

Rural Development Strategic Plan FY 2010-2015



United States
Department of Agriculture

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Message from the Under Secretary

Rural Development (RD) plays a large role in the USDA Secretary's Strategic Plan for 2010 to 2015 with strong support (almost all) of USDA Goal # 1 - *Assist rural communities to create prosperity so they are self-sustaining, re-populating, and economically thriving.* RD's Seven priority Strategies for Economic Development are the cornerstone for our support to creating enhanced prosperity for rural Americans. Building 21st Century rural communities requires adoption of strategies that look not only within a community for defining its strengths and opportunities, but to regions where one community can complement and draw upon the resources of another.



- 1 - Strategic Partners: The old adage that there is strength in numbers especially holds true when you build strong and strategic alliances.
- 2 - Capital Markets: Stimulating local economies requires the infusion of new investment opportunities.
- 3 - Regional Collaboration: Smaller, more remote rural communities don't have to be stand-alone economic engines in an oasis, each looking only from within for sustainability.
- 4 - Community Building: Creating great places to live, raise families, provide recreational opportunities, and infrastructure for high paying jobs is very important to our efforts at USDA.
- 5 - Broadband and Continuous Business Creation: Expanding access to high-speed broadband is one of our greatest challenges and our highest priority.
- 6 - Alternative Energy: America's development and use of alternative energies is good for our country and good for our environment.
- 7 - Regional Food Systems: Building markets for local and regionally grown agricultural products makes great economic sense.

The USDA Strategic Plan for FY 2010-2015 differs from previous plans by striving to break down organizational barriers to maximize the Department's available resources. Key priorities and desired outcomes have been identified, as well as the best means and strategies to achieve them. In the pursuit of these outcomes, our three agencies Rural Housing and Community Facilities Services, Rural Business and Cooperative Services, and Rural Utilities Service and the 47 State offices of Rural Development will be encouraged to collaborate more effectively to achieve the shared goals of rural prosperity, preservation and maintenance of forests and working lands, sustainable agricultural production, global food security, and safe and nutritious foods for Americans.

This strategic plan represents the dynamic process within USDA and Rural Development to ensure the best results for America. Through this process, the Department and our mission area are able to continually assess the quality of its provision of services to the public. This close attention to performance outcomes and results will allow Rural Development to better support its constituents as they strive to take advantage of today's new opportunities.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dallas Tonsager". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Dallas Tonsager
Under Secretary of Rural Development

Mission Statement

We provide leadership on food, agriculture, natural resources, rural development, nutrition, and related issues based on sound public policy, the best available science, and efficient management. Specifically Rural Development's (RD) mission is to increase economic opportunity and improve the quality of life for all rural Americans. It is driven primarily through USDA's Goal number 1: to *Assist Rural Communities to Create Prosperity so They Are Self-Sustaining, Repopulating, and Economically Thriving*.

Vision Statement

To expand economic opportunity through innovation, helping rural America to thrive; to promote agriculture production sustainability that better nourishes Americans while also helping feed others throughout the world; and to preserve and conserve our Nation's natural resources through restored forests, improved watersheds, and healthy private working lands. RD's vision is to maximize our program benefits to support a rural America that is a healthy, safe, and prosperous place to live and work.

Process

Rural Development will use over 40 loan and grant programs to create opportunities in housing, business, and infrastructure. Rural Development serves as a catalyst to improve conditions in rural America by offering technical assistance and increasing the flow of capital through leveraged partnerships. Successful rural economic development requires cooperation and coordination with local leaders, public and private sector partners, and educational institutions.

Core Values

Our success depends on:

- **Transparency** — Making the Department's management processes more open so that the public can learn how USDA supports Americans every day in every way.
- **Participation** — Providing opportunities for USDA constituents to shape and improve services provided by the Department.
- **Collaboration** — Working cooperatively at all governmental levels domestically and internationally on policy matters affecting a broad audience.
- **Accountability** — Ensuring that the performance of all employees is measured against the achievement of the Department's strategic goals.
- **Customer Focus** — Serving USDA's constituents by delivering programs that address their diverse needs.
- **Professionalism** — Building and maintaining a highly skilled, diverse, and compassionate workforce.
- **Results Orientation** — Measuring performance and making management decisions to direct resources to where they are used most effectively.
- **Responsible Lending** - Serving as a catalyst to increase the availability of resources in rural areas by sound grant and loan underwriting, strong portfolio management and continued oversight and management of the programs and their subsidy rates (RD).

Strategic Plan Framework

The country looks to rural America to not only provide food and fiber, but also for crucial emerging economic opportunities in renewable energy, broadband, and recreation. People in rural areas operate in a technologically advanced, rapidly diversifying, and highly competitive business environment driven by increasingly sophisticated consumers.

To assist the country in addressing today's challenges, Rural Development operates as a catalyst to impact the success of the Department's lead goal:

- Assist rural communities to create prosperity so they are self-sustaining, re-populating, and economically thriving (Goal 1);

RD through several of its programs also provides economic support to the three other USDA Goals that are covered in a Supplemental RD Support section following our primary Goal # 1 discussions:

- Ensure our national forests and private working lands are conserved, restored, and made more resilient to climate change, while enhancing our water resources (Goal 2);
- Help America promote agricultural production and biotechnology exports as America works to increase food security (Goal 3); and
- Ensure that all of America's children have access to safe, nutritious, and balanced meals (Goal 4).

These four strategic goals articulate the Department's priorities. RD takes responsibility for the three objectives of Goal # 1 that describe the Department's major programmatic policies. USDA's and RD's strategic goals and performance objectives mirror the Department's commitment to provide exceptional service and state-of-the-art science through consistent management excellence across the Department. Sound management is an inherent part of achieving these goals. RD has incorporated its office of Operations and Management strategic management plans that detail support in the areas of human capital, outreach efforts, civil rights, faith-based initiatives, performance and efficiency, information technology, "green" operations, homeland security, and emergency preparedness.

Performance measures will track progress in attaining each objective and its overarching goal. Measures specify baseline information and long-term performance targets. Strategies and means describe the actions that need to be taken to accomplish the strategic goals. The external risk factors section of each goal highlights possible challenges the USDA may encounter in making progress on each strategic goal.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT'S THREE AGENCIES:

RD operates through three complementary agencies to meet its program and service mandates; **Rural Housing and Community Facilities Service, Rural Business - Cooperative Services, and Rural Utilities Service.**

Rural Housing and Community Facilities Service support rural communities and enhance quality of life for rural residents by creating a thriving rural community where people want to live and raise families. In addition to meeting the needs of Rural America, Housing and Community Facilities Programs is committed to developing and implementing comprehensive strategies to improve leadership throughout the organization leading to employee development and talent management to Housing and Community Facilities Programs into a model Federal agency.

- The Community Facilities Programs provide support for the development of infrastructure, enhanced educational opportunities, and available funding for the development of essential facilities to make rural communities bastions of strength for the growth, protection, and education of its citizenry.
- The Multi-Family Programs are focused on the establishment, revitalization, and funding of decent, safe, sanitary and affordable rental units that not only provide housing for individuals and families who are not in a position to own a home, but also to encourage energy efficient, safe and attractive facilities for rural America.
- The Single Family Housing Programs continue to be a leader in government funding of decent, safe, affordable and accessible homes in rural America. The programs provide eligible individuals and families with 100% financing through commercial lenders (guaranteed program) or subsidized financing for the construction, purchase, or rehabilitation of homes in rural America.

Rural Business - Cooperative Services works with private sector and community-based organizations to provide financial assistance and business planning in rural areas to create or preserve quality jobs and thriving business and sustaining energy in eligible service areas. Recipients include individuals, corporations, partnerships, cooperatives, public bodies, nonprofit corporations, Indian tribes, and private companies. The agency accomplishes its mission and supports agency goals and objectives by successfully implementing a number of Business and Cooperative programs:

- ***Business and Industry***
 - Business and Industry Guarantee Loan Program (B&I)
- ***Specialty Programs***

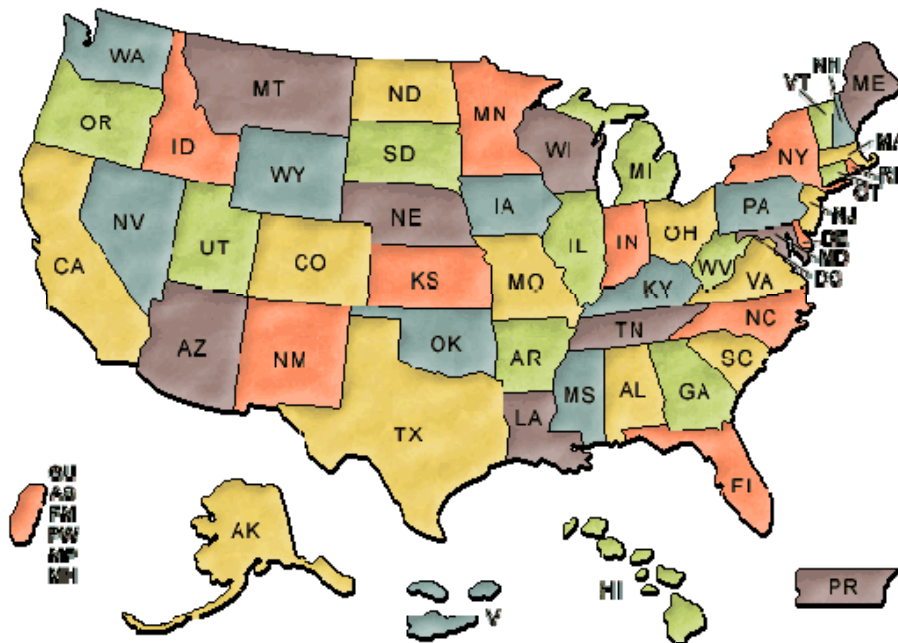
- Intermediary Revolving Loan Program (IRP)
- Rural Business Enterprise Grant Program (RBEG)
- Rural Economic Development Loan/Grant Program (REDLG)
- Rural Microenterprise Assistance Program (RMAP)
- **Cooperative Programs**
 - Value Added Producer Grant Program (VAPG)
 - Rural Cooperative Development Grant Program (RCDG)
 - Small Disadvantaged Minority Producers Grant (SMPG)
 - 1890 Land Grant Institution Initiative (1890)
 - Research on The Economic Impact of Cooperatives (REIC)
- **Energy Programs:**
 - Biorefinery Assistance Program Biorefinery Assistance Loan Guarantees
 - Bioenergy Program for Advanced Biofuels
 - Repowering Assistance Program
 - Rural Energy for America Program/Renewable Energy Systems/Energy Efficiency Improvement Program (REAP/RES/EEI)
 - Rural Energy for America Program/Energy Audit and Renewable Energy Development Assistant (REAP/EA & REDA)
 - Rural Energy for America Program/Feasibility (REAP/FEASIBILITY)
 - Rural Energy for America Program Guaranteed Loan Program (REAP LOAN)

Rural Utilities Service mission is to promote a portfolio of affordable Investments in Rural American infrastructure, competitive and sustainable business or job creation, environmental stewardship, non-discriminatory life-quality improvements, and the internal expertise for superior delivery of utilities-focused legislative and policy mandates

- The Electric Programs support alternative, reliable, efficient and affordable energy and the infrastructure capacity, transmission, and systems to deliver these across rural communities.
- The Telecommunications and Broadband programs promote affordable, high-quality, broadband telecommunications service throughout rural America.
- The Water and Environmental Programs support safe, sustainable and affordable water and wastewater infrastructure and services designed to meet the current and future rural communities' needs.

