



EESI

Environmental and
Energy Study Institute

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Unlocking Rural Economies: Farm Bill Investments in Rural America

Wednesday, May 24, 2023

About EESI



Non-partisan Educational Resources for Policymakers

A bipartisan Congressional caucus founded EESI in 1984 to provide non-partisan information on environmental, energy, and climate policies



Direct Assistance for Equitable and Inclusive Financing Program

In addition to a full portfolio of federal policy work, EESI provides direct assistance to utilities to develop “on-bill financing” programs



Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice

We recognize that systemic barriers impede fair environmental, energy, and climate policies and limit the full participation of Black, Indigenous, people of color, and legacy and frontline communities in decision-making



Sustainable Solutions

Our mission is to advance science-based solutions for climate change, energy, and environmental challenges in order to achieve our vision of a sustainable, resilient, and equitable world.

Polymaker Education

Briefings and Webcasts



Live, in-person and online public briefings, archived webcasts, and written summaries

Climate Change Solutions



Bi-weekly newsletter with everything policymakers and concerned citizens need to know, including a legislation and hearings tracker

Fact Sheets and Issue Briefs



Timely, objective coverage of environmental, clean energy, and climate change topics

Social Media (@EESIOnline)

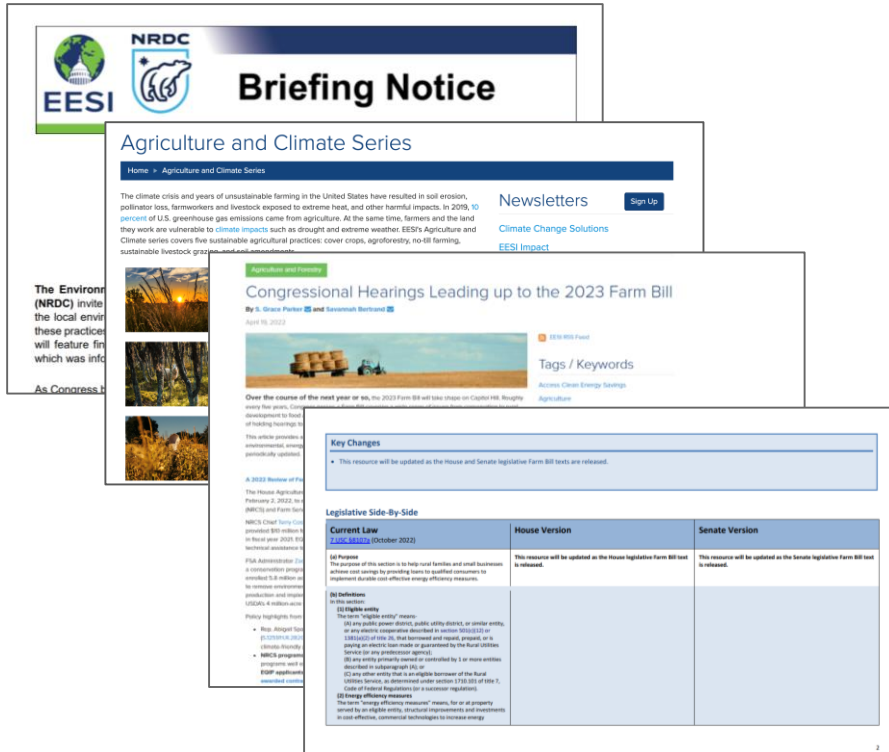


Active engagement on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and YouTube



EESI Farm Bill Resources

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Briefing Notice

Agriculture and Climate Series

The climate crisis and years of unsustainable farming in the United States have resulted in soil erosion, pollinator loss, farmworker and livestock exposed to extreme heat, and other harmful impacts. In 2019, 10 percent of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions came from agriculture. At the same time, farmers and the land they work are vulnerable to climate impacts such as drought and extreme weather. EESI's Agriculture and Climate series covers five sustainable agricultural practices: cover crops, agroforestry, no-till farming, sustainable livestock grazing, and soil conservation.

