

Dept. of Agriculture: Announces new staff assigned to rural partners network

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STEVENS POINT, Wis., April 5, 2023— Julie Lassa, State Director for U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development in Wisconsin, today announced new staff to directly assist rural people in accessing resources and funding to improve their communities.

These new Community Liaisons are part of the [Rural Partners Network](#) (RPN), an all-of-government program led by USDA to help local people create jobs, build infrastructure, and support long-term economic stability.

“This is an exciting opportunity to engage in close partnerships with communities to help rural Wisconsinites get their fair share of federal funding,” said Rural Development State Director Julie Lassa. “As we move forward, we are sharing what we hear from rural people with program and policy leaders in Washington to help improve programs and focus investments for better results in every rural community across the nation.”

The new [Community Liaisons in Wisconsin](#) are:

- **Nathan Sandwick**, Supervisory Community Liaison
- **Laura West-Kralcik**, Community Liaison
- **Sarah Sippl**, Community Liaison

In Wisconsin, four total Community Liaisons will work directly with people and organizations in assigned RPN Community Networks. A fourth Community Liaison is expected to join the team this summer. They will be supported by a Statewide

Community Liaison, national RPN staff, and Rural Desk Officers who help manage programs at more than 20 agencies and commissions across the federal government.

Each RPN Community Network receives dedicated community development support to help them navigate federal and other programs, build relationships, and identify community-driven solutions. RPN Community Liaisons also help reduce barriers to federal program participation, support development of successful applications, and work to increase investments in underserved areas.

Community Networks [announced](#) last fall in [Wisconsin](#) include:

- Northern Wisconsin
- Greater Menominee
- Forest County
- Northwestern Wisconsin
- Adams County Visionary

The Biden-Harris Administration developed RPN to transform the way federal agencies partner with rural places to create economic opportunity. Through the program, self-identified [RPN Community Networks](#) in selected areas are invited to opt into the program.

The Rural Partners Network is a first-of-its-kind collaboration between federal agencies and local leaders and residents. The program is focused on improving social and economic well-being bolstered by existing local partnerships and assets. The Rural Partners Networks first launched in April 2022 in 11 communities in Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, and New Mexico, as well as three Tribes in Arizona. In November 2022, communities in Alaska, Puerto Rico, Nevada, North Carolina, West Virginia, and Wisconsin were added to the program and will each receive a full-time Community Liaison to help community members and leaders advance locally identified priorities and projects.

Learn more about Rural Partners Network at RURAL.gov.