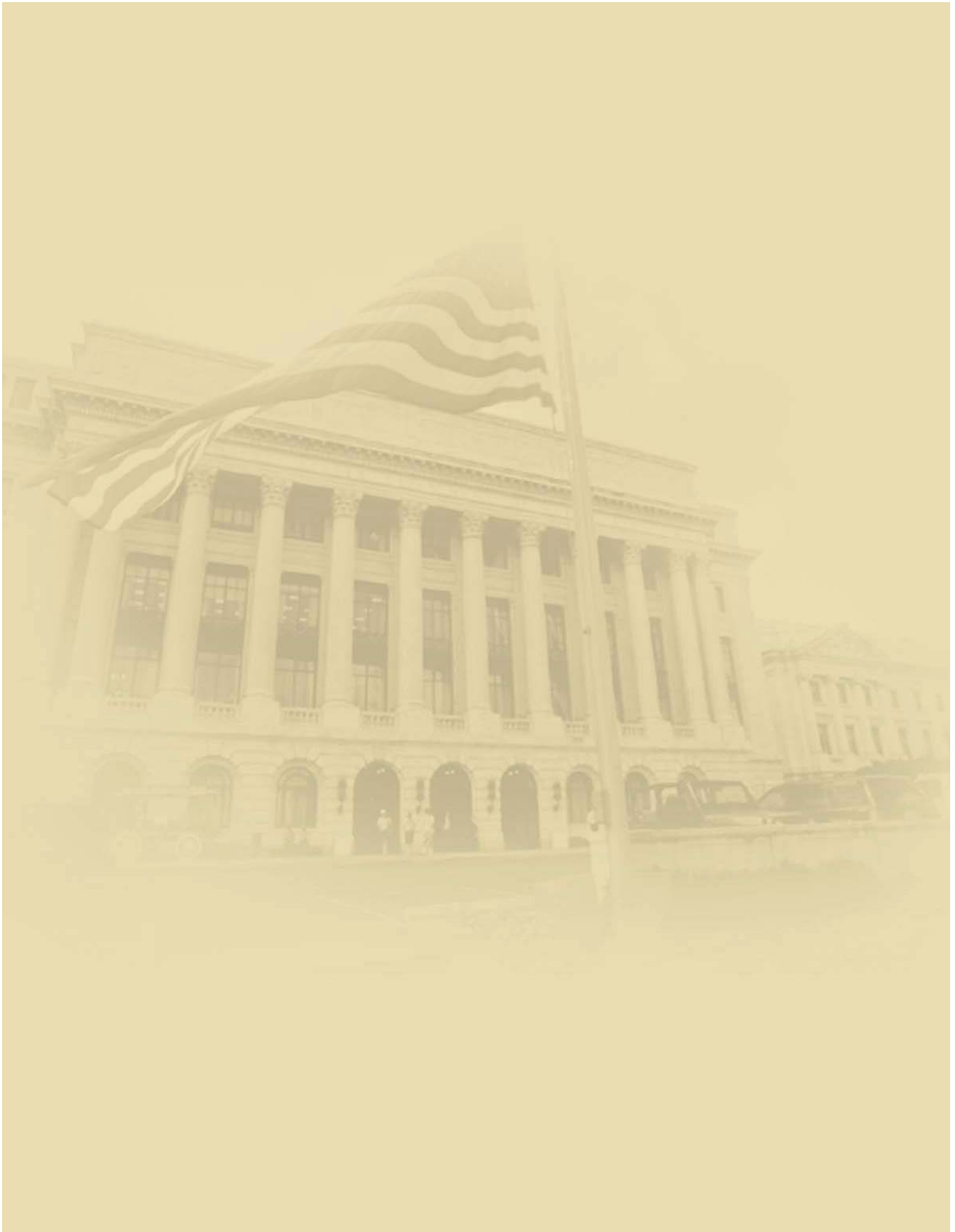
RD's 47 State Offices are a strong component of our program delivery system. Operating through 47 main State facilities and nearly 450 Regional and local operations our national team represents USDA and RD on the ground throughout rural America. Through this network RD nationwide delivers Federal investment and commitment for equal opportunities in Rural America.

- ✦ USDA has the unique responsibility of coordinating Federal assistance to rural areas of the nation. Rural Development's mission is to help rural Americans to improve the quality of their lives.
- ✦ To do this, USDA Rural Development is working closely with the private and nonprofit sectors and with State, tribal, and local governments to fundamentally change the way Government works. With this new philosophy of public partnership -- this new relationship among Government, industry, and communities -- many positive outcomes for rural Americans are happening daily.
- ✦ Now and in the future, prosperity in rural America depends on ensuring that residents have a wide range of economic opportunities. Rural America's historic strengths -- agriculture and forestry -- will continue as one part of the picture.
- ✦ Rural Development works to make sure that rural citizens can participate fully in the global economy -- with technical assistance and programs that help rural Americans build strong economies to improve their quality of life.
- ✦ OUR FIELD OFFICES ARE A VALUABLE PART OF OUR PROGRAM DELIVERY TO State Offices only http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/recd_map.html



RD has adopted the framework of the USDA Goal #1 for this Strategic Plan. Included in the discussions below you will see reference and cross reference to our three supporting agencies, and to the Under Secretary's RD "Seven" Priority Objectives laid out in our introduction above as we provide the foundational support for this important Goal and our mission area.

Link to our State Offices Website <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/StateOfficeAddresses.html> or http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/recd_map.html.



Strategic Goal 1: Assist Rural Communities to Create Prosperity so They Are Self-Sustaining, Repopulating, and Economically Thriving



is the leading advocate for rural America. The Department supports rural communities and enhances quality of life for rural residents by improving their

economic opportunities, community infrastructure, environmental health, and the sustainability of agricultural production. The common goal is to help create thriving rural communities where people want to live and raise families, and where the children have economic opportunities and a bright future. RD's three mission agencies Rural Housing Service (RHS), Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBS) and Rural Utilities Service (RUS) focus their work on expanding rural prosperity through regional and local economic development (See detail of all RD's Programs in Appendix D page 33).

USDA revitalizes rural communities by expanding economic opportunities and creating jobs for rural residents. USDA, in cooperation with its public and private partners, is connecting rural residents to the global economy by expanding access to broadband to unserved and underserved communities; promoting rural leadership in sustainable renewable energy development; creating new opportunities for small agricultural producers to market their products by developing local and regional food systems; ensuring that rural residents capitalize on potential opportunities presented by the Nation's efforts to develop markets for ecosystem services and mitigate climate change; and generating jobs through recreation and natural resource conservation, restoration, and management in rural areas. USDA operates job training and business development programs that give rural residents the tools and capacity to access markets and enter the green economy.

USDA is working to enhance the livability of rural communities. The Department uses 21st century technology to rebuild infrastructure, ensure that rural residents have decent housing and homeownership opportunities, clean water, adequate systems for handling waste, reliable electricity and renewable energy systems, and critical community facilities including health-care centers, schools, and public safety departments. USDA also helps

communities invest in strategic green-infrastructure planning and protection of critical natural resources.

The economic vitality and quality of life in rural America also depends on a financially healthy agricultural system and access to agricultural markets. The country's farmers help ensure that all of America and many other parts of the world have nutritious and safe food, adequate energy sources, and fiber products sufficient to meet the needs of our rapidly growing population. USDA works to ensure American farmers and ranchers are competitive and producers have access to new and international markets, adequate support in times of economic or environmental distress, and the ability to manage their risks. The Department strives to provide agricultural producers with an adequate safety net comprised of necessary risk management tools, disaster assistance, and prompt and equitable assistance for farmers, ranchers, and eligible landowners. USDA encourages producers to be good stewards of their lands so American agricultural production is economically and environmentally sustainable, as well as socially beneficial.

USDA will achieve this goal through a focus on asset and data-driven investment decisions coupled with strategic place-based decision making. The Department will provide on-the-ground support (financial, technical, and planning assistance) for local multi-county, community-driven strategic plans. USDA will also use the Rural Innovation Initiative to promote economic opportunity and job creation in rural communities. These investments will facilitate and support regional economic development by combining a multitude of financial and technical resources to maximize the collaborative economic development impact on high-priority regions. As part of this strategy, USDA will create partnerships to leverage investments made by other Federal departments, tribal, State, and local partners, and private entities to more effectively support rural communities and regions. These investments allow and support our long-term national prosperity by ensuring that rural communities are self-sustaining, repopulating, and thriving economically.

Four of RD's Priority Strategies work in tandem to support all the initiatives in creating economic prosperity:

1 - Strategic Partners: The old adage that there is strength in numbers especially holds true when you build strong and strategic alliances. Identify strategic partners to best serve the regions and communities who are our customers (for example National Rural Electric System) to combine resources for enhanced rural economic development

2 - Capital Markets: Stimulating local economies requires the infusion of new investment opportunities. Bolster existing private credit structure working with capital markets through guaranteeing quality loans with lasting community benefits to expand the investments and keep the wealth in rural communities

3 - Regional Collaboration: Smaller, more remote rural communities don't have to be stand-alone economic engines in an oasis, each looking only from within for sustainability. Create 5 to 10 regional collaborative efforts between communities and interested and supportive parties to integrate RD investments with USDA investments and other federal, state, local public or private funds that foster regional development

4 - Community Building: Creating great quality places to live, raise families, provide recreational opportunities, and infrastructure for high paying jobs is very important to our efforts at USDA.

Over the next 5 years, USDA will work to enhance rural prosperity (Objective 1.1), create livable communities (Objective 1.2), and support a sustainable, competitive agricultural system (Objective 1.3).

Objective 1.1 – Enhance Rural Prosperity

While rural communities face unique challenges in creating and sustaining good jobs, they are also presented with unprecedented opportunities for economic growth. RD's Rural Business Programs and Rural Utilities Broadband Programs form the foundation for continuous business creation and investments of entrepreneurial capital through loans and grants that support small company job creation. Through Rural Housing Programs, affordable housing, both home ownership and rental housing, are critical components to rural economic vitality. Investments in residential infrastructure such as electricity, water and waste facilities, broadband, schools, and public safety departments enable

and form the foundation for strong communities. Building on the infrastructure; businesses, cooperatives, and broadband attract economic improvements. And in combination with support for economic improvements, RD programs provides the support for new and revitalized housing needed in thriving rural communities that offer the prosperity and quality of living to keep Americans in these communities, and support and grow our other sustainable RD investments.

Rural development programs enhance rural prosperity by establishing the foundation for regional and community economic opportunities. The Department's commitment to the unserved and underserved is enhanced through regional collaboration with strategic stakeholders and the capital markets. Investments in infrastructure include direct funding and credit for broadband and other advanced telecommunication systems; reliable electricity and renewable energy; beneficial business projects; alternative energy and biofuel production facilities; as well as sustainable feedstock systems that utilize biomaterials and biomass.

The Department works to ensure that rural residents have the ability to capture these opportunities so that rural families thrive and rural youth see a bright future in their hometowns.

USDA revitalizes rural communities by expanding opportunities for job creation and economic growth. (See performance measure 1.1.1.) The Department has identified five pillars that support the achievement of this objective: (1) increasing access to broadband; (2) facilitating sustainable renewable energy development; (3) developing regional food systems; (4) capitalizing on climate change opportunities; and (5) generating and retaining jobs through recreation and natural resource restoration, conservation, and management. In addition, USDA operates business development and job training programs to give citizens advanced community development opportunities, continuous business creation opportunities, and the tools and capabilities to access markets and gain employment.

Pillar 1 — Increasing Access to Broadband

Expanding broadband capacity into communities that otherwise might not have access provides businesses and communities increased opportunity to form networks and connect to the global economy. USDA will deploy

broadband infrastructure in unserved and underserved areas in the United States by targeting outreach, expanding the availability of public computer centers, and encouraging the adoption of broadband service. The Rural Utilities Service's Broadband and Traditional Telecommunications Programs have averaged \$1 billion in annual investments that deploy broadband capable systems and interconnectivity to rural America. Increased access to broadband will help rural communities attract new business and cooperative development; increase local leadership development; and improve community services and capacity through community connect, distance learning, and telemedicine programs. This is a clear Priority; **RD Strategy # 5 - Broadband and Continuous Business Creation:** Expanding access to high-speed broadband is one of our greatest challenges and our highest priority.

(See performance measure 1.1.2.)

Pillar 2 — Facilitate Sustainable Renewable Energy Development

USDA promotes rural America's role in renewable energy production by providing leadership in the research, development, and sustainability of renewable energy and energy efficiency. The Department's activities will support the reduction of both America's greenhouse gas emissions and dependence on foreign oil. The Rural Business Service's (RBS) Energy Programs and RUS Electric Programs form the foundation in developing alternative fuels and electricity sources. USDA programs make it economically feasible for farmers, ranchers, and other rural small businesses to invest in alternative energy production and energy-saving activities. Through funding opportunities in the form of payments, grants, loans, and loan guarantees for energy projects such as biomass, biofuels, wind, solar, geothermal, hydro-electric, and ocean waves; the Department is committed to developing clean energy sources, promoting energy efficiency, and curbing the effects of climate change. When compatible with other natural resource goals, USDA will facilitate the use of public lands in our National Forest System to support sustainable renewable energy development. The Department will play a role in developing and deploying the sustainable use of biofuels as a renewable energy resource. The future of the biofuels industry also includes the commercialization of second- and third-generation feedstocks and the use of non-food sources. USDA programs can also target financial assistance for gains in energy efficiency.

Renewable energy loans and grants foster energy independence as farmers, ranchers, and other rural businesses convert from traditional to environmentally sustainable energy.

- 1) RBS's energy division manages a number of grant programs that provide resources to produce feasibility studies and allow rural businesses and entrepreneurs to conduct research, develop and implement renewable, reliable, efficient and affordable energy systems and products. Renewable Energy Loans and Grants foster energy independence as farmers and other rural businesses convert from expensive and environmentally unsustainable traditional energy consumption to renewable energy sources.
- 2) Rural Energy for American Program makes it economically feasible for farmers, ranchers and other rural small businesses to invest in renewable energy production and energy saving activities, reducing the cost of energy services and increasing the available supply. The various advance biofuel biorefinery programs encourage the replacement of fossil fuels and use of non-food sources for the production of advanced biofuels. Guaranteed Biorefinery Loans provides loan guarantees for the development, construction and retrofitting of commercial-scale biorefineries producing advanced biofuels, and grants to help pay for the development and construction costs of demonstration-scale biorefineries producing advanced biofuels to meet key Presidential and Secretarial energy independence and energy security priorities.
- 3) The future of the biofuels industry lies in the commercialization of second and third generation feedstocks. The Section 9003 Program is a critically important investment in that evolution.

