



# CORE

## Creating Opportunities through Rural Engagement

USDA Rural Development (RD) is committed to helping improve the economy and quality of life in rural America. We offer grants, technical assistance programs, loans and loan guarantees that help create jobs and support economic development. Through CORE, RD's extensive field network is actively engaging local leaders, residents, business owners and other stakeholders in underserved communities. Our goal is to better identify, understand and address the barriers they face to participating in USDA RD and partner programs.

### USDA Rural Development Key Priorities



Creating more and better market opportunities



Addressing climate change and environmental justice



Advancing racial justice, place-based equity, and opportunity

CORE addresses USDA RD key priorities by:

- Building lasting relationships with underserved rural and Tribal communities to build brighter futures in rural America
- Connecting business owners to new markets
- Helping empower people with resilient and sustainable infrastructure
- Creating equitable access and opportunities for generations to come

# CORE Advances USDA Rural Development's Vision

We invest in rural America with loan, grant, and loan guarantee programs because we understand a strong community is rooted in its people. The commitment and resources we bring to rural communities helps drive economic security and prosperity. USDA RD is committed to ensuring that the investments we make and the assistance we offer are available – fairly and intentionally – to all eligible rural and Tribal communities. We support rural America by ensuring communities have the right tools and resources to achieve economic security and prosperity.

Through CORE, USDA RD engages underserved rural and Tribal communities and connects them to the resources they need, including other federal agencies and entities through the USDA Rural Partners Network.

## CORE Objectives and Accomplishments

- In November 2021, USDA RD initiated Creating Opportunities through Rural Engagement (CORE) to ensure all eligible areas, groups, and residents have equitable access to our programs and can benefit from USDA RD-funded projects.
- CORE uses data sets to identify socially vulnerable, distressed and underserved rural communities across the nation.

More than 13,000 census tracts or zip codes have been identified for engagement through CORE.

- An emphasis is placed on communities which have not participated in USDA RD programs in recent years.
- As of April 2024, nearly 700 CORE communities have been engaged and more than \$430 million in new RD investments have been made in CORE communities.

## The CORE Process

CORE's process is built on three main phases:

- **Phase 1: Engaging with underserved communities** by identifying communities with which to work, connecting with community stakeholders, and documenting needs and barriers to programs and potential projects.
- **Phase 2: Identifying opportunities to assist underserved communities** by reviewing the needs and barriers communicated, identifying opportunities to assist with these needs and barriers, and actively assisting CORE communities by connecting them with resources and partners that can help.
- **Phase 3: Documenting investments and support** resulting from connecting underserved communities with USDA RD resources, technical assistance opportunities, and local, state, and federal partners.

For more information, you can email the CORE support team at [sm.rd.core@usda.gov](mailto:sm.rd.core@usda.gov).

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