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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES TO BE  
COORDINATED UNDER NEW PILOT PROJECT**

JACKSON, Miss., - USDA Rural Development State Director Nick Walters, Mississippi Development Authority Executive Director, Robert J. Rohrlack, Jr., and other state and local economic development resource providers announced today a pilot project to assist with the implementation of the community's strategic plans.

The announcement was made at a press conference in Jackson on Wednesday, August 21, 2002 at 11:00 a.m. on the second floor of the state capitol.

The concept, termed "Community Development Coordinating Councils," would offer to any county or locality with a unified plan the option to form an ad hoc council of resource providers to help them implement the plan. The resource providers would work to find ways to implement the plan. The council would disband once the plan is funded.

The unified plan, termed a Community Assessment and Project Plan will be in conjunction with the locality's Planning and Development District office. There are ten Planning and Development Districts in Mississippi, and they have been involved in the development of this concept. Local government officials, local business leaders, local economic developers, and other interested groups would be required to agree on a Community Assessment and Project Plan before requesting the formation of a council.

"This new concept can be summed up in two words: working together. This simple concept should be standard operating procedure in all 50 states," stated Walters. "Here in Mississippi, our office has joined with MDA Director Rohrlack, the Planning and Development Districts, the Institution of Higher Learning the Extension Service and the Delta Regional Authority, to add a formal mechanism for cooperation to the mix."

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“This announcement today is but another great example of how the Advantage Mississippi Initiative can work for economic development. Government should be more accessible and responsive. This is a step towards that. Communities will now find it easier to apply for funding from the various governmental agencies,” said Robert J. Rohrlack, Jr., executive director, MDA.