The distributed nature of these renewable resources holds great potential for increased employment, prosperity, and local energy in rural areas. This is one of our targeted **RD Priority Strategies # 6 - Alternative Energy:** America development and use of alternative energies is good for our country and good for our environment. (See performance measure 1.1.3.)

Pillar 3 — Develop and Support Regional Food Systems

An increased emphasis on regional food systems will have direct and significant benefits to rural communities. Increased economic activity in food-related sectors of the economy help communities build and maintain prosperity. RD's Programs have several investment vehicles that stretch through the food system value chain and provide investment support beyond farming food production through cooperative services, value added processing, energy alternatives and operations efficiencies. Building on the foundation established in the 2008 Farm Bill, USDA will work closely with all its strategic partners – Federal, tribal, State, county, local, community, and private sector – to develop and revitalize the critical infrastructure necessary for vibrant regional food systems. This includes supporting innovative new opportunities as well as proven business approaches like cooperatives. Farmers markets continue to provide an important distribution channel for direct-to-consumer sales. Regional food hubs will also play a role in enabling regional food systems to serve traditional and institutional customers.

USDA continues to support the planning, coordination, and education necessary for thriving regional food systems, and the recognition and replication of successful models. This is the final **RD Priority Strategy # 7 - Regional Food Systems**: Building markets for local and regionally grown agricultural products makes great economic sense.

Pillar 4 — Capitalize on Opportunities Presented by the Nation's Efforts to Develop Markets for Ecosystem Services and Mitigate Climate Change

Climate change is a critical challenge facing the United States and the world. Farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners have a role to play in addressing climate change. The Nation's response to climate change also represents a potential opportunity to create wealth and revitalize communities in rural America. Emissions from domestic agriculture account for 6 percent of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, while U.S. lands sequester approximately 12 percent of the Nation's annual greenhouse gas emissions. By expanding stewardship practices such as conservation tillage, afforestation, construction of methane digesters, improved forest management, and nutrient use efficiency, landowners

could play a role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing carbon sequestration. The President has called for an **economy-wide target of reducing emissions** in 2020 to 17 percent below 2005 levels. USDA conservation and energy programs will target actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase carbon sequestration.

The potential emergence of a viable **greenhouse gas offsets** market—one that rewards farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners for permanent stewardship activities—also has the potential to play a role in helping America become energy independent and in the Nation's efforts to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. Further, the potential for new environmental markets for other ecosystem services, such as improved water quality, water conservation, and biodiversity, could provide landowners with significant new sources of revenue.

Climate change is already affecting U.S. agriculture, land and **water resources**, and biodiversity; and will continue to do so, creating risks that threaten rural prosperity. USDA has a responsibility to support efforts of landowners in adapting to climate change through conservation practices that conserve water, reduce catastrophic fires, and protect and restore flood-prone areas, among others. USDA will expand its work with landowners to increase adoption of practices that will make farms, ranches, and forestlands more resilient to the effects of climate change.

Pillar 5 — Generate and Retain Green Jobs and Economic Benefits Through Natural Resource and Recreation Programs

USDA is a key player in the President's America's Great Outdoors Initiative to build a 21st century conservation agenda, based on the experience and ideas of people from across the country. The goal of the initiative is to **conserve our natural resources**, both public and private, while **reconnecting Americans to the outdoors**.

USDA natural resources **conservation, restoration, and land management programs generate and sustain rural jobs** and prosperity. Forests and grasslands generate economic value by attracting tourism and recreation visitors; **sustaining green jobs; and producing timber and non-timber products, minerals, food, water, and renewable and non-renewable energy**. USDA recreation programs create direct and indirect recreation, tourism, and related service-sector jobs and economic benefits. These benefits

include work restoring or creating trails and facilities; providing camping, boating, and outfitter and guide services; and supporting associated retail businesses. Hunting and fishing activity is also an important economic driver in rural America, and leads people to protect habitat and maintain interest in the outdoors.

Other programs generate restoration jobs, which reduce hazardous fuel loads, restore wildlife and fish habitats, and improve watershed conditions on national forests and grasslands, and tribal, State, and private lands. USDA also works with farmers, ranchers, and others to conserve and restore private wetlands, croplands, wildlife habitats, and riparian areas. The Department’s partnerships with farmers, ranchers, and communities create corridors for wildlife, prevent and reduce impacts from flooding or other extreme weather events, and support the creation of green space for rural recreational use.

To supplement these five pillars and further support rural regional economic prosperity, USDA, both by itself and by working with partners, provides job training and business development opportunities for rural and urban residents. These include the natural resources-based Job Corps and Youth Conservation Corps for young adults; cooperative business development; community economic development and strategic community planning; along with faith-based and self-help initiatives. In 2009, the USDA graduated 2,779 students from USDA-run Job Corps Centers. These and other programs provide the educational opportunities, training, technical support, and tools for rural residents to start small businesses and access jobs in agricultural markets, the green economy, and other existing markets, as well as acquire training in vocational and entrepreneurship skills they can use in the marketplace and business sector.

Performance Measures

1.1.1 Annual number of jobs created or saved through investments in business, entrepreneurship, cooperatives, and industry

Baseline 2009		Target 2015	
68,969		85,000	
2006	2007	2008	
71,715	72,710	72,907	

1.1.2 Annual number of subscribers receiving new or improved broadband telecommunication and services

Baseline 2009		Target 2015	
190,000		402,500	
2006	2007	2008	
300,000	360,000	780,000 ¹	

1.1.3 Millions of kilowatt hours (mkWh) generated in rural America from alternative energy sources

Baseline 2009		Target 2015	
1,504 mkWh		3,123 mkWh	

Additional Objective 1.1 Key Performance Measures included in the MD&A

Rural Business – Business & Industry Guaranteed Loans and Grants

Delinquency rate (excluding bankruptcy cases)

Baseline 2009		Target 2015	
9.46%		8.04%	

Small businesses assisted

Baseline 2009		Target 2015	
21,415		32,123	

Community Development Programs

Number of jobs created and saved in Rounds I, II and III & REAP Communities

Baseline 2009		Target 2015	
6,373		9,560	

¹ One broadband loan for \$267 million accounted for 447,114 subscribers, which was an anomaly for FY 2008.



Telecommunications Program

Number of borrowers' subscribers receiving new or improved telecommunication services

Baseline 2009		Target 2015	
175,416		170,000	
2006	2007	2008	
N/A	155,137	182,175	

Percentage increase of borrowers' subscribers receiving new or improved telecommunication services

Baseline 2009		Target 2015	
-3.71%		5.70%	
2006	2007	2008	
N/A	12.86%	17.40%	

Leveraging of telecommunications financial assistance (private investment to Rural Development funding)

Baseline 2009		Target 2015	
\$2.60:1		\$3:20:1	
2006	2007	2008	
N/A	\$3.42:1	\$3.04:1	

Distance Learning and Telemedicine

Number of educational institutions receiving distance learning facilities

Baseline 2009		Target 2015	
1,198		489	

Number of healthcare institutions receiving telemedicine facilities

Baseline 2009		Target 2015	
576		369	
2006	2007	2008	
N/A	512	541	

Farm Bill Broadband

Percentage growth of borrowers' subscribers receiving new or improved telecommunication services

Baseline 2009		Target 2015	
N/A		6.00%	
2006	2007	2008	
N/A	141%	195%	

Strategies and Means

USDA will create opportunities in rural communities by encouraging communities to come together to form regional strategies. Through grassroots, asset-based strategies that rely on strong analytics, this approach will empower rural citizens and ensure that Federal dollars are better targeted. This approach will encourage collaboration among Federal, State, and local Governments; as well as between the government, private sector, non-profit community, and educational institutions. USDA resources will also be used to initiate regional planning efforts with tribes. They will also be used with other Departmental assistive efforts, such as planning grants, leveraging of resources, additional funding, access to credit, and similar efforts to address the unique challenges in rural economic development that are part of the experience of tribal governments and communities.

Through multiple agencies, USDA will apply several broader strategies to enhance rural prosperity. These include leveraging technology and innovation, encouraging business development, regional planning, and increasing available funding and access to credit.

Leveraging technology and innovation would entail using technology and innovation in distributing business tools, information, and resources. It would also use non-formal education programs, outreach, Future Farmers of America (FFA), 4-H, and other youth development programs to transfer knowledge and technology.

Encouraging business development will involve providing up-to-date training for field staff to properly utilize these five pillars in directing activities and investments. It would also entail identifying and marketing business programs in high-need areas. The Rural Innovation Initiative is designed to promote economic opportunity and job creation in rural communities. To support this innovative approach, USDA plans to make investments from approximately 20 existing programs. These funds would be allocated competitively

among regional pilot projects tailored to local needs and opportunities. This targeting effort will allow the Department to prioritize areas with the greatest need and potential by encouraging comprehensive and innovative approaches to foster rural revitalization.

Assisting rural communities in meeting their funding needs as well as increasing their access to credit means applying strategies that include maintaining a farm credit system with sound collateral, loan, and guaranteed-loan portfolio oversight to secure investments. It also means participating in marketing efforts to reach national lenders (capital markets) and leveraging USDA resources with private capital. The Department seeks to provide equitable access to capital for rural minority business owners and targeted outreach to underserved and minority communities. It also provides on-the-ground technical assistance to communities for access and resources to Federal investments. USDA seeks to enhance rural regions by supporting community and multi-county driven strategic plans that connect regions to emerging and existing industry sectors.

- Develop new economic indicators to better assess rural community impacts and constituent satisfaction;
- Complete implementation of all Recovery Act funded programs by 2010;
- Increase the activities and organization efforts in regional and community planning initiatives;
- Maintain sound collateral, loan, and guaranteed-loan portfolio oversight to secure investments;
- Improve marketing efforts to reach national lenders (capital markets);
- Identify and market business programs in high need areas;
- Provide access to capital for rural minority business owners;
- Offer loans that traditional lenders do not make;
- Leverage USDA resources with private capital;
- Work in concert with other Federal, State and local government funding opportunities;
- Provide continuous staff development and cross train employees to maximize program efficiencies;
- Use technology and innovation to provide distribution of business tools, information, and resources;
- Build leveraging partnerships to expand resources going into rural areas;

- Direct resources to the neediest projects, the underserved, and unserved communities;
- Work with local communities to assure funds are invested wisely;
- Maintain reliable electric systems in rural communities;
- Deploy broadband services to rural America;
- Facilitate utility deployment of smart grid, renewable energy, energy efficiency, and carbon capture and storage;
- Facilitate utility deployment of water, waste, and environmental water systems;
- Provide access to capital for home ownership in rural areas;
- Provide access to capital to build and preserve affordable rental housing;
- Facilitate the deployment of community facilities with critical health care, schools and safety investments to the neediest communities; and
- Address the special needs of economically distressed regions and those areas with limited resources.

Specific strategies and means applied to the five pillars include:

Pillar 1 — Increasing access to broadband: **USDA-wide Strategies & Means**

- Perform outreach activities to inform rural communities of the benefits of broadband; and
- Provide loans and grants, and loan and grant combinations to telecommunications firms and cooperative service organizations to support broadband, distance learning and telemedicine program, and community connect program deployments within unserved and underserved communities.

RD Specific Strategies & Means

- Work for results within, across community and state line and across USDA agencies (i.e. FSA & NRCS) to provide access to resource tools and education.
- Train and disseminate State staff (telecommunications FTE et al) on telecommunications program, and leverage training for rural community businesses and entrepreneurs.
- Create a system to monitor success of Broadband implementation and portfolio management and the creation of business, jobs and economic opportunities.

Pillar 2 - Facilitate sustainable renewable energy development.

USDA-wide Strategies & Means

- Support expanding production of advanced biofuels through the financing of the widespread deployment of full-scale commercial facilities;
- Evaluate programs and coordinate efforts across USDA and other Federal departments and agencies to support production capacity, sustainable commercialization, and distribution of biofuels to accomplish the Renewable Fuel Standards mandate (RFS2) while establishing markets and demand for biofuels;
- Create viable engineering, business, and financial protocols to evaluate proposed commercial renewable energy and energy efficiency projects to benefit both the commercial and government sectors;
- Develop programs to help industry utilize new science and technology in sustainably producing and transforming the Nation’s renewable biomass, wind, solar, and geothermal resources into cost competitive renewable energy;
- Integrate existing research and development areas for bioenergy and climate change, food and fuel, and renewable energy production/use and the environment;
- Support the establishment and production of eligible crops such as annual and non-woody perennial crops for conversion to bioenergy by assisting agricultural and forest land owners and operators with the collection, harvest, storage, and transportation of renewable biomass for conversion of bioenergy;
- Integrate renewable energy production into sustainable agriculture, forest, and range management systems;
- Develop superior genetic biofuel feedstocks and the needed sustainable production and logistic systems suited to regional conditions and biofuel refinery specifications; and
- Develop processes and technologies to produce value-added bioproducts that can be added alongside biofuels production to diversify product options, increase income, and diversify risks.

