
Associate Director Western Rural Development Center (WRDC)

Position Information

Posting Number	SP005324P
Position Title	Associate Director
Department	Western Rural Development Center (WRDC)
Division/College	College of Agricultural & Life Sciences
Location	Boise, Idaho

Posting Context Statement:

The Western Rural Development Center (WRDC) is one of four Regional Rural Development Centers (RRDCs) established by Congress's Rural Development Act of 1972. It is a collaborative effort between the United States Department of Agriculture and the University of Idaho. The core of its funding comes from the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. The WRDC works with land-grant universities and colleges in the Western region to conduct research-based studies and educational outreach programs. It also partners with local communities, native nations, decision-makers, entrepreneurs, families, farmers, and ranchers to address various rural development issues. The WRDC's objective is to enhance the capacity of the region's land-grant universities and colleges and Cooperative Extension Services to help rural communities thrive and become self-sustaining. The WRDC works in conjunction with the other three Regional Rural Development Centers in the country to achieve their shared mission.

Position Overview:

The Associate Director leads highly specialized and multifaceted research and Extension programs, directing the work of junior research and Extension scientists, postdoctoral fellows, and professional staff. The position plays a key leadership role in advancing the WRDC's mission by supporting day-to-day operations, promoting collaborative multistate initiatives, and driving integrated research and outreach efforts across the western United States.

This role combines advanced scientific expertise with strategic and administrative oversight. The Associate Director directs the work of junior research and Extension scientists, postdoctoral fellows, and research associates, establishing priorities, performance standards, and accountability systems. The individual is expected to serve as a principal investigator on sponsored projects. The position ensures that scientific findings are translated into practical, evidence-based applications that strengthen rural communities and inform policy and practice.

The Associate Director maintains an independent research and Extension portfolio while often maintaining active research collaborations external to the university. The Associate Director collaborates closely with the WRDC Director and institutional partners to guide programmatic initiatives and facilitate integrated teams spanning research, education, and Extension functions

Duties may include:

- Selecting, developing, and managing research and Extension portfolios, with a focus on rural community and economic development
- Support the WRDC Director in strategic planning, day-to-day management, and coordination of WRDC programs and operations.
- Hiring, training, and supervising a team of research and Extension support staff, postdoctoral fellows, and junior scientists, including performance evaluation.
- Assigning and managing designated research and Extension program space.
- Oversee technical and administrative aspects of funded projects, including budgeting, deliverable tracking, and reporting.
- Conduct original, applied research and perform complex analyses to inform community and regional development practices.
- Expected to lead and co-author peer-reviewed publications, Extension materials, and professional presentations.
- Review and provide consultation on scientific and Extension projects, proposals, or methodologies.
- Engage with partners, stakeholders, and community leaders to align research and outreach efforts with regional needs and priorities.
- Facilitate multistate and interdisciplinary collaborations that integrate research, education, and Extension functions. May mentor graduate students
- Other duties as assigned.

Assigned Duties:

Extension & Outreach

- Lead and contribute to the design, implementation, and evaluation of WRDC Extension and outreach programs.
- Lead regional and multistate Extension initiatives addressing rural development, community resilience, and economic vitality.
- Lead and contribute to the development of curricula, training materials, and technical resources for Extension professionals and community partners.
- Deliver workshops, webinars, and technical assistance to stakeholders, policymakers, and local leaders.
- Translate research findings into actionable tools, models, and best practices that strengthen rural decision-making and capacity building.
- Coordinate and facilitate collaboration among land-grant universities and colleges, Extension systems, and partner organizations.

- Engage with community stakeholders to identify emerging needs and ensure the relevance and accessibility of WRDC programs.
- Support Extension faculty and staff through professional development and mentorship in applied research and program evaluation.
- Evaluate the outcomes and impacts of WRDC Extension activities using established and innovative assessment methods.
- Represent the WRDC at regional and national meetings, committees, and professional associations related to rural development and Extension work.

