



USDA Rural Development

Key Messages and Talking Points



Rural Development
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Together, America Prospers

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Introduction

This messaging guide should serve as a starting point for United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development (USDA RD) officials, communicators, state office employees, and staff to align on messaging tone and style. It is not intended to be used as a script or a perfect fit for every message scenario, but rather to be used as a jumping-off point to help craft a consistent message from USDA RD regardless of geographic location, program, etc. It can be used to help draft speeches, community meeting talking points, or other communication outreach.

The guide separates messages by the four main USDA RD audiences: government, partners, media, and rural people/customers. By adapting messages with the audience type in mind, staff can better communicate in the appropriate tone for their particular audience. To help support a consistent tone and style, key messages pull from a central theme. As a result, there are similarities in the messaging across audiences – however, each section features nuanced changes to better personalize the message with that specific audience in mind.

Within each audience section, messages are organized into three categories: Connecting People, Powering People, and

Providing Opportunity for People. This organization was created to help staff members share how RD programs are positively impacting people.

Message Box

Also included below is an update to the USDA RD Message Box. The Message Box is a matrix tool made up of four questions, with four key messages that answer these questions and with all messages crafted to support a central idea: “When rural people thrive, America thrives.”

The four questions asked within the Message Box are:

- Why does rural America matter?
- How is Rural Development making an impact?
- How are we uniquely positioned to help?
- What are the outcomes we help make possible?

The Message Box is the starting point for all new messages. When USDA RD staff need specific messages not covered in the audience-specific examples given below, the Message Box should act as a quick reference tool to help them craft consistent messaging for all possible audiences, communities, or partners.

Message Box



Perspectives and Insights from Rural People

Through research and feedback from rural people, USDA RD learned a few important considerations to remain mindful of as we craft messages and meaningfully engage with rural communities. In this guide, you will see messages on the left that demonstrate impact and stories on the right that support those messages with dollar amounts, practical examples, and additional data. Aim to replicate this method in your messaging.



Rural people bring unique and real value.

Always orient our mission and message by focusing on rural people. After all, they are the reason we do what we do. Begin messages with rural people and always remember that it's rural people who make rural communities strong. Our messages should reflect this. Also, consider the fabric that makes up rural America and include how people are impacted on a micro-level by our work in your message. For example, illustrate USDA RD's role in supporting people, like "USDA Rural Development invests in rural America with grants and relending programs so first responders can put people's safety first, schools can teach kids, and hospitals can care for everyone."



USDA RD is a partner to rural communities.

Avoid language that makes it appear USDA RD is here to save anyone or the community. Rural people want a partner, not a hero. Be thoughtful about the way we position USDA RD in our messages. Opt for phrases like "works with rural people", "helps to support", "partners with", etc.



Rural communities are diverse, resilient, and full of innovators.

Rural people are a vital part of our country. Celebrate their successes and recognize the contributions they make for all America. Add language that showcases the innovation happening throughout rural America, like how decisions today "keep rural people and economies prepared for the future". Include the ways in which rural people are valuable to the country as a whole, like the ways "rural people bring new ideas and solutions to the rest of our country".



Language should be inspiring and inclusive.

Respect and embrace the uniqueness that makes each community different and consider how USDA RD's programs will support these differences. Rural people are not all the same, so it's important to authentically approach our work and engagement, including choosing language that resonates with each community. Select words that are inclusive, like "rural people" over "rural Americans" to be thoughtful of Sovereign tribal governments.



Connect programs to impact.

Rural people are the reason for the work we do. Be sure to not just include the facts and figures, but also discuss the real-life impact those numbers have on the people they reach. By combining key messages that emphasize rural people with stories that highlight data, we can best demonstrate the impact our work has on the people living in rural America.



Look for these icons throughout the guide for examples of how to incorporate the insights above into your messaging approach.



Government

Why does rural America matter?

How is Rural Development making an impact?

How are we uniquely positioned to help?

What are the outcomes we help make possible?

Communicating to a Government Audience

Why does rural America matter?



Rural America is hometown America — more than a great place to live, its people make up America’s spirit and character. Rural people provide the everyday essentials our country depends on and grow our economy.

CONNECTING PEOPLE	
Key Message	Story & Message
<p>A strong community is rooted in its people. USDA Rural Development invests in rural America with grants and relending programs so first responders can put people’s safety first, schools can teach kids, and hospitals can care for everyone.</p> <p>Keeping the people of rural America connected with reliable, high-speed internet brings new opportunities to rural people and innovative ideas and solutions to the rest of our country. That’s why high-speed internet programs are an important part of USDA Rural Development’s partnership with rural communities.</p> <div><div></div><div>Remember to use people-focused language.</div></div> <div><div></div><div>Position USDA RD as a partner to rural people.</div></div>	<p>Story 1: U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development announced that the Department is increasing the maximum loan amount to \$400,000 under the Intermediary Relending Program. The Intermediary Relending Program provides low-interest loans to local lenders that relend the funds to businesses to advance equity in rural America by creating new opportunities in distressed communities.</p> <p>Story 2: Tatum Telephone Company, headquartered in East Texas, will use a \$4.4 million grant to deploy a fiber-to-the-premises network. The funded service area includes 986 households, 2,657 people, three educational facilities, two essential community facilities, a healthcare facility, 67 businesses, and 60 farms spread over 41 square miles.</p>

POWERING PEOPLE

Key Message

USDA Rural Development partners with rural communities on renewable and reliable energy and water systems to keep rural people and economies prepared for the future.

Rural people drive our economy, and USDA Rural Development is a partner who understands that and invests in keeping rural people healthy, kids educated, and small businesses powered through grants tailored specifically for the people of rural America.



Remember rural people are diverse, resilient, and innovators.

Story & Message

Story 1:

Flemington, New Jersey, has received a loan in the amount of \$1,802,000 and a grant in the amount of \$498,000. This project will replace deteriorating and undersized water and sewer mains in various roadways throughout the borough. This will improve water quality and quantity in the existing water system and will reduce infiltration and inflow into the sewer system.

Story 2:

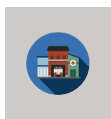
Glendive EyeCare is nestled in the heart of downtown Glendive, Montana. The staff of this optometry business suffered from fluctuating workplace temperatures. So in 2021, the company applied for funding through the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) and received a grant to install an energy-efficient system. Through a \$13,619 REAP grant, the older building is now retrofitted with a smaller, programmable HVAC unit that can be set from on-site or off-site to adapt to Glendive's seasonality as well as Glendive EyeCare's work schedule and needs.

PROVIDING OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE

Key Message

USDA Rural Development is ready to support the people of rural America — whether they are transitioning jobs, taking care of their homes and loved ones, moving to a new town, or experiencing other life needs — because rural communities are a place everyone should feel comfortable calling home.

Main Street businesses give communities character, and at USDA Rural Development, we work with rural communities to help make sure more people have the resources they need to build the next successful local business.



Be thoughtful about showing the impact programs have on rural people.

Story & Message

Story 1:

Through the USDA RD Section 504 Home Repair Program, retired U.S. Air Force veteran Raymond Mendoza received a \$6,010 grant to repair his home in Brown County, Texas. Mr. Mendoza applied for a grant to help with his leaking roof and to level his home's foundation that was affecting his health and the safety of his home. With the partnership of Cornerstone Community Action Veterans Assistance Program, USDA was able to complete repairs that helped bring hope for this hero.

Story 2:

The Rural Innovation Stronger Economy (RISE) Grant Program encourages a regional, innovation-driven approach to economic development by funding job accelerator partnerships in low-income rural communities. RISE provides grants of up to \$2 million to consortiums of local governments, investors, industry, institutions of higher education, and other public and private entities in rural areas.

Communicating to a Government Audience

How is Rural Development making an impact?



We promote rural prosperity by investing in high-speed internet access, rural businesses and jobs of the future, affordable rural homes, water and wastewater systems, and rural healthcare.