Congressional Hearings Leading up to the 2023 Farm Bill

By S. Grace Parker and Savannah Richmond

April 10, 2023

Over the course of the next year or so, the 2023 Farm Bill will take shape on Capitol Hill. Roughly every five years, Congress develops a new farm bill. The House and Senate have held several hearings in the past year to discuss the bill's provisions. This article provides an overview of the bill's provisions and the latest developments. This article provides an overview of the bill's provisions and the latest developments. This article provides an overview of the bill's provisions and the latest developments.

Key Changes

- This resource will be updated as the House and Senate legislative Farm Bill texts are released.

Current Law	House Version	Senate Version
Legislation Conservation (October 2022)	This resource will be updated as the House legislative Farm Bill text is released.	This resource will be updated as the Senate legislative Farm Bill text is released.
Key Provisions The purpose of this section is to help rural families and small businesses achieve cost savings by providing loans to qualified consumers to implement durable and effective energy efficiency measures.		
Key Definitions The term "eligible entity" means: (A) any public power district, public utility district, or similar entity, or any electric cooperative described in section 551(a)(2) or (3) of the Act that is owned and operated, managed, or is providing an electric transmission service to the Rural Utilities Service for any production activity; (B) any entity primarily owned or controlled by 1 or more entities described in paragraph (A); or (C) any other entity that is an eligible borrower of the Rural Credit Service, as determined under section 1715(b)(1) of title 7, United States Code. The term "energy efficiency measure" means, for an entity owned by or eligible entity, structural improvements and investments in cost-effective, commercial technologies to increase energy.		

- Congressional briefings
- Articles and podcasts
- *Climate Change Solutions* newsletter special editions
- Farm Bill hearing tracker
- Legislative side-by-side-by-sides

All resources available at: www.eesi.org/2023-farm-bill

Briefing Series: Farm Bill in Focus



EESI
Environmental and
Energy Study Institute

Every Other Wednesday

The Process and Path Forward for Passing a Bipartisan Farm Bill | Recording Available

Climate, Energy, and Economic Win-Wins in the Farm Bill | Recording Available

Unlocking Rural Economies: Farm Bill Investments in Rural America | May 24, 2:00-3:30 PM EDT

The Future of Forestry in the Farm Bill | June 07, 2:00-3:30 PM EDT

Conservation Practices from Farms to Forests and Wetlands | June 21, 2:00-3:30 PM EDT



UNLOCKING RURAL ECONOMIES: FARM BILL INVESTMENTS IN RURAL AMERICA

MAY 24, 2023 | EESI BRIEFING

AALIYAH NEDD | DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

| NCBA CLUSA



ABOUT NCBA CLUSA



- Apex membership association for U.S. cooperatives established in 1916
- **MISSION:** Develop, advance and protect cooperatives
- **VISION:** Help more people use cooperatives to build a more inclusive economy
- Our members are sector-based co-op associations and cooperatively-owned businesses across all sectors of the economy



Develop, advance and protect cooperative enterprise



COOPERATIVE IMPACT



WHY CO-OPS ARE FORMED

- **Address market failures** where neither the private sector nor the government provide a needed service
- **Help small players gain parity** with large investor-owned competitors
- **Give consumers a deliberate choice** of enterprise to better meet their common needs and aspirations



COOPERATIVE IMPACT



CO-OPS PROVIDE

- **Healthy foods** to communities
- **Purchasing scale** for independent businesses (Ace Hardware, CCA Global Partners)
- **Electricity** and broadband to rural communities (20 million households and businesses)
- **Financial services** to households (100 million credit union members)
- Affordable **home ownership**
- Business ownership for **low-wage workers** (fastest-growing sector)
- Marketing and processing of **agricultural products** (50% of ag)



