

1.1 Enhance Rural Prosperity, Including Leveraging Capital Markets to Increase Government's Investment in Rural America

ACHIEVEMENTS: In FY 2015 USDA continued its record level of investment in rural America and the rural communities that millions call home by investing in essential community facilities, providing loans for rural small business, helping rural families buy or repair a home, and helping to ensure communities have access to critical infrastructure. In FY 2015 USDA met most targets for Strategic Objective 1.1 by creating or saving 52,697 jobs through financing of businesses and targeting 17.16 percent of Rural Development investments in high poverty areas that leverage private sector funding.

Additionally, USDA provided access to new or improved services resulting from Rural Development investments to 48.93 percent of rural residents. This includes delivering new and improved services to 2.4 million rural residents through investments in water and waste disposal infrastructure, 5.5 million rural residents through investments in electric infrastructure including Smart Grid technology, renewable electric generation and energy efficiency programs, 95,000 rural residents through investments in telecommunications infrastructure and 21.7 million rural residents through investments in health care, public safety, and education related community facilities.

CHALLENGES: While rural communities are diverse and their economic challenges vary based on the condition of the industries that drive their economies, generally speaking, for more than a decade, those that rely heavily on the manufacturing and agricultural industries have struggled to remain competitive in the global economy. Furthermore, rural areas typically have underdeveloped public services that make it difficult to attract or retain businesses. The persistent lack of well-paying job opportunities and the related local tax base ramifications place many rural county and municipal governments under great stress.