RD Specific Strategies & Means

- Develop processes to improve energy efficiencies and green power into single- and multi-family housing dwellings, community facilities, water and waste systems, and commercial and entrepreneurial business models.
- Develop best practices for development of renewable energy projects including opportunities to finance national transmission corridors.
- Train and disseminate State staff (renewable energy FTE et al) on energy programs, and leverage training for rural community businesses and entrepreneurs.

Pillar 3 — Develop and support regional food systems.

USDA-wide Strategies & Means

- Connect investments to regional economic development strategies, such as food hubs;
- Use job training and business development programs across urban and rural communities to reduce the rural-urban divide;
- Provide regions with an economic analysis to better support decision making;
- Develop local leadership and increase productive capacity for processing, storage, and distribution;
- Develop and support educational outreach to regions to assess local food systems; and
- Connect regional food systems to existing markets (e.g., universities, community facilities, school programs).

RD Specific Strategies & Means

- Identify partners to maximize RD’s ability to finance local and regional food systems;
- Develop partners and plans to reduce “food deserts” (locations in an urban, rural or tribal community which lack access to fresh foods);
- Identify partnerships and marketing opportunities for Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food and reinforce existing-, and generate new-markets for agricultural products; and
- Align small farmer capital needs with available USDA financing tools including FSA, NRCS and RD (IRP, RMAP, RBEG) programs and resources.

Pillar 4 — Capitalize on opportunities presented by the Nation’s efforts to develop markets for ecosystem services and mitigate climate change.

USDA-wide Strategies & Means

- Develop and assist entry to markets for greenhouse gas offsets to help landowners benefit from opportunities presented by climate change;
- Develop and facilitate participation in multiple ecosystem markets to help landowners generate new income by capturing the economic benefits from ecosystem services;
- Provide technical and financial assistance for conservation, renewable energy, and energy efficiency actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions;
- Support innovative strategies to capitalize on climate change mitigation;
- Provide technical support and analysis to enhance water conservation and restore watershed health; and
- Increase research and development efforts to support water conservation.

RD Specific Strategies & Means

- Continue strong support and improve interagency work on programs to support these goals.

Pillar 5 — Generate and retain green jobs and economic benefits through natural resource and recreation programs.

USDA-wide Strategies & Means

- Provide recreational opportunities in National Forests that offer healthy activity and generate revenue from tourism;
- Create jobs for youth in rural America by funding projects that improve or maintain recreation facilities, particularly trails, on public lands;
- Provide more opportunities for natural resource conservation and restoration work on public lands;
- Support the production of non-timber products, wood, and energy where consistent with natural resource goals;
- Provide technical and financial assistance for conservation work on private lands;
- Collaboratively engage public lands communities in natural resource management;

- Support pathways for entry to the green economy by providing training to youth and adults through job corps centers and youth corps programs;
- Connect investments to regional economic development strategies;
- Participate in and organize public listening sessions for America’s Great Outdoors;
- Work with stakeholders to develop a conservation agenda and connect people to the outdoors; and
- Facilitate the protection of habitat (through restoration and management) and access for hunting and fishing on public and private lands.

RD Specific Strategies & Means

- Use RD programs to support all USDA efforts in the development of green jobs and building sustainable economic development benefits.

OBJECTIVE 1.2 – CREATE THRIVING COMMUNITIES

USDA seeks to enhance the opportunities necessary for rural families to thrive economically and to increase the quality of life in rural communities so that these communities are places where people want to live. RD’s Rural Housing and Community Facilities programs offer the widest possibilities through loan, grant and guaranteed loan funding for essential community facilities for public use in rural areas and may include hospitals, fire protection, safety, as well as many other community-based initiatives. Rural Business-Cooperative Programs and Rural Utilities Programs form the foundation for community development with investments in water, waste systems, electric and telecommunications infrastructure and investments for entrepreneurial opportunities. RD uses 21st Century technology to rebuild the infrastructure of small communities, ensuring that rural residents have decent housing and homeownership opportunities, clean water, adequate systems for handling waste, reliable electricity and renewable energy systems, and vital community facilities, including critical health-care centers, schools, faith-based initiatives, and public safety departments. Affordable housing, both homeownership and rental housing, is a critical component to rural economic vitality. These rural development programs enhance rural prosperity by establishing a foundation for regional and community economic growth while protecting the natural resources people value.

The Department also works to ensure that rural residents live in a healthy and productive environment, with clean air, clean water, and access to outdoor recreation opportunities. A healthy environment is an essential ingredient for thriving, sustainable rural communities and rural quality of life. In addition to enhancing the livability of communities, strategic green infrastructure planning and strategic place-based efforts can provide energy conservation, stormwater pollution abatement, improved public physical and mental health, and other values. USDA partners with communities, local businesses and foundations, and many others to establish urban and community forestry programs. These partnerships also create green infrastructure to maintain, restore, and enhance the natural resources and quality of life in urban and rural communities.

Performance Measures

1.2.1 Annual number of subscribers receiving new or improved water and waste facilities services

Baseline 2007		Target 2015
1,322,063		2,000,000
2006	2008	2009
1,637,554	4,361,972 ²	3,400,000

1.2.2 Annual number of (1) homeownership opportunities generated through rural housing credit programs and (2) affordable rental opportunities for those not able to purchase a home

Baseline 2009	Target 2015
55,957 (homeownership); 469,162 (rental opportunities)	222,000 (homeownership); 600,000 (rental opportunities)

Homeownership Opportunities

2006	2007	2008
42,172	43,532	66,574

1.2.3 Percentage of rural residents who are provided access to new or improved essential community facilities – (1) Health Care Facilities, (2) Public Safety Facilities, and (3) Education Facilities

Baseline 2009	Target 2015
Health: 3.8 percent (2.3 million people), Safety: 5.4 percent (3.3 million people), and Education: 5.7 percent (3.4 million people)	Health: 6.3 percent (3.8 million people), Safety: 5.8 percent (3.5 million people), and Education: 6.5 percent (3.9 million people)

Health Care

2006	2007	2008
3.6 percent	5.98 percent	4.7 percent

² In the years 2008 and 2009, there were several loans to a borrower where the results were anomalies in reporting because those systems captured all the users in a large regional system.

Public Safety

2006	2007	2008
3.4 percent	6.3percent	5.6percent

Education with Child Care

2006	2007	2008
5.6 percent	3.3 percent	5.2 percent

1.2.4 Annual number of borrowers' subscribers receiving new or improved electric facilities

Baseline 2009		Target 2015
9,800,000 ³		8,165,000

2006	2007	2008
8,200,000	5,800,000	8,100,000

Additional Objective 1.2 Key Performance Measures included in the MD&A

Single Family Housing

Delinquency rate (Direct loans only)

Baseline 2009	Target 2015
Rate is 72 basis points below FHA	Same

Delinquency rate (Guaranteed loans)

Baseline 2009	Target 2015
Rate is 265 basis points below FHA	Same

Multi-Family Housing

Number of projects with accounts more than 180 days past due

Baseline 2009	Target 2015
296	262

³ In 2009, there was \$2.4 billion more available for program participants than is projected to be available in 2011. The 2015 target will be met with significantly less program-level funding.

Total number of units selected for funding for New Construction

Baseline 2009	Target 2015
3,671	1,500

Total number of units selected for funding for preservation

Baseline 2009	Target 2015
6,188	7,500

Decrease in number of families in substandard housing in MFH portfolio

Baseline 2009	Target 2015
2,222	2,322

Decrease in number of families in the MFH properties paying more than 30 percent of income in rent

Baseline 2009	Target 2015
65,878	2,500

Increase in the amount of leveraged funds in Rural Rental Housing for both New Construction and rehabilitation

Baseline 2009	Target 2015
\$816,466,017	\$416,425,365

Electric Program

Dollar amount of new and/or improved electric facilities

Baseline 2009		Target 2015
\$6,598,477,000		\$7,100,000,000

2006	2007	2008
N/A	\$3,889,764,304	\$7,100,000,000

Strategies and Means

For developing rural community infrastructure, USDA employs strategies appropriate to the community's needs. Perhaps the most important of these strategies is working in concert with other Federal, tribal, State, and local governments to develop partnerships to leverage resources in rural areas. The Department also encourages increased regional and community planning initiatives that build local planning capacity for taking advantage of economic and environmental opportunities. USDA provides economic analyses and promotes successful economic development models to regions to help facilitate strategic decision making to support livable communities. It may also assist in planning strategic investments that are community-driven in conjunction with a region's long-term vision. For instance, the Department works with State offices to improve priority performance goals by establishing place-based funding, decision-selection criteria, targeted areas, and customers.

USDA also coordinates outreach efforts supporting increased access to the Department's programs and services for women and minority farmers. The Department addresses the special needs of economically distressed regions by providing training to local staff and directing resources to projects in underserved and unserved communities. In addition, USDA programs provide educational and mentoring opportunities for youth that develop long term community leadership capacity.

USDA-wide Strategies & Means

To implement these strategies, USDA will:

- Facilitate the utility deployment of smart grid, renewable energy, energy efficiency, and carbon capture and storage for maintaining reliable electric systems in rural communities;
- Facilitate the deployment of water, waste, and environmental water systems;
- Facilitate the deployment of community facilities with critical health care, school, library, and safety investments to the neediest communities;
- Protect rural water supplies through watershed protection and restoration efforts;
- Improve access to green space and supporting livable communities through urban and community forestry programs;
- Collaboratively engage public lands communities in natural resource management;

- Engage tribal governments in tribal consultation concerning natural resource management;
- Work strategically with regions to promote sustainable planning and implementation; and
- Provide on-the-ground financial and technical support for regions.

RD Specific Strategies & Means

- Target strategic partners (Community leaders, organizations, cooperatives, foundations and other financing agencies) who will collaborate on decisions, actions and resources to support rural economic development and regional collaboration.
- Support capital markets with collaboration across government entities, to attract capital from foundations, investors and rural banking and capital markets to assist RD projects in rural America.
- Perform extensive outreach to engage stakeholders and investments that encourage and leverage delivery of program benefits to regional economic development solutions.
- Promote economic development plans that reflect economic opportunities, prosperity, population and strategies to build and retain economic benefits in rural communities.

OBJECTIVE 1.3 – SUPPORT A SUSTAINABLE AND COMPETITIVE AGRICULTURAL SYSTEM

The economic vitality and quality of life in rural America and the U.S. economy at large depends on a financially healthy agricultural system. RD's three mission agencies Rural Housing Service, Rural Business –Cooperative Service and Rural Utilities Service support expanding rural agriculture and food systems.

Agriculture is one of only a few sectors in the U.S. economy in which exports are creating a positive trade balance. U.S. agricultural producers are not simply farmers and ranchers. They are often small business owners trying to survive and support their families and rural communities in a challenging global, technologically advanced, and competitive business environment. USDA works to ensure that American farmers and ranchers are prosperous and competitive, have access to new and international markets, can manage their risks, and are supported in times of unusual economic distress or disaster. USDA also ensures agricultural and forestry land is used in an environmentally sustainable way.

It will take five coordinated tasks to meet Objective 1.3. These tasks are: ensuring a financially sustainable and competitive national agricultural system; facilitating access to international markets; supporting the development of new domestic markets; maintaining a strong financial safety net; and protecting the foundations of the agricultural system.

RD provides several value-added agricultural value-chain production funding vehicles. However, our first four RD Strategic Objectives work to bring comprehensive possibilities to the agriculture marketplace: (1) - Strategic Partners, (2) Capital Markets, (3) Regional Collaboration: and (4) Community Building. With the final RD Priority Strategy # 7 - Regional Food Systems: RD supports the foundation for building markets for local and regionally grown agricultural products for greater rural economic prosperity.

Ensure a Financially Sustainable and Competitive Agricultural System

USDA management understands that, without profits and fair competition comparable to other U.S. business sectors, farm and ranch businesses cannot be sustained; the agriculture sector will not be able to produce the needed quantities of nutritious and safe foods, fuel, and fiber products for the rapidly growing U.S. and global populations; and rural communities cannot expect their youth to remain in farming.

Thus, the Department plays a number of critical roles in increasing prosperity and sustainability in our Nation's agricultural system and rural communities. USDA also looks for ways to improve crop and animal production practices, including environmentally sustainable ones. The Department further encourages the development of ecosystem markets that offer payments to producers for ecosystem services, such as carbon sequestration, water quality, wetlands, wildlife habitat, and species protection.

