Currently, 85 percent of our country’s persistent poverty counties are in rural America. More than one third of rural Americans, and one in four rural children live in poverty. Kids growing up in families earning twice the poverty threshold are nearly three times as likely as other children to have poor health, are more likely to finish two fewer years of school, and are more likely to earn half as much money in their adult lives.

Growing the economy by investing in rural communities and increasing opportunities for families is key to our Nation’s future. In 2010, Secretary Vilsack established USDA’s StrikeForce Initiative for Rural Growth and Opportunity to address the specific challenges associated with rural poverty. Since then, StrikeForce teams have collaborated with more than 500 community partners and public entities to bring targeted assistance to rural areas experiencing chronic poverty.

These efforts have invested more than $16.5 billion to create jobs, build homes, feed kids, assist farmers and conserve natural resources across twenty states. In 2015, StrikeForce expanded to include Oklahoma and Puerto Rico. Now, USDA StrikeForce teams will operate in 880 counties in 21 states and Puerto Rico. Each StrikeForce project is a commitment to America’s economic future.

**StrikeForce At Work**

In rural South Dakota, tribal members often lack access to higher education courses and facilities. For instance, students living on the 1,900-square-mile Rosebud Indian Reservation and the 11,000-square-mile Oglala Lakota Sioux Indian Reservation, must travel long distances to attend local tribal colleges.

USDA participated in a 2014 Grant Writing Workshop to help communities improve education, training and resources for these and other rural residents. More than 80 participants from 21 communities participated. Topics included grant writing, finding grant writing assistance, and identifying funding sources. In addition, participants had the opportunity to connect with resource providers, including USDA, other agencies, nonprofits and community foundations.

Following the workshop, two tribal colleges completed successful applications with USDA Rural Development. Sinte Gleska University on the Rosebud Indian Reservation received a grant to purchase four 15-passenger vans to transport students to and from classes. The students, who otherwise may not be able to attend, will travel more than 250,000 miles per year getting to class. In addition, Oglala Lakota College of Kyle, South Dakota, will receive funds to purchase equipment and remodel nine remote instructional centers that will connect tribal members from across the vast reservation to classes. Both colleges have strong agriculture programs, and students learning about farming and ranching practices are also connected to Natural Resource Conservation Service and Farm Service Agency programs through this partnership.
StrikeForce Initiative for Rural Growth and Opportunity in South Dakota
www.usda.gov/strikeforce

1,007 Projects in 2014 = $77.6 Million Invested

- 280 Jobs Created or Saved
- 597,963 Summer Meals for Kids
- 255 Farmers Assisted
- 925 Home Investments
- 284 Conservation Efforts

United States Department of Agriculture

StrikeForce Map Series Final: South Dakota Persistent Poverty StrikeForce Counties with overlay of Native American Reservations

Legend
- State
- Lakes
- Tribal Reservations and Pueblos
- Counties

Map Produced - January 10, 2014

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer