



United States Department of Agriculture

StrikeForce for Rural Growth and Opportunity



Rural Americans face many unique challenges and every day, the U.S. Department of Agriculture provides assistance to help rural communities prosper. Unfortunately, 90 percent of America’s persistent poverty counties are in rural America – and we can’t allow these areas to be left behind.

In 2010, USDA launched the StrikeForce for Rural Growth and Opportunity – an effort to leverage partnerships in poverty-stricken rural areas to ensure that every community has equal access to USDA programs. USDA piloted the StrikeForce initiative in 2010 in the states of Arkansas, Georgia and Mississippi. In 2011, StrikeForce expanded to the Southwest, adding Colorado, New Mexico and Nevada.

In 2013, Secretary Vilsack announced new efforts to bring the StrikeForce for Rural Growth and Opportunity to Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, North Carolina, North Dakota, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Utah and Virginia.

Encouraging Growth, Creating Opportunity, Increasing Participation

USDA’s StrikeForce aims to increase investment in rural communities through intensive outreach and stronger partnership.

USDA partners with rural communities and regions on locally-supported projects. USDA takes steps, in partnership with the community, to provide technical assistance and explanation as needed to ensure that communities can fully access USDA programs.

Local Community Based Organizations are critical to this effort. Since 2010, USDA has partnered with over four hundred of these organizations – congregations, volunteer organizations, nonprofits and others.

Working In Partnership with Communities

- In Arkansas, StrikeForce is tackling food insecurity and access to healthy food. USDA established a partnership with Heifer International through the East Arkansas Enterprise Community. This partnership is developing a sustainable food system in order to address existing food deserts in a nine-county area.

- In New Mexico, USDA is increasing homeownership opportunities for families living in the Colonias communities of Luna, Hidalgo and Dona Ana Counties along the U.S./ Mexico border. USDA worked with Southwest Regional Housing and Community Development Corporation and Tierra del Sol Housing to increase the number of USDA home loans provided in these areas from 22 in 2011 to 58 in 2012 and already has 36 loans completed in 2013.
- In Nevada, StrikeForce is improving access to farm programs in Indian Country. USDA has partnered with the Indian Nations Conservation Alliance, Nevada Department of Agriculture and local extension services to promote locally grown food on Tribal lands in Nevada.
- In Georgia, USDA is collaborating with Fort Valley State University to provide technical assistance to develop a cooperative business structure in the Georgia goat industry.
- In New Mexico, StrikeForce is helping more children get a healthy meal when school’s out. USDA partnered with Share Our Strength and Dairy Max to fund its first mobile Summer Food Service Program bus. This bus, together

with other food service programs, helped to deliver 45,000 meals to children each summer weekday at 700 partner sites across the State.

Achieving Meaningful Results

- In 2012, the Farm Service Agency saw an increase in the total number of direct farm loan applications received in StrikeForce areas – even with nationwide applications down 10 percent during that time.
- In the Natural Resources Conservation Service, program applications by underserved producers last year increased an average of 82 percent in StrikeForce areas.

- Last year, the Rural Housing Community Facilities Program obligated a total of \$65 million in StrikeForce areas – a 112-percent increase over 2011.
- In 2012, USDA's Food and Nutrition Service increased the number of children in StrikeForce states receiving free or reduced price school breakfasts by 7.4%. The agency increased the number of children receiving food assistance through the Summer Food Service Program in StrikeForce states from 10.5 million to 11.3 million.

Getting Involved

As USDA's StrikeForce for Rural Growth and Opportunity expands in 2013, we foresee many new partnerships ahead. You can learn more about the USDA StrikeForce for Rural Growth and Opportunity at www.usda.gov/strikeforce. You can also contact your state StrikeForce coordinator:

USDA StrikeForce State Coordinators

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