

Meeting the Moment: Urban Challenges and the Land-Grant Mission

The land-grant university (LGU) system was established to serve a predominantly rural America. Today, over 80% of the U.S. population lives in urban areas—a demographic shift that demands LGUs reimagine how to engage with communities. LGU's and their Extension organizations are uniquely positioned to lead in this evolution. Joining the [National Urban Research and Extension Center \(NUREC\)](#) offers your university a strategic opportunity to amplify its impact, extend its reach, and lead nationally in addressing urban challenges.

NUREC is advancing urban Extension nationally, bridging the gap between community needs and academic research by leveraging the power of the LGU system and Extension's community-centered approach. NUREC is a national platform for innovation, applied research, and policy development that directly addresses the complex issues facing urban communities. Initially formed as the Western Center for Metropolitan Extension & Research, our success led to interest from LGU's across the nation. Our membership expanded beyond the West to all ECOP regions, leading to our renaming as the National Urban Research and Extension Center.

Strategic Benefits and Opportunities

Engage

- **National Visibility:** NUREC can increase your university's national network across cities and industries through our partnership with organizations like the [National League of Cities](#), offering your faculty a platform to showcase research and Extension programs to new audiences.
- **Collaborative Networks:** NUREC is actively building [Knowledge and Practice Networks](#) to support scholarly collaboration and dissemination; creating opportunities for presenting, publishing, and co-creating knowledge across institutions. The [Built Environment](#) network is creating a cohort technical assistance model with the National League of Cities and developing an extramural funding opportunity. Urban Agriculture & Food Systems and Health & Wellness networks are in development, with leadership opportunities available.
- **Targeted Outreach:** NUREC promotes member applied research and Extension programs through tailored marketing campaigns and national webinar series like the 5-part [Built Environment Rx](#).

Innovate

- **Lead Multi-State Projects:** NUREC prioritizes its members for leadership roles in multi-state, extramural funding opportunities. Examples include current projects funded by NSF and USDA/NIFA.
- **Access to Urban Data:** Through NUREC member institution University of Missouri's Center for Applied Research and Engagement Systems (CARES), members will have unique access to thousands of GIS data layers, providing Extension and researchers a point of entry to geo-spatial data layers to better understand their communities and inform development of Extension programs and research questions¹.

¹ This is currently under development and will be available to members during FY26.

- **Host National Workshops:** With NUREC staff support, you can host national research and synthesis workshops, positioning your university as a thought leader in urban Extension.

Advance

- **Lead National Conversations:** NUREC works to advance the Extension system through a convening role such as the Leading Edge Dialogues, system change-focused conversations, created for the 2019 National Urban Extension Conference that are now a regular feature of the conference.
- **Expand Training Programs:** NUREC can help you build upon existing programs to develop national training modules and enhance workforce development and community capacity, including digital credentialing.
- **Drive Urban Extension:** NUREC can help you respond to emerging urban issues with professional development, project management support, and access to specialists through its national network.

NUREC in Action

ROI and Member Success

NUREC membership delivers tangible returns on investment. Examples include:

- **Fellowships:** Since 2019, NUREC has awarded over \$125,000 in fellowships to member faculty and graduate students to address issues facing metropolitan areas and conduct applied research.
- **Agriculture and the Built Environment:** A USDA NIFA multi-institutional initiative that has fostered interdisciplinary collaboration and partnerships with industry and funders.
- **Transdisciplinary Network:** A model for how NUREC supports scalable, replicable research partnerships and professional development for research faculty in community-based participatory research and engagement.
- **National Research Support Project:** NUREC, with the support of member institutions, is leading a Hatch Multi-state research support project to drive urban research on agricultural production, soils, and nature-based solutions.

A Strategic Alignment

Joining NUREC aligns with the land-grant mission to serve the public good through research, education, and community engagement. It offers a pathway to scale the university's impact, foster innovation, and lead nationally in addressing the pressing challenges of urbanization, equity, and sustainability.

Join Today

An organizational membership to NUREC extends benefits to all of your institution's faculty and staff. Membership fees are paid on an annual basis. To learn more about NUREC and its current activities visit nurec.extension.org. If you would like additional information or want to become a member, **contact Brad Gaolach, NUREC Director, at gaolach@wsu.edu or 425-405-1734.**