USDA works to ensure minority, women, beginning, and other socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers have full knowledge and access to its programs

Facilitate Access to International Markets

For every \$1 billion of agricultural exports, it is estimated that around 8,000 jobs are created and an additional \$1.4 billion in economic activity is generated. This work contributes directly to the prosperity of local and regional economies across rural America through increased sales and higher income.

The Department expands market opportunities in many ways. USDA connects agricultural exporters to customers, ensuring a level playing field for trade. It also provides timely information on agricultural markets in the United States

USDA currently supports the farms-of-the-future concept, which describes strategies by which farmers and forest landowners can extend their production portfolios by providing and being compensated for measurable environmental benefits.

Support the Development of New Domestic Markets

One component of ensuring the financial sustainability of producers is to continue to identify and access new markets domestically. USDA provides support in developing opportunities through market trend analysis and business and marketing tools. This assistance includes overseeing national standards for the production and handling of agricultural products labeled as organic. (See performance measure 1.3.1.) Goods that are certified as organic frequently bring higher prices at market, resulting in increased returns for farmers. The Department also promotes access by producers to direct-to-consumer, local and regional, and other emerging opportunities. Finally, USDA supports the development of new markets, especially in food deserts and other underserved rural and urban communities.

Ensure a Strong Farm Financial Safety Net

USDA helps maintain economic stability in the agricultural sector, enhancing the competitiveness and sustainability of farm economies. Improve the Foundations of the National Agricultural System

USDA efforts support the long-term viability of the U.S. agricultural system by providing Federal leadership in creating and disseminating knowledge spanning the biological, physical, and social sciences related to agricultural research, economic analysis, statistics, extension, and higher education.

Performance Measures

1.3.1 Number of agricultural operations certified as organic

Baseline 2009	Target 2015
16,564	20,655

1.3.7 Number of farmers and ranchers that gained an economic, environmental, or quality-of-life benefit from a change in practice learned by participating in a Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) project

Baseline 2008	Target 2015
10,849	14,300
2006	2007
9,610	10,240

Strategies and Means

USDA-wide Strategies & Means

To increase the prosperity, competitiveness, and market opportunities for rural America, the USDA will:

Ensure a financially sustainable and competitive agricultural system

- Shape farm price support policies to increase farm and rural prosperity, and provide viable business opportunities for beginning farmers, racial and ethnic minority farmers and women producers;
- Provide agricultural producers and agribusinesses with information to make informed decisions in response to changing market conditions;

- Provide current, unbiased price and sales information to assist in the orderly marketing and distribution of farm commodities;
- Ensure quality price indices are publicly available for all commodities that are included in the Farm Bill where a marketing loan is available or a USDA program payment can be made;
- Implement policy and regulations and perform industry analysis that keeps pace with the changing livestock, meat, and poultry industries;
- Enforce fair market practices and take action against anti-competition behavior, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Justice, to create a level playing field for producers;
- Ensure that USDA-approved and licensed warehouse programs maintain adequate storage facilities, adequate frequency of warehouse examinations, and reduced product losses;
- Ensure that USDA foods are delivered timely, within contract specifications, and at competitive prices;
- Develop markets for ecosystem services and help farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners access those markets;
- Examine and accredit State and private certifying agents to ensure their compliance with national organic standards; and

USDA-wide Strategies & Means

Facilitate access to international markets

- Provide agricultural producers with information to make informed decisions in response to changing market conditions both at home and abroad;
- Stimulate greater involvement in international markets by small- and medium-sized enterprises selling U.S. agricultural products;
- Promote increased sales by U.S. agricultural exports in rapidly growing foreign markets.

USDA-wide Strategies & Means

Support the development of new domestic markets

- Promote locally and regionally produced and processed food;
- Foster new opportunities for farmers and ranchers;
- Stimulate agriculturally and food-based community economic development;
- Expand access to affordable, fresh and local food;
- Cultivate healthy eating, and educated, empowered consumers; and
- Demonstrate the connection between food, agriculture, community, and the environment.

USDA-wide Strategies & Means

Ensure a strong farm financial safety net

- Improve the effectiveness of outreach efforts to minority producers, beginning farmers, and women by expanding efforts to partner with other Federal, state and local agencies, tribal governments, and non-governmental organizations that serve these targeted populations of agricultural producers;
- Enhance existing partnerships with land-grant universities and other educational organizations to identify and assist minority producers, beginning farmers, and women producers, and remove program barriers to participation;
- Collaborate with other governmental agencies, tribal governments, and non-governmental organizations to increase knowledge of risk management alternatives with a special emphasis on understanding the needs and barriers to utilization by minority, beginning, and women producers;
- Provide educational opportunities to beginning farmers and ranchers to help ensure they are knowledgeable of whole-farm planning, including farm financial management, conservation of natural resources, and increased agricultural productivity, and marketing opportunities, such as community-supported agriculture and farmers markets;
- Inform farmers and ranchers of risk management tools and strategies, especially in underserved and emerging communities;

- Mitigate the adverse results of natural disasters and provide relief to producers; and
- Expand outreach efforts for farm storage facility loans to eligible biomass, fruit, and vegetable producers;

RD Specific Strategies & Means

- RD is supporting the Farm Safety Net in the following specific areas:
 - Investing across the Value Chain of the Food system
 - Facilitating Generation transfer of Infrastructure around Agriculture
 - Supporting Off-farm Income
 - Expanding Renewable Energy
 - Supporting of Food System value added and income/production diversification
 - Investing in Farm Infrastructure necessary for sustainable economic viability
 - Investing in Farm equipment processes and production

USDA-wide Strategies & Means

Improve the foundations of the national agricultural system

- Help higher-education institutions with undergraduate and graduate programs in agriculture develop strong science, technology, engineering, and math curriculums, and increase enrollment in secondary and two-year post secondary programs, especially from underrepresented groups;
- Advance knowledge to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in agriculture systems;
- Develop advanced biomass crops and methods for their sustainable production for use as biofuels and other forms of biopower;
- Develop these systems into viable and marketable products and ecosystem services;

- Develop new and improved practices to reduce producer costs;
- Use the cooperative extension system to transfer technology and best practices from the laboratory into active use; and Develop and maintain national standards governing the production and handling of agricultural products labeled as organic.

External Risk Factors

Many external factors influence the outcome of this strategic goal. These might be changes in environmental conditions, including climate change, changing weather patterns, and ecosystem health. Other factors involve natural disasters, animal and plant pests and disease outbreaks, and intentional food contamination. Still others are primarily economic. Production-level factors include the volatility of farm commodity prices, workforce skills and competencies, and increasing input and operating costs for farms. Certain macroeconomic factors are also important, including rising unemployment, inflation, changes in the relative strength of the U.S. dollar to foreign currencies, and changes in the market demand for organic or bio-based products. Other influences include international concerns, such as trade policy and regulatory developments in other countries, and economic and cultural influences on student enrollment.

Supplemental RD Support:

Strategic Goal 2:

Ensure Our National Forests and Private Working Lands⁴⁴ Are Conserved, Restored, and Made More Resilient to Climate Change, While Enhancing Our Water Resources

Strategic Goal 3:

Help America Promote Agricultural Production and Biotechnology Exports as America Works to Increase Food Security

Strategic Goal 4:

Ensure that All of America's Children Have Access to Safe, Nutritious, and Balanced Meals

Strategic Goal 2:

Ensure Our National Forests and Private Working Lands Are Conserved, Restored, and Made More Resilient to Climate Change, While Enhancing Our Water Resources

America's prosperity is inextricably linked to the health of our lands and natural resources. Forests, farms, ranches, and grasslands offer enormous environmental benefits as a source of clean air, clean and abundant water, and wildlife habitat. These lands generate economic value by supporting the vital agriculture and forestry sectors, attracting tourism and recreation visitors, sustaining green jobs, and producing ecosystem services, food, fiber, timber and non-timber products, and energy. They are also of immense social importance, enhancing rural quality of life, sustaining scenic and culturally important landscapes, and providing opportunities to engage in outdoor activity and reconnect with the land.

Federal, tribal, State and private lands face increasing threats from climate change, catastrophic wildfires, intense floods

⁴⁴ "Private working lands" include farms, ranches, grasslands, private forest lands, and retired cropland.

and drought, air and water pollution, aggressive diseases and pests, invasive species, and development pressures resulting in land and water conversion and reduced wildlife habitat. At the same time, there are immense opportunities to capture and increase the environmental, economic, and social benefits these lands provide.

The Department is also a key player in the President's America's Great Outdoors initiative to build a 21st century conservation agenda, based on the experience and ideas of people from across the country. The goal of the initiative is to conserve our natural resources, both public and private, while reconnecting Americans to the outdoors.

USDA provides technical, financial, and planning assistance to its public and private partners. Over the next 5 years, USDA will help to restore and conserve the Nation's forests, farms, ranches, and grasslands (Objective 2.1); lead efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change (Objective 2.2); protect and enhance America's water resources (Objective 2.3); and reduce the risk from catastrophic wildfire and restore fire to its appropriate place on the landscape (Objective 2.4).

OBJECTIVE 2.1 – RESTORE AND CONSERVE THE NATION'S FORESTS, FARMS, RANCHES, AND GRASSLANDS

OBJECTIVE 2.2 – LEAD EFFORTS TO MITIGATE AND ADAPT TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Compliance on Electricity Production – Environmental Standards

OBJECTIVE 2.3 – PROTECT AND ENHANCE AMERICA’S WATER RESOURCES

RDs Water and Environmental Programs directly support water supplies and waste system enhancements in rural America’s water resources

OBJECTIVE 2.4 – REDUCE RISK FROM CATASTROPHIC WILDFIRE AND RESTORE FIRE TO ITS APPROPRIATE PLACE ON THE LANDSCAPE

RD is supporting these specific efforts:

- Wood to Energy programs
- Working farm land preservation in support of economic development
- Eco-tourism and Education/Cultural (eco & wildlife) Centers
- Environmental Restoration
- Waste water Management

Strategic Goal 3: Help America Promote Agricultural Production and Biotechnology Exports as America Works to Increase Food Security

OBJECTIVE 3.1 – ENSURE U.S. AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES CONTRIBUTE TO ENHANCED GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY

Global food insecurity affects people worldwide, and the current global economic downturn only exacerbates the problem. Food assistance alone is not enough. Adequate food supplies must also be based on enhanced domestic, regional, and international trade, in-country increases in production,

and the ability of the poor to earn sufficient incomes to purchase food. The largest contributing factors to insufficient in-country production are chronic under-investment in agriculture, inefficient inputs and markets, and poor governance.

American agricultural resources and expertise play a significant role in increasing global food security by promoting technology- and science-based solutions and capacity-building activities in other countries.

Performance Measure

Strategies and Means

To enhance global food security, USDA will:

- Increase in-country capacity to develop sustainable agricultural systems;
- Promote the adoption of technology- and science-based solutions;
- Promote sustainable agricultural production and improve U.S. national and food security through the Department’s component of the Civilian Response Corps and the deployment of Department experts abroad to assist in developing sustainable food systems in priority countries.

OBJECTIVE 3.2 – ENHANCE AMERICA’S ABILITY TO DEVELOP AND TRADE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS DERIVED FROM NEW TECHNOLOGIES

OBJECTIVE 3.3 – SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE PRODUCTION IN FOOD-INSECURE NATIONS

Supporting other nations in Economic Development and technical visits, discussions and lessons learned.

Strategic Goal 4:

Ensure that All of America’s Children Have Access to Safe, Nutritious, and Balanced Meals

OBJECTIVE 4.1 – INCREASE ACCESS TO NUTRITIOUS FOOD

More than one-third of those eligible for SNAP are not participating. While the rate of program coverage has expanded in recent years, it remains below the record-high coverage levels of the 1990s. USDA targets a participation rate that exceeds those levels by 2015. The Department will use outreach to raise awareness of SNAP’s benefits. USDA also will continue to work closely with State partners to streamline program operations and improve customer service.

USDA uses all available opportunities, including new communication and eGovernment technologies, to serve customers, work with partners, and administer programs as effectively as possible.

Strategies and Means

To increase access to nutritious food, USDA will:

- Develop and equip grocery stores and other small businesses and retailers to sell healthy food in communities that currently lack these options, thereby improving food options, creating jobs, helping revitalize distressed communities, and opening up new markets for farmers to sell their products, which can provide an economic boost to rural America; and
- Promote public-private partnerships to encourage grocery store and other healthy food outlet development in underserved areas, helping tackle the obesity epidemic, creating jobs, and revitalizing low-income neighborhoods.
- RD is supporting these efforts:
 - Food Cooperatives
 - Community Gardens
 - Food Deserts
 - Renovation of Elementary and Secondary Schools’ Cafeterias for utilization of Fresh Foods
 - Farm to School Programs

OBJECTIVE 4.2 – PROMOTE HEALTHY DIET AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY BEHAVIORS

RD provides physical fitness and wellness centers, playgrounds, sidewalks/trails/bike-paths and school physical education facilities.