CONNECTING PEOPLE

Key Message

Rural students deserve good, reliable high-speed internet. By partnering to make remote schooling a reality, USDA Rural Development is helping to bring new opportunities within reach.

USDA Rural Development supports a strong, healthy community and environment with loans and grants to make sure kids, families, and all people have clean water and reliable sewer systems that prevent pollution and runoff. Following a disaster, such as a fire, flood, or hurricane, RD programs can help rebuild homes and towns to quickly restore a rural community's dreams.



Remember to use people-focused language.

Story & Message

Story 1:

Paul Bunyan Communications is upgrading high-speed internet for thousands of subscribers in central northern Minnesota through a Rural Utilities Service Telecommunications Broadband Loan. They are in the process of upgrading the 30,000 access lines, 18,000 broadband, and 15,000 digital television subscribers in their service territory to a gigabit network.

Story 2:

The city of Yreka, California, has been allocated more than \$6 million to be used to replace aging infrastructure, reduce inflow and infiltration, provide adequate hydraulic capacity, and ensure safe and reliable transmission of wastewater to the city's wastewater treatment plant.

POWERING PEOPLE

Key Message

Reliable and affordable electricity is vital for a strong economy. USDA Rural Development partners with communities to keep small businesses powered through programs like the Rural Utilities Service.

Safe drinking water is an every-day necessity. USDA Rural Development works with rural leaders to build reliable water systems.

Story & Message

Story 1:

The Astoria Co-op located on the Oregon coast was looking for a way to offset the energy required to keep its products refrigerated. The nonprofit Spark Northwest referred the co-op to the Rural Energy for America Program offered by USDA Rural Development. It was awarded a nearly \$50,000 grant, enabling the co-op to install a 60-kilowatt solar array on its roof.

Story 2:

The town of Amity, Oregon, received a \$1.6 million loan and a \$1.8 million grant in 2019 from USDA to help upgrade its municipal drinking water infrastructure. The community's current system needs updates in order to keep pace with increasing demand. Overall, this \$5.6 million project will ensure this rural community of 1,670 people has reliable access to clean drinking water for years to come.

PROVIDING OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE

Key Message

Stable and affordable homes help small towns across the country stay healthy and prosperous. USDA Rural Development provides easy-access financing with low interest rates to rural families so they can buy, rent, or repair a home.

USDA Rural Development investments help rural businesses create good, quality jobs so the people and families living there can afford a comfortable life.



By using words like “rural families”, language will feel more inclusive.



Even with a government audience, remember to show how financing, interest rates, etc. impact rural people.

Story & Message

Story 1:

USDA staff helped Candice Hill, a single mother of three, through USDA Rural Development's 502 Single Family Direct Loan application process. USDA's Single-Family Housing Program made the mortgage affordable with a low interest rate and no down payment requirement. Candice purchased a three-bedroom home in Watertown, South Dakota. She shared that her three children and two cats now have a place of their own to call home.

Story 2:

The nonprofit Oregon Regional Accelerator and Innovation Network (Oregon RAIN), supported by a USDA Rural Business Development Grant, helps local entrepreneurs like Sarah Butte, who has a bioregional herbal products business in Florence, Oregon, become successful. The \$80,000 in grants for the entrepreneur training program has assisted 70 entrepreneurs, created 33 jobs, and supported start-up businesses that have generated \$453,000 in revenue for rural communities in Lane and Lincoln Counties.

Communicating to a Government Audience

How are we uniquely positioned to help?



USDA RD employees, who often live and work in the rural communities they serve, provide loans and grants to rural people and develop partnerships with local leaders to promote growth and prosperity for rural families and local communities.

CONNECTING PEOPLE

Key Message

Small business owners deserve reliable high-speed internet to have a fair shot in the world's marketplace. By increasing profits, owners can expand their businesses and give more jobs and opportunities to people in their own community.

Local businesses meet local needs, and USDA Rural Development is proud to support businesses owned and shared by people who can best serve their own unique community's needs, fill gaps, and build opportunities for connection.



Remember to use people-focused language.

Story & Message

Story 1:

USDA RD has been working with the Atlantic Telephone Membership Corporation (ATMC) in rural North Carolina since 2010 to bring fast, reliable internet to residents. The residents of Columbus County have been better equipped to handle the COVID-19 pandemic with the access to the internet that ATMC is providing.

Story 2:

Lake Region Electric Cooperative in rural Minnesota will use a \$12 million Electric Infrastructure Loan to build and improve 149 miles of line. This loan will help connect 1,890 people to reliable electricity in Becker, Clay, Douglas, Grant, Otter Tail, Todd, Wadena, and Wilkin counties.

POWERING PEOPLE

Key Message

USDA Rural Development energy loans and grants help keep the lights on in homes, schools, and businesses across rural America.

USDA Rural Development works with rural communities to keep residents online, connecting them to educational opportunities through grants like Community Connect Grants.

USDA Rural Development Community Facilities Loans support rural communities in providing healthcare to the people and places in our country that often lack access.



Position USDA RD as a partner to rural people by connecting them with educational opportunities online, for example.

Story & Message

Story 1:

Beaufort County Community College in rural North Carolina is using a \$329,000 Distance Learning Telemedicine (DLT) Grant from USDA RD to support remote learning. The DLT Grant is enabling remote classrooms to be set up in six rural high schools in eastern North Carolina, enabling students to receive higher education without having to travel.

Story 2:

Atlantic Telephone Membership Corporation will use a \$2.9 million Community Connect Grant to construct an approximately 60-mile fiber-to-the-premises system. This system will expand access to economic, educational, healthcare, and public safety opportunities for 2,500 residents and 19 businesses in the communities of Robeson County.

PROVIDING OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE

Key Message

By avoiding large down payments, USDA Rural Development's low-interest loans help more rural people become homeowners and begin accruing generational wealth.

USDA Rural Development and our local partners support entrepreneurs and their employees by investing in small business expansion, leading to greater employment opportunities for everyone in rural areas.

Story & Message

Story 1:

Jan Riggins of Aberdeen, South Dakota, worked with Homes Are Possible, Inc. (HAPI) to apply for the Single-Family Housing 502 Direct Loan Program. The federal funding was leveraged with a \$10,500 Grow South Dakota silent mortgage, a \$20,000 HAPI silent mortgage for the lot purchase, and a \$3,500 HAPI down payment assistance silent mortgage.

Story 2:

When Carol Lynn Lapotka purchased a historic building on Main Street in Polson, Montana, to house REcreate Designs, LLC, her small-batch manufacturing plant and artist co-op, she knew renovations would be needed. With USDA RD REAP grant funds, and some additional incentives from Mission Valley Power, Carol Lynn was able to refit her edifice with LED lighting, energy-efficient windows, and insulated front doors. Since the 2020 retrofit, REcreate has realized nearly \$3,400 in cost savings and about a 50 percent reduction in energy use.

Communicating to a Government Audience

What are the outcomes we help make possible?



The commitment and resources USDA RD brings to rural people and communities across the country help drive economic security and prosperity. USDA RD connects business owners to new markets; helps power people with modern infrastructure; and supports opportunities for people to build brighter futures in rural America.

CONNECTING PEOPLE	
Key Message	Story & Message
<p>Access to quality, affordable childcare and early learning opportunities allows parents to work knowing their children are safe. USDA Rural Development helps strengthen rural economies through grants for daycare facilities and overall child development.</p> <p>USDA Rural Development's high-speed internet loans and grants help give students the opportunity to study and take classes virtually, or search and interview for new job opportunities, without leaving their hometown. When rural people can be prosperous in their hometowns, it builds stability for the whole community.</p>	<p>Story 1: In West Virginia, the Boys and Girls Club of the Eastern Panhandle is receiving an \$800,000 loan to purchase a facility to house the club's childcare services. Its childcare program is open to all children who live in Morgan County. The club will rent a portion of the facility to a nonprofit healthcare provider.</p> <p>Story 2: In Sumter County, Alabama, USDA is investing \$334,317 through the Sumter County School System to equip six interactive distance learning rooms that will provide opportunities for teachers to reach more students across the school system through interactive video conferencing. This technology will reduce the need for students, teachers, and administrators to travel across the school system, and will also provide professional development opportunities to teachers. The project will benefit the 12,800 rural residents of Sumter County.</p>



Remember to use people-focused language.

