

The adage that there is strength in numbers holds especially true when you build strong and strategic alliances. USDA Rural Development works closely with many partners to help rural residents and businesses.

I'm Dallas Tonsager, Under Secretary for Rural Development at USDA— our mission is to increase economic opportunity and improve the quality of life for all rural Americans.

One of the greatest partnerships in rural America started 75 years ago – through the creation of the Rural Electrification Act. This Act established long-term partnerships with America's farmers, ranchers and rural communities. It leads the way for the strategic partnership with an estimated 900 rural electric cooperatives – each working to improve access to electric and telephone services, and each working to improve their local economy.

Other examples of strategic partnerships include working closely with tribal, state and local governments, and non-profit organizations to finance the construction of critical access hospitals, so that residents have easy access to high-quality health care. Or, expanding lender access to our single-family housing underwriting system – a system that has expedited the ability of lenders to provide home loans to their customers.

One of our biggest partnerships, though, is with rural residents themselves. Whether it's helping neighbors build their own homes through our self-help housing program, or working with local first responders to secure the vehicles and equipment needed to keep residents safe and secure. Rural Development is an active member of the community.

As we move forward in developing more strategic partners, USDA Rural Development will expand its outreach to other strategic partners, such as national foundations, who are willing to invest in rural areas to increase the resources and partnerships to support local economic and community development.

Our goal is to build strong partnerships to best serve these regions and communities.

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