

Smaller, remote rural communities don't have to stand-alone for economic growth opportunities.

This is Dallas Tonsager, Under Secretary for Rural Development at the Department of Agriculture. Our mission at Rural Development is to help build competitive and sustainable 21<sup>st</sup> century rural communities.

One way to do this is to assist rural communities as they explore opportunities to gain greater economic strength and longevity through collaboration with neighboring communities and regional economic hubs. By building off each other's strengths, rural communities have greater opportunity to grow their access to new credit and capital funding.

Rather than seeing a neighboring community as a Friday night football or baseball competitor, let's look to see how collaboration can allow for the development of regional strategies, and build a regional economic team.

At USDA Rural Development - our new Office of Community and Economic Development (CED) administers rural community and regional development programs. Our goal is to work with interested communities to provide the leadership, education and training, technical support and incentives they need to build their regional economy.

Every rural community or region can achieve self-sufficiency through innovative and comprehensive strategic plans developed and implemented at a grassroots level. The programs stress continued local involvement and decision making, which is supported by partnerships among private, public and nonprofit entities.

Rural Development is available for further information or to jump start your local community development process in your community or region!