POWERING PEOPLE

Key Message

USDA Rural Development's energy loans and grants help run businesses, power cars, and heat homes with renewable energy from wind, solar, and biofuels. This commitment to cleaner energy will help create and protect safe places for kids to play, parks for families to picnic, and open spaces for people to enjoy.

Good education and job training shouldn't depend on a zip code. USDA Rural Development works with rural communities to expand schools and support learning opportunities through Community Facilities Loans and other programs.



Choose inclusive language, like “a zipcode” instead of “their zipcode”.

Story & Message

Story 1:

USDA Rural Development is investing \$17,615,000 through loan guarantees for solar renewable energy projects in Maine through its Rural Energy for America Program (REAP). Pequawket Trail Baldwin Solar, LLC, located in Baldwin, Maine, will receive a total of \$10,900,000 to build a ground-mounted solar project.

Story 2:

Oklahoma's Okmulgee Public School District is being awarded a \$756,760 grant to provide distance learning services in Creek and Okmulgee counties. Schools will expand course offerings and provide professional development opportunities. The schools will use videoconferencing and interactive display panels to expand the curriculum, including science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) courses. The equipment this grant provides will help schools respond to the COVID-19 pandemic by enabling students to participate in virtual field trips and join classes from home.

PROVIDING OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE

Key Message

USDA Rural Development grants support small businesses, helping rural communities keep their character while growing opportunities for good jobs.

Whether people are building a new house or repairing a current one, USDA Rural Development works hand-in-hand with local organizations to keep the people of rural America in safe, reliable homes.



Emphasize the uniqueness and diversity of rural communities and celebrate their individual character.

Story & Message

Story 1:

The Skagway Development Corp. in Alaska is receiving a \$121,825 Rural Community Development Initiative Grant to help small businesses develop five-year growth and operating plans. It will provide the services to businesses with 50 or fewer employees and less than \$1 million in gross revenues. This investment will help new entrepreneurs and small business owners succeed and create jobs in their communities.

Story 2:

Penny Taylor's home had an aging septic system that was failing and damaging her home and yard. Due to her limited income she was unable to afford to have the repairs done, but by working with the Housing Assistance Office in Hendersonville, North Carolina, she was able to receive a USDA RD Housing Preservation Grant.



Partners

Why does rural America matter?

How is Rural Development making an impact?

How are we uniquely positioned to help?

What are the outcomes we help make possible?

Communicating to Partners

Why does rural America matter?



Rural America is hometown America — more than a great place to live, its people make up America’s spirit and character. Rural people provide the everyday essentials our country depends on and grow our economy.

CONNECTING PEOPLE	
Key Message	Story & Message
<p>A strong community is rooted in its people. USDA RD invests in rural America with grants and relending programs so first responders can put people’s safety first, schools can teach kids, and hospitals can care for everyone.</p> <p>Keeping the people of rural America connected with reliable, high-speed internet brings new opportunities to rural people and innovative ideas and solutions to the rest of our country. That’s why high-speed internet programs are an important part of our partnerships.</p> <div><div></div><div><p>Highlight the ways in which rural people are innovators and how that innovation has impact across the country.</p></div></div> <div><div></div><div><p>Remember to include how rural people are impacted by the work at USDA RD by using people-focused language.</p></div></div>	<p>Story 1: U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development announced that the Department is increasing the maximum loan amount to \$400,000 under the Intermediary Relending Program.</p> <p>Story 2: Tatum Telephone Company, headquartered in East Texas, will use a \$4.4 million grant to deploy a fiber-to-the-premises network. The funded service area includes 986 households, 2,657 people, three educational facilities, two essential community facilities, a healthcare facility, 67 businesses, and 60 farms spread over 41 square miles.</p>

POWERING PEOPLE

Key Message

USDA RD partners with rural communities and organizations on renewable and reliable energy and water systems to keep rural people and economies prepared for the future.

Rural people drive our economy and they deserve partners who understand that. USDA RD works with organizations to invest in keeping rural people healthy, kids educated, and small businesses powered through grants tailored specifically for the people of rural America.



Position USDA RD as a partner to rural people.

Story & Message

Story 1:

Flemington, New Jersey, has received a loan in the amount of \$1,802,000 and grant in the amount of \$498,000. This project will replace deteriorating and undersized water and sewer mains in various roadways throughout the Borough. This will improve water quality and quantity in the existing water system and will reduce infiltration and inflow into the sewer system.

Story 2:

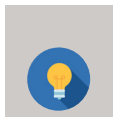
Glendive EyeCare is nestled in the heart of downtown Glendive, Montana. The staff of this optometry business suffered from fluctuating workplace temperatures. So, in 2021, the company applied for funding through the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) and received a grant to install an energy-efficient system. Through a \$13,619 REAP Grant, the older building is now retrofitted with a smaller, programmable HVAC unit that can be set from on-or-offsite to adapt to Glendive's seasonality as well as Glendive EyeCare's work schedule and needs.

PROVIDING OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE

Key Message

RD is ready to work with the people of rural America — whether they are transitioning jobs, taking care of their homes and loved ones, moving to a new town, or experiencing other life needs — because we know rural communities are a place everyone should feel comfortable calling home.

Main street businesses give communities character and at USDA Rural Development, we work with rural communities and local investors to help make sure more people have the resources they need to build the next successful local business.



Celebrate the uniqueness and diversity of rural communities and celebrate their individual character.

Story & Message

Story 1:

Through the USDA RD Section 504 Home Repair Program, retired U.S. Air Force Veteran Raymond Mendoza received a \$6,010 grant to repair his home in Brown County, Texas. Mr. Mendoza applied for a grant to help with his leaking roof and leveling of the foundation that was affecting his health and safety of his home. With the partnership of Cornerstone Community Action Veterans Assistance Program, USDA was able to complete repairs that help bring hope for this hero.

Story 2:

The Rural Innovation Stronger Economy (RISE) Grant Program encourages a regional, innovation-driven approach to economic development by funding job accelerator partnerships in low-income rural communities. RISE provides grants of up to \$2 million to consortiums of local governments, investors, industry, institutions of higher education, and other public and private entities in rural areas.

Communicating to Partners

How is Rural Development making an impact?



We promote rural prosperity by investing in high-speed internet access, rural businesses and jobs of the future, affordable rural homes, water and wastewater systems, and rural healthcare.

CONNECTING PEOPLE	
Key Message	Story & Message
<p>Good, reliable, high-speed internet expands rural students’ prospects for success by reducing the conflict between work, school, and family. By partnering to make remote schooling a reality, USDA Rural Development is helping to bring new opportunities within reach.</p> <p>USDA Rural Development supports a strong, healthy community and environment with loans and grants to make sure people, kids, and families have clean water and reliable sewer systems that prevent pollution and runoff. Following a disaster, such as a fire, flood, or hurricane, RD programs can help rebuild homes and towns to quickly restore a rural community’s dreams.</p>	<p>Story 1:</p> <p>Paul Bunyan Communications is upgrading high-speed internet for thousands of subscribers in Central Northern Minnesota through a RUS Telecommunications Broadband Loan. They are in the process of upgrading the 30,000 access lines, 18,000 broadband, and 15,000 digital television subscribers in their service territory to a gigabit network.</p> <p>Story 2:</p> <p>The City of Yreka, California, has been allocated more than \$6 million to be used to replace aging infrastructure, reduce inflow and infiltration, provide adequate hydraulic capacity, and ensure safe and reliable transmission of wastewater to the City’s wastewater treatment plant.</p>



Remember to include how valuable partnerships are and how rural people are impacted by the work at USDA RD by using people-focused language.

