultural applications, important climate-smart and water-saving technologies may not be applied due to lack of connectivity. Therefore, it is an important time to integrate ANR's research and extension efforts with community and economic development activities to support the expansion of this critical modern utility and close the “digital divide”. This will better ensure long-term community resiliency, particularly for rural communities and industry, such as agriculture.

The advisor would focus on conducting research and providing technical assistance in support of advancing rural broadband adoption, as well as other rural utility services as new models are developed. This may include activities such as economic analyses related to broadband expansion, novel approaches to increase rural adoption, and identifying strategies for industry-specific broadband applications (e.g., precision agriculture for farms).

The advisor will serve as the regional lead for broadband and rural utility expansion to support rural community resiliency in Butte and adjacent counties. High priority subject areas include the economics of rural broadband, broadband for the agriculture and rural healthcare sectors, new models for delivering broadband service, and expanding broadband to unserved and underserved regional households.

**EXTENSION**

The position will be expected to work in partnership with organizations involved in broadband, agriculture, community development, and environmental justice, take an active role in public outreach and develop strong collaborations with key community groups and other non-governmental organizations. The advisor will collaborate with UCCE Advisors and Specialists, as well as other UC and CSU system academics, and USDA-ARS researchers.

**RESEARCH**

The candidate would address key questions in areas such as the following: 1. How do broadband adoption and implementation increase community resilience? What are the barriers to wider broadband availability and adoption? What kind of policies are needed at the local community level to increase availability and adoption of broadband? 2. What kinds of additional actions might be taken to increase community resiliency when it comes to broadband?

**ANR NETWORK**

IGIS, CIWR, UC IPM, SAREP, UC Small Farms Network, the UC ANR RECS, and Cooperative Extension in Butte and Adjacent Counties.

**EXTERNAL NETWORK**

CSU Chico, SBDC, North State Planning & Development Collective, CAFF, Valley Vision, the AgPlus, UC CITRIS, Butte County Economic Development

**SUPPORT**

Basic operational support of the advisor will be covered by UCCE Butte County. Will provide office space, administrative clerical support, office supplies, IT support services, communication, and a county vehicle.

**OTHER SUPPORT**

USDA Rural Development, CA Emerging Technology Fund, RCRC JPA <https://www.goldenstateconnect.org/>, etc.

**HEADQUARTERS AND COVERAGE AREA**

The position is located in Butte County and will also serve Glenn and Tehama counties.

**DEVELOPED AND PROPOSED BY**

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