

Rural on the Rise

October 1, 2025

NDAREC headquarters | 3201 Nygren Drive NW | Mandan, ND



Featuring keynote speaker
Ben Winchester
rural sociologist from
University of Minnesota

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

9 a.m. Welcome & Opening Remarks

9:15 a.m. Opening Keynote:
Rural Living in 2025 — Ben Winchester
Explore forces reshaping rural America and data-driven optimism behind rural vitality.

10:15 a.m. Break

10:30 a.m. Resident Recruitment & Living in the Middle of Everywhere
Ben will help us better understand modern economic development tools for a mobile rural society.

11:15 a.m. NDAREC Rural Development Services Update
Overview of technical assistance, financing programs and initiatives.

Noon Networking Lunch & Roundtable Discussions
Join peer-led discussions on topics that matter to you. Table topics will be crowd-sourced and posted onsite.

1 p.m. Rural Housing: The Public Cost of Private Inaction
Ben returns to share actionable strategies to support economic development.

1:30 p.m. Break

1:45 p.m. Unlocking State Housing Resources for Rural Communities

- N.D. Department of Commerce – Chris Schilken
- N.D. Housing Finance Agency – Jennifer Henderson
- Bank of North Dakota, Courtney Heiser & Andrew Tweet

2:30 p.m. Ignite Talks: Rural Housing Solutions

- USDA Rural Development, Melanie Bauer-Dukart
- Red River Community Housing Development Organization, Lisa Rotvold
- Affordable Housing Developers, Andrea Diede
- Lewis and Clark Development Group, Brent Ekstrom

3:30 p.m. Wrap-Up & Closing Reflections

Register online via ndarec.com/rural-rise. Early bird rate (deadline Aug. 29), \$25; Regular rate (deadline Sept. 19), \$50 payable to NDREC Foundation.

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NDAREC rural and cooperative development services are made possible in part with a USDA Rural Cooperative Development Grant matched with contributions from rural electric and broadband cooperatives operating in North Dakota.

NDAREC is committed to providing inclusive and accessible programs, services and events. The event will be held in an ADA-compliant, accessible facility. For reasonable accommodations requests, please contact Melinda Landis, mlandis@ndarec.com.