POWERING PEOPLE

Key Message

Reliable and affordable electricity is vital for a strong economy. USDA Rural Development partners with communities to keep small businesses powered through programs like the Rural Utilities Service.

Safe drinking water is an every-day necessity. USDA Rural Development works with rural leaders to build reliable water systems.



Position USDA RD as a partner to rural people with examples of collaboration with rural leaders.

Story & Message

Story 1:

The Astoria Co-op located on the Oregon coast was looking for a way to offset the energy required to keep its products refrigerated. The nonprofit Spark Northwest referred the co-op to the Rural Energy for America Program offered by USDA Rural Development. It was awarded a nearly \$50,000 grant, enabling the co-op to install a 60-kilowatt solar array on its roof.

Story 2:

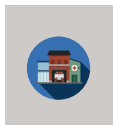
The town of Amity, Oregon, received a \$1.6 million loan and a \$1.8 million grant in 2019 from USDA to help upgrade its municipal drinking water infrastructure. The community's current system needs updates in order to keep pace with increasing demand. Overall, this \$5.6 million project will ensure this rural community of 1,670 people has reliable access to clean drinking water for years to come.

PROVIDING OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE

Key Message

Stable and affordable homes help small towns across the country stay healthy and prosperous. USDA RD provides easy access financing with low interest rates to rural families so they can buy or rent, ensuring generations of families can continue to call their hometown home.

RD investments help rural businesses create good, quality jobs so the people and families living there can afford a comfortable life.



Be thoughtful about showing the impact programs have on rural people.

Story & Message

Story 1:

USDA staff helped Candice Hill, a single mother of three, through USDA Rural Development's 502 Single Family Direct Loan application process. USDA's Single-Family Housing Program made the mortgage affordable with a low interest rate and no down payment requirement. Candice purchased a three-bedroom home in Watertown, South Dakota. She shared that her three children and two cats now have a place of their own to call home.

Story 2:

The nonprofit Oregon Regional Accelerator and Innovation Network (Oregon RAIN), supported by a USDA Rural Business Development Grant, helps local entrepreneurs become successful, like Sarah Butte and her bioregional herbal products business in Florence, Oregon. The \$80,000 in grants for the entrepreneur training program has assisted 70 entrepreneurs, created 33 jobs, and supported start-up businesses that have generated \$453,000 in revenue for rural communities in Lane and Lincoln counties.

Communicating to Partners

How are we uniquely positioned to help?



USDA RD employees, who often live and work in the rural communities they serve, provide loans and grants to rural people and develop partnerships with local leaders to promote growth and prosperity for rural families and local communities.

CONNECTING PEOPLE

Key Message

Small business owners deserve reliable high-speed internet to have a fair shot in the world's marketplace. By increasing profits, owners can expand their businesses and give more jobs and opportunities to people in their own community.

Local businesses meet local needs, and RD is proud to support businesses owned and shared by people who can best serve their own unique community's needs, fill gaps, and build opportunities for connection.



Choose words like “business owners” to keep language inclusive.

Story & Message

Story 1:

USDA RD has been working with the Atlantic Telephone Membership Corporation in rural North Carolina since 2010 to bring fast, reliable internet to residents. The residents of Columbus County are better equipped to handle the COVID-19 pandemic with the access to the internet that ATMC is providing.

Story 2:

Lake Region Electric Cooperative in rural Minnesota will use a \$12 million Electric Infrastructure Loan to build and improve 149 miles of line. This loan will help connect 1,890 people to reliable electricity in Becker, Clay, Douglas, Grant, Otter Tail, Todd, Wadena, and Wilkin counties.

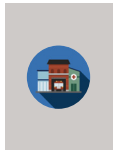
POWERING PEOPLE

Key Message

USDA Rural Development energy loans and grants help keep the lights on in homes, schools, and businesses across rural America.

USDA Rural Development works with rural communities and other local partners to keep residents online, connecting them to educational opportunities through grants like Community Connect Grants.

USDA Rural Development Community Facilities Loans support rural communities in providing healthcare to the people and places in our country that often lack access.



Even with partner audiences, remember to include how loans and grants bring real impact to rural people.

Story & Message

Story 1:

Beaufort County Community College in rural North Carolina is using a \$329,000 Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grant from USDA RD to support remote learning. The DLT Grant is enabling remote classrooms to be set up in six rural high schools in eastern North Carolina, enabling students to receive higher education without having to travel.

Story 2:

Atlantic Telephone Membership Corporation will use a \$2.9 million Community Connect Grant to construct an approximately 60 mile fiber-to-the-premises system. This system will expand access to economic, educational, healthcare, and public safety opportunities for 2,500 residents and 19 businesses in the communities of Robeson County.

PROVIDING OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE

Key Message

By avoiding large down payments, USDA Rural Development's low interest loans help more rural people become homeowners and begin accruing generational wealth.

USDA RD and its partners support entrepreneurs and their employees by investing in small business expansion, leading to greater employment opportunities for everyone in rural towns.



Remember to include how rural people are impacted by the work at USDA RD by using people-focused language.

Story & Message

Story 1:

Jan Riggins of Aberdeen, South Dakota, worked with Homes Are Possible, Inc. (HAPI) to apply for the Single-Family Housing 502 Direct Loan Program. The federal funding was leveraged with a \$10,500 Grow South Dakota silent mortgage, a \$20,000 HAPI silent mortgage for the lot purchase, and a \$3,500 HAPI down payment assistance silent mortgage.

Story 2:


When Carol Lynn Lapotka purchased an historic building on Polson, Montana's Main Street to house REcreate Designs, LLC, her small-batch manufacturing plant and artist co-op, she knew renovations would be needed. With USDA RD REAP grant funds, and some additional incentives through Mission Valley Power, Carol Lynn was able to refit her edifice with LED lighting, energy-efficient windows, and insulated front doors. Since the 2020 retrofit, REcreate has realized nearly \$3,400 in cost savings and about a 50 percent reduction in energy use.

Communicating to Partners

What are the outcomes we help make possible?




The commitment and resources USDA RD brings to rural people and communities across the country help drive economic security and prosperity. USDA RD connects business owners to new markets; helps power people with modern infrastructure; and supports opportunities for people to build brighter futures in rural America.

CONNECTING PEOPLE	
Key Message	Story & Message
<p>Access to quality, affordable childcare and early learning opportunities allows parents to work knowing their children are safe. We strengthen rural economies through grants for daycare facilities and overall child development.</p> <p>USDA Rural Development's high-speed internet loans and grants help give students an opportunity to study and take classes virtually, or search and interview for new job opportunities, without leaving their hometown.</p> <div><p>Remember to include how rural people are impacted by the work at USDA RD by using people-focused language.</p></div>	<p>Story 1:</p> <p>In West Virginia, the Boys and Girls Club of the Eastern Panhandle is receiving an \$800,000 loan to purchase a facility to house the club's childcare services. Its childcare program is open to all children who live in Morgan County. The club will rent a portion of the facility to a nonprofit healthcare provider.</p> <p>Story 2:</p> <p>In Sumter County, Alabama, USDA is investing \$334,317 through the Sumter County School System to equip six interactive distance learning rooms that will provide opportunities for teachers to reach more students across the school system through interactive video conferencing. This technology will reduce the need for students, teachers, and administrators to travel across the school system, and will also provide professional development opportunities to teachers. The project will benefit the 12,800 rural residents of Sumter County.</p>