Scholarship & Creative Activities

- Design, manage, and lead independent and collaborative research projects focused on rural community and economic development.
- Develop and refine scientific methods, analytical frameworks, and data collection tools for applied and interdisciplinary research.
- Conduct complex data analyses and interpret findings to inform programs, policy, and practice.
- Prepare and publish peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, technical reports, and applied research outputs.
- Translate research findings into Extension and outreach materials for professional and community audiences.
- Present research results at academic, professional, and stakeholder meetings.
- Collaborate with regional, national, and institutional partners on multistate research initiatives.
- Mentor graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and research staff involved in WRDC projects.
- Serve as reviewer or advisor on scientific proposals, manuscripts, and data-driven program documents.
- Lead or contribute to the development of metrics and evaluation frameworks to assess the impact of integrated research and Extension projects.

Service & Leadership

- Assist the WRDC Director in setting the Center's strategic direction and priorities.
- Engage and collaborate with the Board of Directors (BOD) and Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to inform program direction, ensure alignment with strategic priorities, and support effective governance.
- Plan, organize, and oversee the WRDC's operations to ensure efficient management of programs, budgets, and resources.
- Direct, supervise, and evaluate the performance of research and Extension staff, postdoctoral fellows, and professional associates.
- Establish work priorities, performance standards, and accountability systems for staff and projects.

- Manage budgets, track project deliverables, and ensure compliance with institutional, state, and federal requirements.
- Lead administrative planning for multistate and collaborative initiatives, ensuring alignment with the WRDC's goals and stakeholder needs.
- Hire, train, and develop staff to strengthen organizational capacity and team effectiveness.
- Facilitate coordination and integration across research, Extension, and education teams to achieve the WRDC's objectives.
- Serve as a key liaison with institutional leadership, funding agencies, and external partners.
- Provide guidance and consultation on programmatic, operational, and regulatory matters affecting WRDC activities.

Required Experience:

- One (1) year of research and/or outreach experience in community development issues.
- One (1) year of experience supervising and managing staff.
- One (1) year of experience managing and conducting significant original research or Extension, or serving as a senior collaborator on a multi-scholar research and Extension initiative
- Experience with U.S. rural community development issues; demonstrated knowledge of issues facing U.S. rural community development may substitute for this experience.

Required Education:

- Ph.D. in applied economics, rural sociology, political science, or a closely related field.

Required Other:

- Ability to travel.
- Ability to work nonstandard business hours, including weekends and holidays.
- Must possess a valid driver's license and be able to meet policy requirements for driving university-owned vehicles.

Additional Preferred Qualifications:

- Demonstrated record of research.
- Demonstrated Extension, outreach experience, or cooperation.
- Knowledge of the U.S. land grant institution system.
- Demonstrated ability to interact effectively with constituents, client groups, and the general public.

Physical Requirements:

- None

Degree Requirement:

Listed degree qualification is required at time of application

Posting Information

FLSA Status	Exempt
Employee Category	Exempt
FTE	1.0
Full Time/Part Time	Full Time
Funding	This position is contingent upon the continuation of work and/or funding.
Visa sponsorship	06/18/2026
Posting Date	
Closing Date	
Open Until Filled	Yes

Special Instructions to Applicants

- Applications received by August 1, 2026, will receive first consideration.
- If you would like to receive a full position description, including responsibilities, visit this website for a copy. <https://wrdc.uidaho.edu/job-announcements/>
- Unofficial transcripts can be uploaded to the posting documents section. In addition, please note the following documents are required and can be submitted under the appropriate document number:
 - Other Document 1 – Research Statement
 - Other Document 2 – Extension Statement
 - Other Document 3 – Management Approach Statement
 - Other Document 4 – 1 research paper

Applicant Resources

<https://www.uidaho.edu/human-resources/careers/applicant-resources>

Background Check Statement

Applicants who are selected as final possible candidates must be able to pass a criminal background check.

EEO Statement

The University of Idaho is an equal employment opportunity employer, including veterans and individuals with disabilities.