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.

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StrikeForce At Work

Geographic and economic isolation in Utah’s high poverty rural and tribal communities creates challenges for residents to connect with funders and service providers. Through the StrikeForce initiative, USDA has conducted extensive outreach in high poverty areas across the state, with a specific focus on reservations and Native American communities. As a result, USDA has made a number of critical investments to bring economic security to communities in need.

Building on existing relationships, USDA Rural Development has funded the materials needed for a volunteer work group to weatherize and make essential health and safety repairs to homes on the Navajo Reservation. To date, the efforts have helped repair 40 homes, giving families safe, warm places to live. Rural Development also awarded $120,000 to help Four Corners School in southern San Juan County purchase six vehicles that will transport students and staff to remote locations as part of a public lands conservation training program. In addition, more than $8.4 million in USDA business loan guarantees and 26 percent of Utah Rural Development’s economic development grants were directed to business assistance, energy, and value-added agriculture projects in persistent poverty communities across the state.
894 Projects in 2014 = $148 Million Invested

- 11 Jobs Created or Saved
- 840,631 Summer Meals for Kids
- 75 Farmers Assisted
- 827 Home Investments
- 74 Conservation Efforts

United States Department of Agriculture