POWERING PEOPLE

Key Message	Story & Message
<p>USDA RD's energy loans and grants help run businesses, power cars, and heat homes with renewable energy from wind, solar and biofuels. This commitment to cleaner energy will help create and protect safe places for kids to play, parks to picnic, and open spaces to enjoy.</p> <p>Good education and job training shouldn't depend on your zip code. We work with rural communities and partners to expand schools and support learning opportunities through Community Facilities Loans and other programs.</p>	<p>Story 1: USDA Rural Development is investing \$17,615,000 through loan guarantees for solar renewable energy projects in Maine through its Rural Energy for America Program (REAP). Pequawket Trail Baldwin Solar, LLC, located in Baldwin, Maine, will receive a total of \$10,900,000 to build a ground-mounted solar project.</p> <p>Story 2: Oklahoma's Okmulgee Public School District is being awarded a \$756,760 grant to provide distance learning services in Creek and Okmulgee counties. Schools will expand course offerings and provide professional development opportunities. The schools will use videoconferencing and interactive display panels to expand the curriculum, including science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) courses. The equipment this grant provides will help schools respond to the COVID-19 pandemic by enabling students to participate in virtual field trips and join classes from home.</p>

PROVIDING OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE

Key Message	Story & Message
<p>RD grants support small businesses, helping rural communities keep their character while growing opportunities for good jobs.</p> <p>Whether building a new house or repairing a current one, USDA Rural Development works hand-in-hand with local organizations to keep the people of rural America in safe, reliable homes.</p> <div data-bbox="168 1608 279 1757">  </div> <div data-bbox="316 1621 686 1734"> <p>Position USDA RD as a partner to rural people with examples of collaboration with rural and local organizations.</p> </div>	<p>Story 1: The Skagway Development Corp. in Alaska is receiving a \$121,825 Rural Community Development Initiative Grant to help small businesses develop five-year growth and operating plans. It will provide the services to businesses with 50 or fewer employees and less than \$1 million in gross revenues. This investment will help new entrepreneurs and small business owners succeed and create jobs in their communities.</p> <p>Story 2: Penny Taylor's home had an aging septic service that was failing and damaging her home and yard. Due to her limited income she was unable to afford to have the repairs done, but by working with the Housing Assistance Office in Hendersonville, North Carolina, she was able to receive a USDA RD Housing Preservation Grant.</p>



Media

Why does rural America matter?

How is Rural Development making an impact?

How are we uniquely positioned to help?



What are the outcomes we help make possible?

Communicating to the Media

Why does rural America matter?



Rural America is hometown America — more than a great place to live, its people make up America’s spirit and character. Rural people provide the everyday essentials our country depends on and grow our economy.

CONNECTING PEOPLE	
Key Message	Story & Message
<p>USDA RD invests in rural America with loan and grant programs because we know a strong community is rooted in its people. Towns are gathering places where first responders put people’s safety first, schools teach kids, and hospitals care for everyone.</p> <p>Keeping the people of rural America connected with reliable, high-speed internet brings new opportunities to rural people and innovative ideas and solutions to the rest of our country. That’s why at USDA Rural Development, high-speed internet programs are an important part of our partnership with rural communities.</p> <div><p>Highlight the ways in which rural people are innovators and how that innovation has impact across the country.</p></div> <div><p>Position USDA RD as a partner to rural people.</p></div>	<p>Story 1: U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development announced that the Department is increasing the maximum loan amount to \$400,000 under the Intermediary Relending Program.</p> <p>Story 2: Tatum Telephone Company, headquartered in East Texas, will use a \$4.4 million grant to deploy a fiber-to-the-premises network. The funded service area includes 986 households, 2,657 people, three educational facilities, two essential community facilities, a healthcare facility, 67 businesses, and 60 farms spread over 41 square miles.</p>

POWERING PEOPLE

Key Message

USDA Rural Development partners with rural communities on renewable and reliable energy and water systems to keep rural people and economies prepared for the future.

Rural people drive our economy, and we understand that at USDA Rural Development. We invest in keeping rural people healthy, kids educated, and small businesses powered through grants tailored specifically for the people of rural America.



Emphasize how rural people are resilient.

Story & Message

Story 1:

Flemington, New Jersey, has received a loan in the amount of \$1,802,000 and grant in the amount of \$498,000. This project will replace deteriorating and undersized water and sewer mains in various roadways throughout the Borough. This will improve water quality and quantity in the existing water system and will reduce infiltration and inflow into the sewer system.

Story 2:

Glendive EyeCare is nestled in the heart of downtown Glendive, Montana. The staff of this optometry business suffered from fluctuating workplace temperatures. So, in 2021, the company applied for funding through the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) and received a grant to install an energy-efficient system. Through a \$13,619 REAP Grant, the older building is now retrofitted with a smaller, programmable HVAC unit that can be set from on-or-offsite to adapt to Glendive's seasonality as well as Glendive EyeCare's work schedule and needs.

PROVIDING OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE

Key Message

USDA Rural Development is ready to support the people of rural America — whether they are transitioning jobs, taking care of their homes and loved ones, moving to a new town, or experiencing other life needs— because we believe rural communities are a place everyone should feel proud to call home.

Main street businesses give communities character and at USDA Rural Development, we work with rural communities to make sure more people have the resources they need to build the next successful local business.



Choose inclusive language, such as “people of rural America” or “rural communities”.

Story & Message

Story 1:

Through the USDA RD Section 504 Home Repair Program, retired U.S. Air Force Veteran Raymond Mendoza received a \$6,010 grant to repair his home in Brown County, Texas. Mr. Mendoza applied for a grant to help with his leaking roof and leveling of the foundation that was affecting his health and safety of his home. With the partnership of Cornerstone Community Action Veterans Assistance Program, USDA was able to complete repairs that help bring hope for this hero.

Story 2:

The Rural Innovation Stronger Economy (RISE) Grant Program encourages a regional, innovation-driven approach to economic development by funding job accelerator partnerships in low-income rural communities. RISE provides grants of up to \$2 million to consortiums of local governments, investors, industry, institutions of higher education, and other public and private entities in rural areas.

Communicating to the Media

How is Rural Development making an impact?



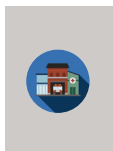
We promote rural prosperity by investing in high-speed internet access, rural businesses and jobs of the future, affordable rural homes, water and wastewater systems, and rural healthcare.

CONNECTING PEOPLE

Key Message

Rural students deserve every opportunity for success, including good, reliable high-speed internet. By helping make remote schooling a reality, we're helping bring new opportunities within reach.

RD promotes a strong, healthy community and environment with loans and grants to make sure people have clean water and reliable sewer systems. Following a disaster, RD programs can help rebuild homes and towns to quickly restore a community's dreams.



For a media audience, include how USDA RD programs affect real, rural people clearly and concisely.



Remember to use people-focused language.

Story & Message

Story 1:

Paul Bunyan Communications is upgrading high-speed internet for thousands of subscribers in Central Northern Minnesota through a RUS Telecommunications Broadband Loan. They are in the process of upgrading the 30,000 access lines, 18,000 broadband, and 15,000 digital television subscribers in their service territory to a gigabit network.

Story 2:

The City of Yreka, California, has been allocated more than \$6 million to be used to replace aging infrastructure, reduce inflow and infiltration, provide adequate hydraulic capacity, and ensure safe and reliable transmission of wastewater to the City's wastewater treatment plant.

POWERING PEOPLE

Key Message

Reliable and affordable electricity is vital for a strong economy. At USDA RD, we partner with communities to keep small businesses powered through programs like the Rural Utilities Service.

Safe drinking water is an every-day necessity, so we work with rural leaders to build reliable water systems.



Choose inclusive language, like rural “people”, “leaders”, and “business owners”.

Story & Message

Story 1:

The Astoria Co-op located on the Oregon coast was looking for a way to offset the energy required to keep its products refrigerated. The nonprofit Spark Northwest referred the co-op to the Rural Energy for America Program offered by USDA Rural Development. It was awarded a nearly \$50,000 grant, enabling the co-op to install a 60-kilowatt solar array on its roof.