OBJECTIVE 4.3 – PROTECT PUBLIC HEALTH BY ENSURING FOOD IS SAFE

OBJECTIVE 4.4 – PROTECT AGRICULTURAL HEALTH BY MINIMIZING MAJOR DISEASES AND PESTS TO ENSURE ACCESS TO SAFE, PLENTIFUL, AND NUTRITIOUS FOOD

Management Initiatives

OVERVIEW OF MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES

USDA is working to transform itself into a model organization. Rural Development follows these Management Initiatives verbatim to support the Department's model organizational goals. By strengthening management operations and engaging employees, the Department will improve customer service, increase employment satisfaction, and develop and implement strategies to enhance leadership, performance, diversity, and inclusion. The transformation will result in process improvements and increased performance.

USDA expects to:

- Transform itself into a model Federal department for effective program delivery by enhancing leadership, encouraging employee inclusion, and focusing on improving customer and employee satisfaction;
- Provide civil rights leadership to its employees, applicants, and customers by reducing the inventory of program civil rights complaints, analyzing field operations for systemic improvements, and increasing the use of early resolution processes (a form of alternative dispute resolution) for civil rights and equal employment opportunity complaints;
- Coordinate outreach efforts to increase access to its programs and services among women and minority farmers;
- Use resources more effectively by incorporating new strategies and policies into its management practices that increase performance, encourage efficiency, and align activities to the Department's strategic goals;
- Implement modern information technology systems and policies in a cost effective manner that improve program delivery and internal and external communications capabilities to better serve USDA constituents;
- Maximize its "green" operations by increasing recycling and the use of bio-preferred products and alternative energy, and decreasing water and energy usage at its facilities;
- Improve Departmental emergency preparedness and security measures to protect its employees and the public

to ensure the continued delivery of its products and services; and

- Enhance human resources policies and practices to develop a workforce more representative of the national population and that has the necessary skills to ensure the continued and improved delivery of services.

Initiative I: Engage USDA Employees to Transform USDA into a Model Agency –

Engaging employees to transform USDA into a high-performing, inclusive department that benefits from leadership at all levels will require a pointed and comprehensive effort. USDA will continue to generate opportunities to listen to employees' concerns and ideas. The Department also will design and implement beneficial systemic changes to processes that affect employee satisfaction and human resources.

USDA's plans include:

- Developing and implementing comprehensive strategies to improve leadership;
- Effectively managing employee development, talent management, employee progression, and customer and community outreach across the Department; and
- Measuring and increasing the satisfaction of its customers and employees.

Initiative II: Provide Civil Rights Services to Agriculture Employees and Customers

USDA leadership has established civil rights as one of its top priorities. To be successful, all employees must be committed to making the Department a model in the Federal Government for respecting the civil rights of its employees and constituents. USDA will change the direction of equal employment opportunity, civil rights, and program delivery through a comprehensive approach. This approach will ensure fair and equitable treatment of all employees and applicants. It also will improve program delivery to every person entitled to services. This effort will assist the Department to address past errors, learn from its mistakes,

and move forward to a new era of equitable service and access for all.

USDA's plans include:

- Increasing early resolution usage in program civil rights and equal employment opportunity complaints;
- Reducing the inventory of program civil rights complaints; and
- Analyzing field operations for systemic improvements.
- Rural Housing MFH Programs 75% Section 515 – Training the Owners and Managers of those properties.

Initiative III: Coordinate Outreach and Improve Consultation and Collaboration Efforts to Increase Access to USDA Programs and Services

USDA will coordinate and measure the performance of strategic outreach efforts to ensure that all Americans have equal and fair access to key Department programs and services. By promoting USDA values and priorities in such efforts as the People's Garden, the Department looks to enhance the public's knowledge of sustainable growing practices and the importance of the American farm community. USDA will develop or expand enterprise-wide, results-driven initiatives and coordinated efforts. This collective work will increase the viability and profitability of small farm operators and beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers. The Department will coordinate various USDA services for such priority populations as farm workers. USDA also will improve its compliance with Executive Directives by requiring consultation and improved collaboration with tribal governments. Significant improvements will be made in USDA's consultation processes, policies, reporting, and outcomes.

USDA's plans include:

- Measuring and increasing participation in key programs among small and beginning farm operators and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers;
- Coordinating and enhancing programs and services for farm workers to ensure the stability of the agricultural labor force;
- Simplifying procurement and program application processes to ensure fairness and equity of opportunity;

- Expanding the People's Garden concept to exhibit Department values across the Nation;
- Building and leveraging partnerships between itself and non-profit and faith-based organizations to better serve individuals, families, and communities;
- Launching the Office of Tribal Relations, instituting Department-wide policies and reporting procedures, and launching regionally based technical assistance and dialogue opportunities for tribal governments, tribal communities, and individuals served by tribal governments.
- Enhancing tribal relations through improved consultation in compliance with President Obama's presidential proclamation, related directives, and Executive Orders, and the use of targeted means to reach tribal governments, communities, and individual tribal members;
- Increasing USDA commodity procurement contracting opportunities for small-farmer-owned cooperatives through contracting outreach and education, and the aggressive use of contracting vehicles, such as 'set-asides' and preferences;
- Improving the health and wellness of Federal employees by serving local and nutritious food at USDA cafeterias;
- Outreach and marketing materials Tribe & Latino (Tim McNeilly) ; and
- Build upon success from the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act investments to improve results on Persistent Poverty areas.

Initiative IV: Leverage USDA Departmental Management to Increase Performance, Efficiency, and Alignment

In a world of increasingly tight budgets and expanding responsibilities, it is necessary for USDA to ensure the effective and efficient use of its resources. The Department must maintain effective financial controls so that program dollars achieve the outcomes for which they were intended. USDA, led by Departmental Management, will implement strategies to strengthen its financial management by improving internal control systems and by implementing electronic systems that permit real-time reporting. These systems will allow the Department to optimize the use of Recovery Act funding in the creation of jobs and economic opportunities across the country.

As part of improving financial management and resource use, USDA will also build upon its performance measurement system to achieve further results. The Department will expand the use of performance metrics to track areas of success and those needing improvement. This information will allow agency decision makers to align resources to achieve the highest outcome. The Department also will use performance management strategies, including project labor agreements, to strengthen its contracting and procurement activities across the country.

USDA's plans include:

- Using such technology and process improvements as the Financial Management Modernization and the Web-based Supply Chain Management Initiatives to streamline operations;
- Promoting sound financial management through leadership, policy, and oversight;
- Using project labor agreements to ensure proper employment standards where feasible in contracting;
- Implementing strong and integrated internal control systems;
- Increasing the use of performance measurements and standards;
- Optimizing the use of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act resources;
- Implementing and maintaining an infrastructure to provide management with the real-time financial management information necessary for sound decision making;
- Improving cross-servicing for financial and administrative services to itself and other Federal Government agencies;
- Eliminating improper payments;
- Reviewing and addressing problem areas perceived to be affecting management efficiency; and
- Ensuring agency-developed material requiring action by the Office of the Secretary is analytically sound and consistent with Administration policy.

Initiative V: Optimize Information Technology (IT) Policy and Applications

USDA is committed to increasing the economic opportunity and growth of rural communities across America. The Department is working to improve the effective delivery of programs and services to its constituents, applicants, and

customers. The Department is deploying broadband, creating an enterprise platform that enables open communication channels, ensuring the protection of mission-critical operations and customer data, and supporting portfolio views for managing across organization and geographic boundaries. USDA plans to prioritize key technology investments through a re-engineering of the IT Capital Planning and Investment Control process. The Department also looks to ensure open, transparent, and collaborative avenues for easy access to USDA information. In addition, USDA aims to protect the privacy of information collected in service delivery, and modernize foundational elements to consolidate and streamline core IT processes.

RD is working to improve the effective delivery of programs and services to its constituents, applicants, and customers. The mission area is deploying broadband, modernizing its applications to better meet customer's needs, ensuring the protection of mission-critical operations and data, and supporting portfolio views for managing across organization and geographic boundaries. RD strives to ensure open, transparent, and collaborative avenues for easy access to important information. RD aims to protect the privacy of information collected in service delivery, and modernize foundational elements to consolidate and streamline core IT processes.

RD's plan supports the Department's IT initiative to use technology to improve program delivery and communication by modernizing RD's loan and grant systems through the Comprehensive Loan Program (CLP). CLP will modernize and streamline the systems used to deliver and manage RD's housing, business, and utilities loan and grant programs. CLP seeks to develop a more agile IT platform that provides more robust automation support for all RD stakeholders. This updated platform will optimize the loan and grant architecture to enable more rapid rollout of new or changed programs, improved data accessibility and reporting to support executive decision-making, reduced maintenance complexity through consolidation of IT systems, and modernization of the technologies to help ensure availability of support and longevity of systems. The CLP initiative will bring strong benefits to all RD stakeholders as well as to RD's program beneficiaries by improving access to important loan, grant, and program data.

The RD plans also support the Department's IT initiative to implement a modern, secure, robust delivery platform across its enterprise. The infrastructure improvement program, which was initiated for RD to optimize End User Support, Telecommunications, and Business Web Application Hosting, will increase the agility to implement changes to end user computing tools, improve both analog and digital communications relating to voice and data, and enhance

application efficiency. This effort will define a new vision for IT infrastructure, reaffirm end user needs, and increase infrastructure efficiency to address duplication, reduce costs, and increase sustainability, scalability, and flexibility.

USDA's plans include:

- Prioritizing and optimizing all Departmental IT policies, programs, and spending;
- Leveraging resources and internal capabilities to reduce dependence on IT contractors;
- Using technology to improve program delivery and communication, including various IT modernization efforts, geospatial technologies, and social media;
- Integrating information systems to address such management challenges as the Comprehensive Information Management System (CIMS); and
- Implementing a modern, secure, and robust delivery platform across its enterprise.

Initiative VI: Optimize USDA “Green” or Sustainable Operations

One of the President's top priorities for all Federal agencies is to establish an integrated strategy to work towards sustainability and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. As a steward of natural resources, USDA is committed to achieving these goals. The Department will focus its efforts towards sustainable operations. USDA aims to accomplish this task by: decreasing energy intensity; increasing renewable energy use; conserving water; promoting pollution prevention, waste reduction, and recycling; implementing sustainable building design, construction, and operation; increasing green procurement; promoting electronic product stewardship; and embracing environmental management systems to achieve sustainable operation goals. [RD is supporting Department commitments to reduce contract spending by an additional 7% in Fiscal Year 2011.](#)

USDA's plans include:

- Establishing aggressive, Departmentwide greenhouse gas emission goals;
- Monitoring greenhouse gas emissions through annual inventories; and
- Developing and implementing a Strategic Sustainability Performance Plan in accordance with Executive Order 13514.

Initiative VII: Enhance USDA Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness to Protect USDA Employees and the Public

USDA is working to enhance homeland security and emergency activities to provide a coordinated national effort to protect American agriculture and rural communities from intentional harm. The Department will ensure the Nation's quality of life through the continuance of a secure and reliable food supply. USDA will lead these efforts by protecting the food supply, maintaining security of USDA resources, securing infrastructure, and supporting emergency response and program operations nationwide.

USDA's plans include:

- Improving information technology security;
- Strengthening food and agriculture defense;
- Enhancing pandemic flu planning and response;
- Enhancing continuity plans; and
- Upgrading physical security at USDA facilities.

Initiative VIII: Enhance the USDA Human Resources Process to Recruit and Hire Skilled, Diverse Individuals to Meet the Program Needs of USDA

USDA is reforming its hiring process to ensure a streamlined, user-friendly environment for both the applicant and the hiring manager. Such an environment will lead to the identification and selection of the most talented and competent workforce possible. In doing so, the Department will experience increased diversity while addressing current and future skills gaps. USDA is evaluating its human resources policies relative to talent management. Where necessary, the Department is also realigning its policies to further support its transformation of recruitment and retention initiatives. Additionally, USDA is addressing the gap between employee engagement and performance expectations.

USDA's plans include:

- Addressing current or future gaps in skill sets and workforce capacity;
- Increasing diversity in its workforce;
- Aligning its human resources policies;
- Streamlining hiring processes; and
- Establishing an employee satisfaction action team.

Initiative IX: Enhance Collaboration and Coordination on Critical Issues through Cross-cutting Department-wide initiatives

More than ever, the problems facing our customers require a holistic response. To enable agencies and programs to more effectively and efficiently achieve the strategic goals established in this plan, USDA will utilize cross-cutting initiatives to focus on the most critical and complex challenges. Initiatives do not perform programmatic activities; rather, they enhance the work already being done by USDA by offering an innovative environment for learning, sharing, and problem solving across traditional organizational boundaries. Examples of current collaborative, cross-cutting initiatives include the Biotechnology Working Group; *Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food*; and *Let's Move!*.

USDA's plans include:

- Establishing cross-cutting initiatives to more effectively address critical challenges;
- Identifying opportunities for collaboration across agencies; and
- Creating new, results-based reporting mechanisms to improve communication, problem solving, and decision making.

Appendix A:

Program Evaluations

USDA used several tools in developing this strategic plan, including:

- Program evaluations;
- Advisory committees;
- Office of Inspector General (OIG), Government Accountability Office (GAO), and other external reviews; and
- Internal management studies and performance measurement systems.

The following table highlights some of these tools as they relate to USDA’s strategic goals.

Program Evaluations Used to Develop the Strategic Plan				
Goal	Evaluations/ Analyses	Brief Description	What Was The Effect	Date
Goal 1	Independent reviews of Rural Development (RD) Customer Satisfaction Surveys	JD Powers review of RD performance when compared to mortgage companies providing single family home services	RD was rated “superior”	Every 2 years (most recently FY 2009)
	Economic Research Service (ERS) annual macroeconomic estimates	Review, analysis, and update of macroeconomic models that estimate number of jobs created and additional economic activity generated from the export of agricultural products at both farm and non-farm levels	Estimates the impact of agricultural export activity on jobs and income at both farm and non-farm levels	Annually
	Oversight of Recovery Act monies expended by USDA programs	Oversight of both funded and unfunded Emergency Watershed Protection Floodplain Easement applications	NRCS developed a national oversight and evaluation plan	September 2009
Goal 1 (cont.)	Improper Payments Information Act (IPIA) reviews	Analysis and testing using required IPIA thresholds	Reduction in amount of improper payments	Annually
	OIG and GAO audits and reviews	Financial statement audited annually and programs reviewed on a variable schedule	Staff made improvements to address recommendations	Annually

USDA will undertake many new and ongoing evaluations over the next 5 years. The following table highlights some of the longer-term studies as they relate to USDA’s strategic goals.

Future Program Evaluations and Other Analyses				
Goal	Evaluations/ Analyses	General Scope	Methodology	Timetable
Goal 1				
Goal 1 (cont.)	Economic Research Service (ERS) annual macroeconomic estimates	Review, analyze, and estimate the impact of agricultural export activity on jobs and income at both farm and non-farm levels.	ERS uses sophisticated econometric modeling techniques to estimate the macroeconomic impact of exports on various economic criteria, including jobs and income, at both farm and non-farm levels.	Annually
	RD Customer Satisfaction Surveys	Independent reviews of Customer Satisfaction Evaluations	Surveys are planned for Water and Environmental Programs Direct Loans and Grants, Business & Industry Guaranteed Loans, and Multi-family Housing Guaranteed Loans	Every 2 years

Appendix B:

Cross-Cutting Programs

USDA’s work often cuts across jurisdictional lines within USDA, with other Federal agencies, and with State, local, and private partners. This table lists the primary partnerships that will enable USDA to reach the outcomes in this Strategic Plan. Please note that for the purposes of this table, it is assumed that all USDA Departmental Offices support all strategic goals and management initiatives.

Cross-cutting Programs		
Goal	USDA Primary Agencies	External Organizations
Goal 1	Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Economic Research Service (ERS), Farm Service Agency (FSA), Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS), Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS), Forest Service (FS), Grain Inspection, Packers & Stockyards Administration (GIPSA), National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Office of Budget and Program Analysis (OBPA), Office of the Chief Economist (OCE), Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO), Office of Civil Rights, Office of the Inspector General (OIG), Risk Management Agency (RMA), Rural Development (RD), World Agricultural Outlook Board (WAOB)	Agribusiness industry officials, America On the Move Foundation, American Bar Association, American Farm Bureau Federation, American Savings Education Council, Bio-Based Products and Bio-Energy Coordination Council, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), commercial lenders, commercial warehouse operators, Commodity Futures Trading Commission, commodity groups (cooperators), Department of Commerce, Department of Defense (DOD), Department of Education, Department of Energy (DOE), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of the Interior (DOI), Department of Transportation, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Farm Foundation, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Financial Literacy and Education Commission, Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Helping America’s Youth, Internal Revenue Service, Jump\$tart Coalition for Personal Financial Literacy, land-grant and other universities and colleges, National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), National Animal Rescue and Sheltering Coalition, National Institutes of Health, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Savings Forum, National Science Foundation (NSF), Office of U.S. Trade Representative, private and cooperative lending institutions, private industry trade groups, private sector insurance companies, producers, regional development banks, Small Business Administration, State Agriculture Finance Programs, State and regional trade associations, State departments of agriculture, U.S. Army, U.S. Agency for International Development, U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), and Veterans Administration

Appendix C:

Strategic Consultations

USDA regularly consults with external stakeholders, including USDA’s customers, partners, landowners, policy experts, and industry and consumer groups regarding our programs’ effectiveness. While many of the consultations were not conducted expressly for the development of USDA’s Strategic Plan, they did impact strategic goals, objectives, strategies, and targets. Additionally, the Strategic Plan was developed in accordance with guidance from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA).

With the full support of its senior leadership, USDA regularly consults with stakeholders and seeks validation of all goals, objectives and performance measures from employees and the public.

Strategic Consultations			
Goal	Date	Who	Purpose
All Goals	May – October, 2009	Secretary Vilsack hosted 22 listening sessions or “Rural Forums” with residents in small communities across the country as part of President Obama’s “Rural Tour.”	Listening to diverse voices in communities throughout rural America and learning from citizens what the Administration can do to strengthen the rural communities. Frequently addressed topics included: jobs and quality-of-life issues, climate change and energy legislation, rural infrastructure, and concerns about the dairy industry.
Goal 1	December 8-10, 2009	Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Health and Human Services, animal humane organizations, and States	Develop and refine objectives and strategies for effective disaster response efforts for companion animals
	Ongoing through FY 2010	Department of Justice	Joint public workshops exploring competition issues affecting the agriculture industry in the 21st century and the appropriate role for antitrust and regulatory enforcement in that industry
	Ongoing	Producers, producer groups and associations, commercial lenders, and land-grant colleges and universities	Share information and provide input on program delivery and outreach
	Ongoing	AARP Foundation, American Council on Consumer Interests, American Humane Association, Association for Financial Counseling and Planning Education, Consumer Federation of America, Council for Agricultural Science and Technology, Federal interagency working groups and task forces, industry groups, land-grant and other universities and colleges, National Association of Counties, National Association of Elementary School Principals, National Endowment for Financial Education, National Home Safety Council, National Institute for American Agriculture, other Federal agencies, practitioner associations, producer groups, and science societies and associations	Stakeholder input and partner coordination for program planning

Strategic Consultations			
Goal	Date	Who	Purpose
Goal 1 (cont.)	Annually (most recently November 2009)	U.S. Agricultural Export Development Council participants	Annual conference that brings together U.S. Government officials, agribusiness industry groups, and State and regional trade associations to work in partnership with USDA in market-development and export-promotion programs. Purpose is to share information and best practices, with the goal of improving coordination and effectiveness of U.S. agricultural export promotion efforts.
	November 2009	Listening Sessions with tribal leaders and representatives	Dialogue conducted in conjunction with the President's Tribal Leaders Conference
Goal 2	Ongoing	Federal interagency working groups and task forces, land-grant and other universities and colleges, National Council for Science and the Environment, other Federal agencies, and science societies and associations	Stakeholder input and partner coordination for program planning
	Ongoing	Public	Obtained public comments on interim final rules and proposed rules for the 2008 Farm Bill programs. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is in the process of developing final rules, giving full consideration to the public comments received.
	July 14, 2008	Federal, State, and local government agencies, academic professionals, non-government organization (NGO) representatives, and the public	Listening session on the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative authorized under the 2008 Farm Bill. More than 250 stakeholders provided ideas about priority practices, programs, and geographic areas.
	Ongoing	Conservation Districts, Resource Conservation and Development Program Councils, State conservation agency partners, NRCS field representatives, and the public	Listening sessions and focus groups for the Soil and Water Resources Conservation Act to obtain partner and public input on priority natural resource concerns and potential approaches to strengthening conservation adoption
Goal 3			
	April 29-30, 2009	Stakeholders and the public	Issue-focused public meeting to solicit feedback on revisions to existing regulations regarding the importation, interstate movement, and environmental release of certain genetically engineered organisms
	Ongoing	Department of Commerce, Department of Defense, Department of State, USAID, multinational organizations, and educational and research institutions	Iraq and Afghan Provincial Reconstruction and Development. These war-torn countries require vast resources to rebuild and develop basic infrastructure to enable them to have the capacity to feed themselves throughout the year. Because of the agrarian nature of these populations and their unique needs, USDA is a major participant in these ongoing efforts, which require constant joint strategic consultations involving multidisciplinary teams with the expertise to facilitate these efforts.
Goal 4			
	June 17-18, 2009	Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection, State officials and industry representatives from the U.S., Mexico, and Belize	Reviewed citrus health status in the U.S. and Mexico regarding Citrus Greening and Asian Citrus Psyllid and developed a tri-national approach
	June 2010	State departments of agriculture and specialty crop industry representatives	Annual Farm Bill Section 10201 meeting to gather stakeholder input for activities to be conducted in FY 2011

Strategic Consultations			
Goal	Date	Who	Purpose
	Ongoing	America On the Move Foundation, American Community Gardening Association, Association for Size Diversity and Health, Community Food Security Coalition, Federal interagency working groups and task forces, industry groups, land-grant and other universities and colleges, other Federal agencies, and science societies and associations	Stakeholder input and partner coordination for program planning
	Ongoing since October 2009	National Academy of Sciences	Peer review projects and initiatives proposed by the Department to ensure that USDA decisions are science-based and data-driven
	Ongoing	Safe Food Coalition	Monthly meeting with the consumer group to discuss food safety issues



Appendix D: Summary of Rural Development's Programs



Committed to the future of rural communities.

Rural Housing (Selected Programs)

Program	Objective	Applicant	Uses	Population	Loan/Grant	Terms/Conditions
Single Family Home Ownership Direct Loans	Safe, well-built, affordable homes for rural Americans.	Families and individuals.	Buy, build, improve, repair, or rehabilitate rural home as the applicant's permanent residence.	Rural areas with populations of 10,000 or less and, under certain conditions, towns and cities between 10,000 and 20,000 population.	Direct loan.	Up to 100% of market value or cost. Loan term of 33/38 years. Applicant may be eligible for payment assistance (subsidy) on the loan.
Single Family Home Ownership Direct Repair Loans and Grant	To help very-low-income applicants remove health and safety hazards or repair their homes.	Families and individuals who currently own their home.	Repair/replace roof, winterizing, purchase or repair of heating system, structural repair, water/sewage connect fees, etc.	Same as above.	Direct loan and grant.	Loans up to \$20,000 up to 20 years at 1 percent. Grants available to very-low-income applicants 62 years or older unable to pay 1 percent loan.
Single Family Home Ownership Guaranteed Loans	To assist moderate income applicants(s)/household(s) in buying their homes by guaranteeing loans made by private lenders.	Families and individuals.	Purchase new or existing home and refinance existing Rural Development guaranteed loan.	Same as above.	Loan guarantee.	30-year, fixed rate. Interest rate is negotiated between lender and borrower. Loans up to 100 percent of market value plus the amount of the guarantee fee being financed.
Mutual Self-Help Home Ownership Loans	Individual homes built by a group of applicants, with construction guidance of a non-profit organization.	Families and individuals. Individual applications for each participating individual/family.	Construction of a new home, in part, by the applicant under supervision.	Same as above.	Direct loan.	Individuals/families receive a direct loan from Rural Development. Participating nonprofit housing organization receive grants for project supervision.
Mutual Self-Help Housing Grants	Assist lower income families in building their own homes.	Non-profits and public bodies.	Technical assistance to assist small groups of families to build each other's homes.	Same as above.	Grant.	Grant agreement.
Rental Housing for Families and Elderly Direct Loans and Loan Guarantees	Safe, well-built, affordable rental housing for very-low-income individuals and families.	Individuals, trusts, associations, limited partnerships, for-profit and non-profit entities, tribes, public bodies.	New construction or substantial rehabilitation of rental housing.	Same as above.	Direct loan or loan guarantee.	Up to 100 percent of total development cost (non-profits); 97 percent (for-profits); 95 percent (for-profits with Low-Income Housing Tax Credits). 30-year term with up to 50 year amortization.
Housing Preservation Grants	Repair and rehabilitate housing owned or occupied by very-low- and low-income rural families.	Public bodies and non-profit organizations.	Operation of a program which finances repair and rehabilitation activities for single family and small rental properties.	Same as above.	Grant.	Grant agreement.



