

U.S. Dept. of Agriculture: Trump administration highlights record levels of investment in 2020 to build rural prosperity in Wisconsin

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STEVENS POINT, Wis., Dec. 17, 2020 – U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Wisconsin Rural Development State Director Frank Frassetto highlighted the department's investments in 2020 that are building prosperity and strengthening Wisconsin's rural businesses and communities.

"Under the leadership of President Donald J. Trump and Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue, USDA invested over \$600 million in rural Wisconsin in 2020," Frassetto said. "This assistance is helping increase economic opportunities and improving the quality of life for rural residents across our great state."

Frassetto added, "We want to extend our thanks to all the agencies, partners and economic development leaders we worked with last year which ensured that our investments in rural Wisconsin created jobs, expanded economic opportunities and helped guarantee that our rural communities continue to be great places to live, work, start a business and raise a family because when rural America thrives, all of America thrives."

Below is a summary of USDA Wisconsin Rural Development's Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 accomplishments:

Connecting Rural America to High-Speed Broadband

- Invested \$3 million to support rural broadband expansion through

the [ReConnect Pilot Program](#). This investment is connecting approximately 2,100 people, 33 farms and 33 businesses to high-speed internet in Chippewa, Rusk & Taylor counties.

- Invested \$10 million in broadband through the [Telecom Infrastructure](#) programs. This investment is connecting 1,400 people in rural Dunn and Barron counties to high-speed internet.

Improving Rural Infrastructure

- Invested \$93 million in six projects to [upgrade or build electric infrastructure](#). These investments will benefit 7,000 customers by improving electric service reliability across 21 counties.
- Invested almost \$10 million in Smart Grid technology to improve electric system operations and monitor grid security for rural electric customers.
- Invested \$50 million to expand access to [safe drinking water and improve wastewater management systems](#). These investments will improve the reliability of local water supply for 25,000 rural Wisconsinites.

Bolstering Rural Economic Development

- Invested \$1 million through the [Higher Blends Infrastructure Incentive Program](#) (HBIIP) to increase the availability of renewable fuels derived from U.S. agricultural products. These investments will help increase biofuels sales by a projected 3 million gallons annually.
- Invested \$23 million to assist 10 rural businesses through the [Business and Industry \(B&I\) Loan Guarantee Program](#). Included in this total was \$15 million provided through the CARES Act. These investments created or saved nearly 530 jobs.
- Invested more than \$13 million in 44 loan and grants through the [Rural Energy for America](#) Program (REAP) for energy efficiency improvements, renewable energy systems, and energy development assistance in rural businesses.

Improving Rural Quality of Life

- Invested \$46 million in loans and grants through the [Community Facilities Programs](#) that funded the construction or modernization of essential community facilities such as police and fire vehicles, equipment, rural hospitals, educational institutions and public safety facilities. These investments will benefit 96,000 rural residents.

- Invested \$2 million through the [Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grant Program](#) in two distance learning and telemedicine projects. These investments will benefit 526,000 rural residents, making it easier for them to access healthcare and educational opportunities without having to travel long distances.
- Invested \$344 million in direct and guaranteed loans through the [Single Family Housing Programs](#) to help 2,400 low- and moderate-income families buy homes.

Enhancing Customer Service

- Cut red tape to increase private investment in rural America by making it easier for lenders to access four flagship loan programs under the [OneRD Guarantee Loan Initiative](#).
- Took immediate actions to assist rural residents, businesses and communities impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, USDA launched a [Federal Rural Resource Guide](#), provided loan forbearances, halted evictions, and made additional funding available under existing programs. For more information, visit our [COVID-19 response page](#).
- Streamlined regulations to ease customer access to CARES Act programs, infrastructure improvements, business development, housing, community facilities and high-speed internet access in rural areas.

USDA Rural Development provides loans and grants to help expand economic opportunities and create jobs in rural areas. This assistance supports infrastructure improvements; business development; housing; community facilities such as schools, public safety and health care; and high-speed internet access in rural areas. For more information, visit www.rd.usda.gov/wi, call us at 715-345-7600 or email wi-rd-stateoffice@usda.gov.

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