Story 2:

The town of Amity, Oregon, received a \$1.6 million loan and a \$1.8 million grant in 2019 from USDA to help upgrade its municipal drinking water infrastructure. The community’s current system needs updates in order to keep pace with increasing demand. Overall, this \$5.6 million project will ensure this rural community of 1,670 people has reliable access to clean drinking water for years to come.

PROVIDING OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE

Key Message

We know stable and affordable homes help small towns across the country stay healthy and prosperous. USDA RD provides easy access financing with low rates to rural families so they can buy or rent a home.

RD investments help rural businesses create quality jobs so the people living there can afford a comfortable life.



Position USDA RD as a partner to rural people and families.

Story & Message

Story 1:

USDA staff helped Candice Hill, a single mother of three, through USDA Rural Development’s 502 Single Family Direct Loan application process. USDA’s Single-Family Housing Program made the mortgage affordable with a low interest rate and no down payment requirement. Candice purchased a three-bedroom home in Watertown, South Dakota. She shared that her three children and two cats now have a place of their own to call home.

Story 2:

The nonprofit Oregon Regional Accelerator and Innovation Network (Oregon RAIN), supported by USDA Rural Business Development Grant, helps local entrepreneurs become successful, like Sarah Butte and her bioregional herbal products business in Florence, Oregon. The \$80,000 in grants for the entrepreneur training program has assisted 70 entrepreneurs, created 33 jobs, and supported start-up businesses that have generated \$453,000 in revenue for rural communities in Lane and Lincoln counties.

Communicating to the Media

How are we uniquely positioned to help?



USDA RD employees, who often live and work in the rural communities they serve, provide loans and grants to rural people and develop partnerships with local leaders to promote growth and prosperity for rural families and local communities.

CONNECTING PEOPLE

Key Message

Small business owners deserve reliable high-speed internet to have a fair shot in the world's marketplace. By increasing profits, owners can expand their business and give more jobs and opportunities to people in their own community.

Local businesses meet local needs, and RD is proud to support businesses owned and shared by people who can best serve their own unique community's needs, fill gaps, and build opportunities for connection.



Remember to include how rural people are impacted by the work at USDA RD by using people-focused language.



Highlight the ways in which rural people are innovators and how that innovation has impact.

Story & Message

Story 1:

USDA RD has been working with the Atlantic Telephone Membership Corporation in rural North Carolina since 2010 to bring fast, reliable internet to residents. The residents of Columbus County are better equipped to handle the COVID-19 pandemic with the access to the internet that ATMC is providing.

Story 2:

Lake Region Electric Cooperative in rural Minnesota will use a \$12 million Electric Infrastructure Loan to build and improve 149 miles of line. This loan will help connect 1,890 people to reliable electricity in Becker, Clay, Douglas, Grant, Otter Tail, Todd, Wadena, and Wilkin counties.

POWERING PEOPLE

Key Message

RD energy loans and grants help keep the lights on in homes, schools, and businesses across rural America.

We work with rural communities to keep residents online, connecting them to educational opportunities through grants like Community Connect Grants.

USDA RD Community Facilities Loans support rural communities in providing healthcare to the people and places in our country that often lack access.



Be thoughtful about showing the impact programs have on rural people.

Story & Message

Story 1:

Beaufort County Community College in rural North Carolina is using a \$329,000 Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grant from USDA RD to support remote learning. The DLT Grant is enabling remote classrooms to be set up in six rural high schools in eastern North Carolina, enabling students to receive higher education without having to travel.

Story 2:

Atlantic Telephone Membership Corporation will use a \$2.9 million Community Connect Grant to construct an approximately 60 mile fiber-to-the-premises system. This system will expand access to economic, educational, healthcare, and public safety opportunities for 2,500 residents and 19 businesses in the communities of Robeson County.

PROVIDING OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE

Key Message

By avoiding large down payments, our low interest loans help more rural people become homeowners and begin to accrue generational wealth.

USDA RD and our partners support entrepreneurs and their employees by investing in small business expansion, leading to greater employment opportunities for everyone in rural areas.

Story & Message

Story 1:

Jan Riggins of Aberdeen, South Dakota, worked with Homes Are Possible, Inc. (HAPI) to apply for the Single-Family Housing 502 Direct Loan Program. The federal funding was leveraged with a \$10,500 Grow South Dakota silent mortgage, a \$20,000 HAPI silent mortgage for the lot purchase, and a \$3,500 HAPI down payment assistance silent mortgage.

Story 2:


When Carol Lynn Lapotka purchased an historic building on Polson, Montana's Main Street to house REcreate Designs, LLC, her small-batch manufacturing plant and artist co-op, she knew renovations would be needed. With USDA RD REAP grant funds, and some additional incentives through Mission Valley Power, Carol Lynn was able to refit her edifice with LED lighting, energy-efficient windows, and insulated front doors. Since the 2020 retrofit, REcreate has realized nearly \$3,400 in cost savings and about a 50 percent reduction in energy use.

Communicating to the Media

What are the outcomes we help make possible?



The commitment and resources USDA RD brings to rural people and communities across the country help drive economic security and prosperity. USDA RD connects business owners to new markets; helps power people with modern infrastructure; and supports opportunities for people to build brighter futures in rural America.

CONNECTING PEOPLE	
Key Message	Story & Message
<p>Access to quality, affordable childcare and early learning opportunities allows parents to work knowing their children are safe. RD strengthens rural economies through grants for daycare facilities and overall child development.</p> <p>USDA RD high-speed internet loans and grants give students an opportunity to study and take classes virtually, or search and interview for new job opportunities, without leaving their hometown. When rural people can be prosperous in their hometowns, it builds stability for the whole community.</p> <div><p>Position USDA RD as a partner to rural people by connecting them with educational opportunities online, for example.</p></div>	<p>Story 1:</p> <p>In West Virginia, the Boys and Girls Club of the Eastern Panhandle is receiving an \$800,000 loan to purchase a facility to house the club's childcare services. Its childcare program is open to all children who live in Morgan County. The club will rent a portion of the facility to a nonprofit healthcare provider.</p> <p>Story 2:</p> <p>In Sumter County, Alabama, USDA is investing \$334,317 through the Sumter County School System to equip six interactive distance learning rooms that will provide opportunities for teachers to reach more students across the school system through interactive video conferencing. This technology will reduce the need for students, teachers, and administrators to travel across the school system, and will also provide professional development opportunities to teachers. The project will benefit the 12,800 rural residents of Sumter County.</p>

POWERING PEOPLE

Key Message

USDA RD's energy loans and grants help run businesses, power cars, and heat homes with renewable energy from wind, solar, and biofuels. This commitment to cleaner energy will help create and protect healthy, green spaces.

Good education and job training shouldn't depend on your zip code. We work with rural communities to expand schools and support learning opportunities through Community Facilities Loans and other programs.



Choose inclusive language like “your zipcode” instead of “their zipcode”.



For a media audience, include how USDA RD programs affect real, rural people clearly and concisely.

Story & Message

Story 1:

USDA Rural Development is investing \$17,615,000 through loan guarantees for solar renewable energy projects in Maine through its Rural Energy for America Program (REAP). Pequawket Trail Baldwin Solar, LLC, located in Baldwin, Maine, will receive a total of \$10,900,000 to build a ground-mounted solar project.

Story 2:

Oklahoma's Okmulgee Public School District is being awarded a \$756,760 grant to provide distance learning services in Creek and Okmulgee counties. Schools will expand course offerings and provide professional development opportunities. The schools will use videoconferencing and interactive display panels to expand the curriculum, including science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) courses. The equipment this grant provides will help schools respond to the COVID-19 pandemic by enabling students to participate in virtual field trips and join classes from home.

PROVIDING OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE

Key Message

RD grants support small-business development to help rural communities keep local entrepreneurs and business owners and attract new ones.

Whether building a new house or repairing a current one, we work hand-in-hand with local organizations to keep the people of rural America in safe, reliable homes.

Story & Message

Story 1:

The Skagway Development Corp. in Alaska is receiving a \$121,825 Rural Community Development Initiative Grant to help small businesses develop five-year growth and operating plans. It will provide the services to businesses with 50 or fewer employees and less than \$1 million in gross revenues. This investment will help new entrepreneurs and small business owners succeed and create jobs in their communities.

Story 2:

Penny Taylor's home had an aging septic service that was failing and damaging her home and yard. Due to her limited income she was unable to afford to have the repairs done, but by working with the Housing Assistance Office in Hendersonville, North Carolina, she was able to receive a USDA RD Housing Preservation Grant.



Rural People and Customers

Why does rural America matter?

How is Rural Development making an impact?

How are we uniquely positioned to help?



What are the outcomes we help make possible?

Communicating to Rural People and Customers

Why does rural America matter?



Rural America is hometown America — more than a great place to live, its people make up America’s spirit and character. Rural people provide the everyday essentials our country depends on and grow our economy.

CONNECTING PEOPLE	
Key Message	Story & Message
<p>A strong community is rooted in its people. USDA Rural Development invests in rural America with grants and relending programs so first responders can put people’s safety first, schools can teach kids, and hospitals can care for everyone.</p> <p>Keeping the people of rural America connected with reliable, high-speed internet brings new opportunities to rural people and innovative ideas and solutions to the rest of our country. That’s why high-speed internet programs are an important part of our partnership.</p> <div><p>Customers may not be familiar with USDA Rural Development, so be sure to include how rural people are impacted by programs with people-focused language.</p></div> <div><p>Highlight the ways in which rural people are innovators and how that innovation has impact across the country.</p></div>	<p>Story 1: U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development announced that the Department is increasing the maximum loan amount to \$400,000 under the Intermediary Relending Program.</p> <p>Story 2: Tatum Telephone Company, headquartered in East Texas, will use a \$4.4 million grant to deploy a fiber-to-the-premises network. The funded service area includes 986 households, 2,657 people, three educational facilities, two essential community facilities, a healthcare facility, 67 businesses, and 60 farms spread over 41 square miles.</p>

POWERING PEOPLE

Key Message	Story & Message
<p>We partner with your communities on renewable and reliable energy and water systems to keep people and economies prepared for the future.</p> <p>Rural communities are strong and you deserve a partner who understands that. USDA RD invests in keeping people healthy, kids educated, and small businesses powered through grants tailored specifically for the people of rural America.</p>	<p>Story 1:</p> <p>Flemington, New Jersey, has received a loan in the amount of \$1,802,000 and grant in the amount of \$498,000. This project will replace deteriorating and undersized water and sewer mains in various roadways throughout the Borough. This will improve water quality and quantity in the existing water system and will reduce infiltration and inflow into the sewer system.</p> <p>Story 2:</p> <p>Glendive EyeCare is nestled in the heart of downtown Glendive, Montana. The staff of this optometry business suffered from fluctuating workplace temperatures. So, in 2021, the company applied for funding through the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) and received a grant to install an energy-efficient system. Through a \$13,619 REAP Grant, the older building is now retrofitted with a smaller, programmable HVAC unit that can be set from on-or-offsite to adapt to Glendive’s seasonality as well as Glendive EyeCare’s work schedule and needs.</p>



When speaking to rural customers, choose inclusive language like “your community” and “your needs”, instead of “their community”, etc.

PROVIDING OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE



Key Message	Story & Message
<p>We’re ready to support you and all people living in rural communities — whether you’re transitioning jobs, taking care of homes and loved ones, moving to a new town, or experiencing other life needs — because we know rural communities are a place everyone should feel comfortable calling home.</p> <p>Main street businesses are what give your community its character and at USDA Rural Development, we work with rural communities to make sure more people have the resources they need to build the next successful local business.</p>	<p>Story 1:</p> <p>Through the USDA RD Section 504 Home Repair Program, retired U.S. Air Force Veteran Raymond Mendoza received a \$6,010 grant to repair his home in Brown County, Texas. Mr. Mendoza applied for a grant to help with his leaking roof and leveling of the foundation that was affecting his health and safety of his home. With the partnership of Cornerstone Community Action Veterans Assistance Program, USDA was able to complete repairs that help bring hope for this hero.</p> <p>Story 2:</p> <p>The Rural Innovation Stronger Economy (RISE) Grant Program encourages a regional, innovation-driven approach to economic development by funding job accelerator partnerships in low-income rural communities. RISE provides grants of up to \$2 million to consortiums of local governments, investors, industry, institutions of higher education, and other public and private entities in rural areas.</p>

Communicating to Rural People and Customers

How is Rural Development making an impact?



We promote rural prosperity by investing in high-speed internet access, rural businesses and jobs of the future, affordable rural homes, water and wastewater systems, and rural healthcare.

CONNECTING PEOPLE	
Key Message	Story & Message
<p>Rural students deserve good, reliable high-speed internet. By helping make remote schooling a reality, we're working to bring new opportunities within reach.</p> <p>People, kids, and families deserve clean water and reliable sewer systems that prevent pollution and runoff. Following a disaster, such as a fire, flood, or hurricane, our loans and grants can help rebuild homes and towns to quickly restore a community's dreams.</p> <div><p>Position USDA RD as a partner to rural people.</p></div> <div><p>Be thoughtful about showing the impact programs have on rural people.</p></div>	<p>Story 1:</p> <p>Paul Bunyan Communications is upgrading high-speed internet for thousands of subscribers in Central Northern Minnesota through a RUS Telecommunications Broadband Loan. They are in the process of upgrading the 30,000 access lines, 18,000 broadband, and 15,000 digital television subscribers in their service territory to a gigabit network.</p> <p>Story 2:</p> <p>The City of Yreka, California, has been allocated more than \$6 million to be used to replace aging infrastructure, reduce inflow and infiltration, provide adequate hydraulic capacity, and ensure safe and reliable transmission of wastewater to the City's wastewater treatment plant.</p>

POWERING PEOPLE

Key Message

Reliable and affordable electricity is vital for a strong economy. USDA RD is here as a partner to help keep small businesses powered through programs like the Rural Utilities Service.

Safe drinking water is an every-day necessity. USDA RD works with your leaders and community organizations to build reliable water systems.



Always orient our mission and message by focusing on rural people. When speaking to rural customers, avoid using jargon.



Position USDA RD as a partner to rural people, not a hero. This is especially important when speaking directly to rural people.

Story & Message

Story 1:

The Astoria Co-op located on the Oregon coast was looking for a way to offset the energy required to keep its products refrigerated. The nonprofit Spark Northwest referred the co-op to the Rural Energy for America Program offered by USDA Rural Development. It was awarded a nearly \$50,000 grant, enabling the co-op to install a 60-kilowatt solar array on its roof.

Story 2:

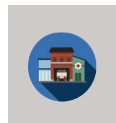
The town of Amity, Oregon, received a \$1.6 million loan and a \$1.8 million grant in 2019 from USDA to help upgrade its municipal drinking water infrastructure. The community's current system needs updates in order to keep pace with increasing demand. Overall, this \$5.6 million project will ensure this rural community of 1,670 people has reliable access to clean drinking water for years to come.

PROVIDING OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE

Key Message

Stable and affordable homes help your hometown stay healthy and prosperous. We provide easy access financing with low rates to rural families so you can buy or rent a home.

RD investments help rural businesses create good, quality jobs so the people and families living there can afford a comfortable life.



Include examples of how USDA RD programs affect real, rural people.

Story & Message

Story 1:

USDA staff helped Candice Hill, a single mother of three, through USDA Rural Development's 502 Single Family Direct Loan application process. USDA's Single-Family Housing Program made the mortgage affordable with a low interest rate and no down payment requirement. Candice purchased a three-bedroom home in Watertown, South Dakota. She shared that her three children and two cats now have a place of their own to call home.

