



Rural Partners Network: Building Stronger Futures Together

Through the Rural Partners Network, rural people and communities benefit from collaborative partnerships among an association of federal agencies, staff and programs.

USDA Rural Development (RD) is leading the Rural Partners Network in collaboration with 16 federal agencies and regional commissions through the Rural Prosperity Interagency Policy Council, co-led by the White House Domestic Policy Council and USDA.



What is the Rural Partners Network?

Through the Rural Partners Network (RPN), the Biden-Harris Administration is taking action to transform the way the federal government partners with rural communities to spur inclusive, sustainable economic growth. The RPN creates an alliance of federal agencies and civic partners working to expand rural prosperity through job creation, infrastructure development, and community improvement. The RPN will improve equitable access to federal programs and funding, and help drive local economic development.

With the RPN, federal agencies are renewing their commitment to rural communities by expanding interagency collaboration and providing targeted staffing, tools, and resources.

How is the Rural Partners Network different?

Rural communities sometimes struggle to get financial or technical assistance from highly competitive programs based in individual federal government agencies.

The Rural Partners Network introduces a new way of doing business: a collaboration among federal agencies meant to improve access to government resources, staffing and tools. Participating agencies designate key points of contact who focus specifically on rural strategies, improving visibility and attention to rural issues.

The Rural Partners Network also puts federal staff on the ground to support designated, economically challenged communities. Known as “Community Liaisons,” these federal employees provide local leaders with the expertise to navigate federal programs. Community Liaisons help build relationships and identify additional resources to get the job done. As their work progresses, the lessons learned will impact future federal rural policy development and investment strategies.

RPN field staff are tasked with feeding key information to federal agencies regarding community needs and barriers to accessing federal resources. Agencies will then use this information to drive policy changes to address the unique challenges faced by rural communities. As a result, RPN will not only support pilot sites and activities, but will inform changes that make the federal government better deliver for all rural communities. Through this new, direct line between rural communities and Washington, D.C., the Biden-Harris Administration is changing “business-as-usual” by working across agencies to coordinate technical assistance to rural communities, share rural data and measures of success, and align grant requirements.

Which federal agencies are RPN members?

- Department of Commerce
- Department of Education
- Department of Energy
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Department of the Interior

- Department of Labor
- Small Business Administration
- Department of Transportation
- Department of the Treasury
- Department of Veterans Affairs
- Appalachian Regional Commission
- Delta Regional Authority
- Denali Commission
- Northern Border Regional Commission

RPN Implementation

In the RPN's first year, we will:

1. Launch dedicated community liaison staff in more than 25 rural communities in multiple U.S. states, Tribal Nations, and territories
2. Introduce a whole-of-government website dedicated to rural prosperity by highlighting federal rural development resources
3. Collaborate with 16 federal agencies and regional commissions through the Rural Prosperity Interagency Policy Council to support and learn from RPN communities

Rural People and Places, Trends and Opportunities

The Biden-Harris Administration is working hard to ensure America's rural places can leverage economic recovery resources, generate diversified economic growth, and create prosperity in their communities.

The federal government makes billions of dollars available each year to invest in community and economic development projects and activities. For many communities – particularly the most distressed – these resources can be difficult to identify and access. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed limitations in the typical competitive grant model, shedding light on access gaps in resources for rural people and communities.

The mere availability of competitive program resources isn't enough to build equitable, sustainable rural prosperity. Rural places need new, intentionally developed service delivery methods to support rural priorities and objectives. The Rural Partners Network provides such a framework.

For questions, please contact RuralPartnersNetwork@usda.gov.