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2017 Breakthrough Solutions Conference set for June 7-8

By the U of A System Division of Agriculture

Fast Facts

* Development on the forefront of many communities' minds with the global economy evolving constantly and a majority of rural Arkansas still recovering from the 2007 economic downturn.

* The Breakthrough Solutions Conference will teach communities the tools they need to be successful in the 21st century global economy.

(486 words)

LITTLE ROCK— With the global economy evolving rapidly, and rural Arkansas still feeling the aftermath of the 2007 economic downturn, development is a major priority for many communities. Community and regional leaders will have a fresh opportunity to learn what works in this 21st century global economy on June 7-8, at the 2017 Breakthrough Solutions Conference and pre-conference workshops.

This year's theme is "Re-Imagining Your Community/Region – Asset-Based, Community-Driven, and Technology Enabled." "We have discovered in working with communities and regions that what worked 10 or even 5 years ago may not be working as well today," states Mark Peterson, University System Division of Agriculture professor of community and economic development. "So we need to re-imagine what success would look in this 21st century global economy, and identify concrete strategies that will be effective. The conference will do this, as well as featuring exciting community projects and opportunities in eight high priority issue areas."

In addition, on June 7, two half-day pre-conference workshops will be held:

- "Re-imagining Your Community/Region in the 21st Century Global Economy"
- "Developing Cultural Competence – Effectively Engaging the Diversity of Your Community in a Diverse World".

"The workshops will provide valuable insights and tools that address two of the most important issues facing communities and regions today," Peterson said.

The conference, which will take place at the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service, 2301 S. University Ave., in Little Rock, builds on the work of the Breakthrough Solutions program with Arkansas communities and regions.

One of the keys to development is identifying the assets that are already present in a community. Community assets include things such as buildings, parks, local companies, natural resources, and especially the talents and abilities of local citizens. The next step in community development is to figure out how to leverage these assets to attract tourists, businesses, entrepreneurs, families and retirees. But navigating all of this is not always easy.