Story 2:

The nonprofit Oregon Regional Accelerator and Innovation Network (Oregon RAIN), supported by a USDA Rural Business Development Grant, helps local entrepreneurs become successful, like Sarah Butte and her bioregional herbal products business in Florence, Oregon. The \$80,000 in grants for the entrepreneur training program has assisted 70 entrepreneurs, created 33 jobs, and supported start-up businesses that have generated \$453,000 in revenue for rural communities in Lane and Lincoln counties.

Communicating to Rural People and Customers

How are we uniquely positioned to help?



USDA RD employees, who often live and work in the rural communities they serve, provide loans and grants to rural people and develop partnerships with local leaders to promote growth and prosperity for rural families and local communities.

CONNECTING PEOPLE	
Key Message	Story & Message
<p>Small business owners deserve reliable high-speed internet to have a fair shot in the world's marketplace. By increasing profits, you can expand your business and give more jobs and opportunities to the people in your own community.</p> <p>Local businesses meet local needs, and USDA Rural Development is proud to support businesses owned and shared by the people who can best serve their own unique community's needs, fill gaps, and build opportunities for connection.</p>	<p>Story 1:</p> <p>USDA RD has been working with the Atlantic Telephone Membership Corporation in rural North Carolina since 2010 to bring fast, reliable internet to residents. The residents of Columbus County are better equipped to handle the COVID-19 pandemic with the access to the internet that ATMC is providing.</p> <p>Story 2:</p> <p>Lake Region Electric Cooperative in rural Minnesota will use a \$12 million Electric Infrastructure Loan to build and improve 149 miles of line. This loan will help connect 1,890 people to reliable electricity in Becker, Clay, Douglas, Grant, Otter Tail, Todd, Wadena, and Wilkin counties.</p>



Highlight the ways in which rural people are innovators and how that innovation has impact.

POWERING PEOPLE

Key Message

RD energy loans and grants help keep the lights on in homes, schools, and businesses across rural America.

USDA RD works with communities like yours to keep residents online, connecting you to educational opportunities through grants like Community Connect Grants.

USDA RD Community Facilities Loans support rural communities in providing healthcare to the people and places that often lack access.



Remember to connect USDA RD programs with the real-life impact they have on the people they reach.

Story & Message

Story 1:

Beaufort County Community College in rural North Carolina is using a \$329,000 Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grant from USDA RD to support remote learning. The DLT Grant is enabling remote classrooms to be set up in six rural high schools in eastern North Carolina, enabling students to receive higher education without having to travel.

Story 2:

Atlantic Telephone Membership Corporation will use a \$2.9 million Community Connect Grant to construct an approximately 60 mile fiber-to-the-premises system. This system will expand access to economic, educational, healthcare, and public safety opportunities for 2,500 residents and 19 businesses in the communities of Robeson County.

PROVIDING OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE

Key Message

By avoiding large down payments, USDA RD's low interest loans help more people in rural areas become homeowners and begin building for their family's future.

USDA RD and its partners support entrepreneurs and their employees by investing in small business expansion, leading to greater employment opportunities for everyone in rural towns.

Story & Message

Story 1:

Jan Riggins of Aberdeen, South Dakota, worked with Homes Are Possible, Inc. (HAPI) to apply for the Single-Family Housing 502 Direct Loan Program. The federal funding was leveraged with a \$10,500 Grow South Dakota silent mortgage, a \$20,000 HAPI silent mortgage for the lot purchase, and a \$3,500 HAPI down payment assistance silent mortgage.

Story 2:



When Carol Lynn Lapotka purchased an historic building on Polson, Montana's Main Street to house REcreate Designs, LLC, her small-batch manufacturing plant and artist co-op, she knew renovations would be needed. With USDA RD REAP grant funds, and some additional incentives through Mission Valley Power, Carol Lynn was able to refit her edifice with LED lighting, energy-efficient windows, and insulated front doors. Since the 2020 retrofit, REcreate has realized nearly \$3,400 in cost savings and about a 50 percent reduction in energy use.

Communicating to Rural People and Customers



What are the outcomes we help make possible?



The commitment and resources USDA RD brings to rural people and communities across the country help drive economic security and prosperity. USDA RD connects business owners to new markets; helps power people with modern infrastructure; and supports opportunities for people to build brighter futures in rural America.

CONNECTING PEOPLE	
Key Message	Story & Message
<p>Access to quality, affordable childcare and early learning opportunities allows parents in your community to work knowing their children are safe. We help strengthen rural economies through grants for daycare facilities and overall child development.</p> <p>USDA RD high-speed internet loans and grants give students an opportunity to take classes virtually, search and interview for a new job, or work remotely without leaving their hometown.</p> <div>  <p>Choose inclusive language, like rural “parents”, “families”, and “students”.</p> </div> <div>  <p>Position USDA RD as a partner to rural people, not a hero. This is especially important when speaking directly to rural customers.</p> </div>	<p>Story 1:</p> <p>In West Virginia, the Boys and Girls Club of the Eastern Panhandle is receiving an \$800,000 loan to purchase a facility to house the club’s childcare services. Its childcare program is open to all children who live in Morgan County. The club will rent a portion of the facility to a nonprofit healthcare provider.</p> <p>Story 2:</p> <p>In Sumter County, Alabama, USDA is investing \$334,317 through the Sumter County School System to equip six interactive distance learning rooms that will provide opportunities for teachers to reach more students across the school system through interactive video conferencing. This technology will reduce the need for students, teachers, and administrators to travel across the school system, and will also provide professional development opportunities to teachers. The project will benefit the 12,800 rural residents of Sumter County.</p>

POWERING PEOPLE

Key Message	Story & Message
<p>USDA RD's energy loans and grants help run businesses, power cars, and heat homes with renewable energy from wind, solar, and biofuels. This commitment to cleaner energy will help create and protect safe places for kids to play, parks to picnic, and open spaces to enjoy.</p> <p>Good education and job training shouldn't depend on your zip code. USDA RD works with rural communities to expand schools and support learning opportunities through Community Facilities Loans and other programs.</p> <div>  <p>Always orient our mission and message by focusing on rural people. When speaking to rural customers, avoid using jargon.</p> </div> <div>  <p>When speaking to rural customers, choose inclusive language like “your community” and “your needs”, instead of “their community”, etc.</p> </div>	<p>Story 1: USDA Rural Development is investing \$17,615,000 through loan guarantees for solar renewable energy projects in Maine through its Rural Energy for America Program (REAP). Pequawket Trail Baldwin Solar, LLC, located in Baldwin, Maine, will receive a total of \$10,900,000 to build a ground-mounted solar project.</p> <p>Story 2: Oklahoma's Okmulgee Public School District is being awarded a \$756,760 grant to provide distance learning services in Creek and Okmulgee counties. Schools will expand course offerings and provide professional development opportunities. The schools will use videoconferencing and interactive display panels to expand the curriculum, including science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) courses. The equipment this grant provides will help schools respond to the COVID-19 pandemic by enabling students to participate in virtual field trips and join classes from home.</p>

PROVIDING OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE

Key Message	Story & Message
<p>Communities like yours can partner with USDA Rural Development to support small-business development, keep local entrepreneurs, and attract new job opportunities.</p> <p>Whether building a new house or repairing a current one, at USDA RD we work hand-in-hand with organizations in your hometown to keep the people of rural America like you in safe, reliable homes.</p>	<p>Story 1: The Skagway Development Corp. in Alaska is receiving a \$121,825 Rural Community Development Initiative Grant to help small businesses develop five-year growth and operating plans. It will provide the services to businesses with 50 or fewer employees and less than \$1 million in gross revenues. This investment will help new entrepreneurs and small business owners succeed and create jobs in their communities.</p> <p>Story 2: Penny Taylor's home had an aging septic service that was failing and damaging her home and yard. Due to her limited income she was unable to afford to have the repairs done, but by working with the Housing Assistance Office in Hendersonville, North Carolina, she was able to receive a USDA RD Housing Preservation Grant.</p>