Rural Housing (Selected Programs)

Program	Objective	Applicant	Uses	Population	Loan/ Grant	Terms/Conditions
Community Facilities Programs	Improve, develop, or finance essential community facilities for rural communities.	Public bodies, non-profit organizations, and Indian tribes.	Build or improve essential community facilities to include public safety, fire and rescue, schools, libraries, hospitals, other healthcare facilities, etc.	City, town, or unincorporated area of not more than 20,000 population. Facilities must primarily serve rural areas.	Direct loan or loan guarantee, grant.	Up to 100 percent of market value. Term for useful life of the facility or equipment, the state statute, or 40 years. Maximum grant 75 percent of project cost. Grant eligibility based on income, population, and need.
Farm Labor Housing	Safe, well-built affordable rental housing for farm workers.	Individuals, public and private non-profit organizations.	New construction or substantial rehabilitation of rental housing.	N/A	Direct loan and grant.	Up to 102 percent of total development cost. Up to 33 years to repay at 1 percent interest.

Direct Loans and Grants: Apply to Rural Development. Loan Guarantees: Apply to intermediary (approved banks, mortgage companies.)

Other

- Rural Community Development Initiative Grant Program (RCDI)
- Rural Coop Home Based Health Care Demo
- Tribal College Grant Program
- Economic Impact Initiative Grant Program
- Rental Assistance
- Multifamily Voucher Demo Program
- Multifamily Demo for Preservation and Revitalization/ Restructuring 515 Properties
- Multifamily Preservation Demo Revolving Loan Fund
- Processing Labor Demo Housing Grants
 - FY 2001 processing worker housing
 - FY 2004 processing worker housing
- Labor Force Grants (Section 14204 of 2008 Farm Bill)
- Section 509 Construction Defect Compensation
- Section 524 Site Development Loans
- Section 525 Technical & Supervisory Assistance

Rural Business (Selected Programs)

Program	Objective	Applicant	Uses	Population	Loan/Grant	Terms/Conditions
Business and Industry Guarantee Loans	Create jobs/stimulate rural economies by providing financial backing for rural businesses.	Businesses.	Real estate, buildings, equipment, supplies, working capital, and some debt refinancing.	All areas except cities over 50,000 and their contiguous urbanized areas.	Loan guarantee.	Lender and borrower negotiate terms. Up to 30 years for real estate, 15 years for machinery and equipment, and 7 years for working capital.
Rural Business Enterprise Grants	Finance and facilitate the development of small and emerging private business enterprises.	Public bodies, private non-profit corporations, and tribes.	Refinancing, land acquisition, revolving funds, construction, equipment, access streets and roads, utility and service extensions, and rural distance learning networks.	All areas except cities over 50,000 and their contiguous urbanized areas.	Grant.	Amount based on funding availability, funding priority, and national goals.
Intermediary Relending Program Loans (IRP)	Establish revolving funds for business facilities and community development projects	Public bodies, non-profit corporations, Native American tribes, and cooperatives.	Community development projects, establishment or expansion of businesses, creation or saving of rural jobs.	Rural areas and incorporated places with populations of less than 25,000.	Direct loan.	The intermediary makes loans to businesses from its revolving loan fund on terms consistent with security offered. Intermediary pays 1 percent for 30 years.
Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program (RMAP)	Establish revolving funds to target assistance to small rural enterprises.	Microenterprise Development Organizations (MDO)	Loans, technical, and capacity building assistance to businesses with 10 or fewer employees and sole proprietorships.	All areas except cities over 50,000 and their contiguous urbanized areas.	Loans, grants.	Rural microenterprises apply directly to the intermediary.
Rural Economic Development Loans and Grants (REDLG)	Finance economic development and job creation in rural areas.	Rural Utilities Service-financed electric and telephone utilities.	Business startups or expansion projects that create rural jobs.	Rural areas with priority to places with populations of 2,500 or less.	Direct loan and revolving loan fund grant.	Intermediary makes loans to profit or non-profit business and public bodies. Loans are 0 percent for 10 years.
Rural Cooperative Development Grants	Establish/operate centers for cooperative development	Non-profits and institutions of higher education.	Establish operating centers for development of rural cooperatives.	All areas.	Grant.	Minimum 25 percent fund match. Grants competitively awarded.



Rural Business (Selected Programs)

Program	Objective	Applicant	Uses	Population	Loan/ Grant	Terms/Conditions
Value-Added Agricultural Product Market Development Grant Program	Assist independent agricultural producers to enter into activities that add value to their crops.	Independent producers, farmer and rancher cooperatives, producer groups, majority-controlled producer-based business ventures.	Feasibility studies, business plans; working capital	All areas.	Grant	Grants are awarded on a competitive basis. Funds cannot be used to build facilities or purchase equipment. Funds must be matched on a dollar-for dollar basis.
Rural Business Opportunity Grant	Finance technical assistance for business development planning in rural areas.	Public bodies, non-profit corporations, Indian tribes on Federal or State reservations, cooperatives with members that are primarily rural residents.	Technical assistance, leadership training, establishment of business support centers, economic development plans.	All areas except cities over 50,000 and their contiguous urbanized areas.	Grant	Must be completed within 2 years after project has begun.
Rural Energy for America (REAP)	Finance the purchase of renewable energy systems, and make energy improvements; energy audits.	Feasibility studies/regular REAPs: agricultural producers and rural small businesses. Energy audits and renewable energy development assistance: local governments, tribes, land grant colleges, rural electric coops, public power entities.	Construction or improvements, purchase and installation of equipment, energy audits, permit fees, professional service fees, business plans, feasibility studies.	All areas except cities over 50,000 and their contiguous urbanized areas.	Guaranteed loans and grants.	Funding is awarded on a competitive basis; grant funding cannot exceed 25% of eligible project costs and combined loan guarantees and grants cannot exceed 75% of eligible project costs.
<p><i>Direct Loans and Grants: Apply to Rural Development. Loan Guarantees: Apply to intermediary (eligible banks, etc.)</i></p> <p><i>Revolving Funds (RMAP, IRP, REDLG): Intermediaries apply to Rural Development; others apply to intermediary</i></p>						



Other

- North American Development Bank Guaranteed Loans
- Delta Regional Authority Grant
- BioRefinery Assistance Program
- Repowering Assistance
- Advanced Biofuel Payment Program
- Health Care Services
- Rural Energy Self-Sufficiency Initiative Grants
- Rural Business Investment Program
- Business and Industry (B&I) Direct Loan Program
- Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas (ATTRA)
- Research on National Economic Impact of Cooperatives (RCDG Mandate)
- Small Socially Disadvantaged Producer Grant (RCDG mandate)
- Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities
- Grant Program for Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities in Rural Areas
- 1890 Land-Grant Institutions Rural Entrepreneurial Outreach and Development Initiative
- Agriculture Innovation Center
- Technical Advisory Service to Cooperatives
- Technical Advisory Service to Producers Desiring to Form a Cooperative
- Cooperative Education
- International Assistance
- Provide Technical Assistance to rural communities
- Coordination within the Executive Branch for community development
- National Rural Development Partnership



Rural Utilities (Selected Programs)

Program	Objective	Applicant	Uses	Population	Loan/Grant	Terms/Conditions
Water and Waste Disposal Loans and Grants	Provide infrastructure for rural areas.	Public entities, Indian tribes, and non-profit corporations.	Build, repair, and improve public water systems, and waste collection and treatment systems.	Rural areas, and towns with up to 10,000 population.	Direct loan and grant.	Repayment period is a maximum of 40 years. Grant funds may be available.
Water and Waste Disposal Loan Guarantees	Provide infrastructure for rural areas.	Public entities, Indian tribes, and non-profit corporations.	Construct, repair, improve water supply and distribution systems, and waste collection and treatment systems.	Rural areas, and towns with up to 10,000 population.	Loan guarantee.	Eligible lenders obtain up to a 90 percent guarantee on loans they make and service.
Technical Assistance/Training/Circuit Rider	Provide technical assistance and training	Public, private, and non-profit organizations	Provide technical assistance and training to assist with management of water and waste projects.	Rural areas and towns with up to 10,000 population .	Grant	
Rural Broadband Loan and Loan Guarantee	Deployment of broadband service to eligible rural communities.	Entities seeking to provide broadband services in rural areas. Individuals/partnerships not eligible.	Finance the construction, improvement, and acquisition of facilities and equipment to provide broadband service in eligible rural communities; refinance Telecommunications Program debt.	Any area not located within: (1) a city, town, or incorporated area over 20,000 inhabitants; or (2) an Urbanized Area contiguous to a city or town of greater than 50,000 inhabitants.	Direct loans and loan guarantees.	Loans are made at the Treasury rate; loan term is the expected composite economic life of the assets financed; guarantees cannot exceed 80 % of the project amount.
Electric and Telecommunications Programs	Assist rural communities in obtaining affordable, high quality electric and telecommunications services.	Non-profit and cooperative associations, public bodies, and other utilities.	Generation, transmission facilities, and distribution of electric power, including alternative, renewable, conservation and energy efficiency programs . Enhance 911 emergency service, digital switching equipment, fiber optic cable, along with traditional main system telecommunications service.	Electric: areas served by an existing rural electric borrower, or rural areas other than a city or town of more than 20,000. Telecommunications: areas cities with population over 5,000	Direct loan or loan guarantee.	Interest rates are established in accordance with 7CFR 17145.



Rural Utilities (Selected Programs)

Program	Objective	Applicant	Uses	Population	Loan/Grant	Terms/Conditions
Distance Learning and Telemedicine	Development and deployment of advanced telecommunication services throughout rural America to improve education and health care.	Incorporated entities, including municipalities, for-profit, and not-for-profit corporations, that operate rural schools, libraries, health care clinics and other educational or health care facilities.	To provide end-user equipment and programming that delivers distance learning and telemedicine services into eligible areas.	Rural areas outside incorporated or unincorporated cities with population over 20,000.	Direct loan and/or Grant.	Matching funds are required.
Community Connect	Provide public access to broadband in otherwise unserved communities.	Public bodies, tribes, cooperatives, nonprofits, limited dividend or mutual associations; corporations and other legally organized entities	To build broadband infrastructure and establish a community center which offers free public access to broadband for two years.	A single community outside incorporated or unincorporated cities with population over 20,000 which does not have broadband	Grant	Min \$50,000; Max \$1,000,000. Amounts are published in NOFAs and may vary

Water and Electric Programs: contact USDA RUS Administrator All others, contact Rural Development State or local office

Other

- Renewable Loan Program
- Bond and Note Guarantee Program for publicly issued securities
- High Energy Cost Grants & Loans Programs
 - High Energy Cost Grants
 - Denali Commission Grants
 - Grants to State Revolving Funds for Bulk Fuel Purchases
- Emergency Community Water Assistance Grants (ECWAG)
- Water and Wastewater Revolving Fund Grants
- Solid Waste Management Grants
- Section 306C Water and Waste Disposal Grants to alleviate health risks
- Section 306D Water and Waste system Grants for Alaskan Villages, incl. technical assistance
- Section 306E Grants for the Construction, Refurbishment and Servicing of Low or Moderate Income Household Water Well Systems
- Predevelopment Planning Grants
- SEARCH Grants
- Public Television Digital Transition Grant Program
- Delta Health Care Services Grant Program
- Weather Radio Transmitter Grant Program



Summary of Program Purposes

	Land & Building	Mach. & Equip.	Working Capital	Infrastructure	Train/Tech. Asst.
Rural Housing					
Single Family Housing - Direct loan	♦				
Single Family Housing - Guaranteed loan	♦				
Single Family Housing Repair - Loan/grant	♦				
Rural Rental Housing - Guaranteed loan	♦			♦	
Rural Rental Housing - Direct loan	♦			♦	
Farm Labor Housing - Loan/grant	♦			♦	
Community Facilities - Direct loan/grant	♦	♦	♦	♦	
Community Facilities - Guaranteed loan	♦	♦		♦	
Housing Preservation - Grant	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
Rural Business					
Business & Industry - Guaranteed loan	♦	♦	♦	♦	
Rural Business Enterprise Grant	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
Intermediary Relending - Loan	♦	♦	♦		
Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program		♦	♦	♦	♦
Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
Rural Cooperative Development Grant				♦	♦
Value-Added Agricultural Product Market Dev. Grant			♦	♦	♦
Rural Business Opportunity Grant					♦
Rural Energy for America (REAP) Guaranteed Loans and Grants	♦	♦		♦	♦
Rural Utilities					
Water and Sewer - Loan/grant	♦	♦	♦	♦	
Water and Sewer - Guaranteed loan	♦	♦	♦	♦	
Solid Waste Management Grant					♦
Rural Broadband Loan and Loan Guarantee	♦			♦	
Electric and Telecommunications - Direct/guar. loan	♦	♦		♦	
Distance Learning & Telemedicine - Loan/grant		♦		♦	
Community Connect	♦	♦	♦	♦	

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