FARMER AND INDEPENDENT SMALL BUSINESS CO-OP IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS



A MAJORITY OF AMERICA'S
1.9 MILLION
FARMERS AND RANCHERS
BELONG TO AT LEAST ONE
OF THE COUNTRY'S
1,800
AG CO-OPS¹



DAIRY CO-OPS
HANDLE
85%
OF MILK
IN THE U.S.²



THERE ARE
MORE THAN
250
PURCHASING CO-OPS
IN THE U.S.³



AG CO-OPS PROVIDE
187,331 JOBS
PAYING
\$10.8 BILLION
IN WAGES AND BENEFITS
TO RURAL AMERICANS⁴



FARM CREDIT MADE
\$14.4 BILLION
IN NEW LOANS
TO SMALL FARMERS AND
RANCHERS IN 2019⁵

CREDIT UNION IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS



85,400
CREDIT UNIONS
WORLDWIDE SERVE
MORE THAN
274 MILLION
MEMBERS¹



CREDIT UNIONS
OFFER NEARLY
30,000
SURCHARGE-FREE ATMs,
MORE THAN ANY
OTHER BANK²



THE AVERAGE INTEREST
RATE ON A 48-MONTH
USED CAR LOAN IS
3.62%
AT CREDIT UNIONS
VERSUS 5.56%
AT BANKS³



CREDIT UNION
INSURANCE FUNDS ARE
MORE STABLE
AND
LESS LIABLE
TO RISK THAN BANKS
DURING FINANCIAL CRISES⁴



52%
OF CREDIT UNION
CEOs ARE WOMEN,
10 TIMES HIGHER
THAN THE RATE OF
WOMEN CEOs
AT BANKS⁵



CONSUMER CO-OP IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS



COMPARED TO
CONVENTIONAL GROCERY
STORES, FOOD CO-OPS
RECYCLE NEARLY
DOUBLE
THE AMOUNT OF PLASTICS
AND FOOD WASTE¹



LOCAL PRODUCTS MAKE UP
21%
OF FOOD CO-OP SALES,
COMPARED TO THE NATIONAL
GROCERY AVERAGE OF
1.8%²



FOOD CO-OPS CREATE
9.3 JOBS
PER \$1 MILLION IN SALES,
COMPARED TO
5.8
AT TRADITIONAL GROCERY STORES³



FOOD COOPERATIVES
PAY ABOUT
7%
MORE THAN GROCERY
STORES FOR THE
SAME WORK⁴



ELECTRIC CO-OPS POWER
OVER
21.5 MILLION
BUSINESSES, HOMES,
SCHOOLS AND FARMS IN
48
STATES¹



MORE THAN
900
ELECTRIC CO-OPS
OWN AND MAINTAIN
42%
OF U.S. ELECTRIC DISTRIBUTION
LINES, POWERING
56%
OF THE NATION'S LANDMASS²



ELECTRIC CO-OPS
RETURNED
\$1.4 BILLION
IN CAPITAL CREDITS TO
CONSUMER-MEMBERS IN
2021

ELECTRIC CO-OP IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS



INVESTMENTS IN RURAL COOPERATIVE BUSINESSES

RURAL COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT GRANT (RCDG) PROGRAM

- Authorized through the farm bill
- Only federal program solely dedicated to cooperative development
- Supports job creation, preserved rural businesses and promotes local economic growth

RURAL ENERGY FOR AMERICA (REAP) PROGRAM

- Provides loan guarantees and grants to producers and rural small business co-ops
- Supports energy efficiency improvements and systems
- Future-planning to increase renewable energy development



RURAL REALITY

- Diverse
- Blessed with abundant natural and cultural assets
- Subject to dynamics of previous generations
- Policy interventions that overlooked parts of the economy
- Result: rural continues to lose around key outcomes





RURAL IMPERATIVE IN THE FARM BILL

WHY FOCUS ON RURAL POLICY?

- **EQUITY:** Rural people deserve economic opportunities just as everyone does.
- **ECONOMY:** Rural has much to offer a sustainable economy
- **RESILIENCE:** Increasing quality of life and climate friendly





POLICY STRATEGIES TOWARD THE FUTURE

CAPACITY BUILDING IS KEY

- **Rural economies are diverse.** Policy interventions must be flexible and tailored to the rural reality – including increasing racial and ethnic diversity.
- **Knowledge-based economy.** Rural positioned to gain and lose.
- **Data.** Rural people must have a voice and feel empowered within their institutions and the economy.



EXAMPLE: COOPERATIVES

COOPERATIVES FOCUS ON SERVICES PROVIDED TO THEIR MEMBERS AND COMMUNITIES, NOT RETURN ON INVESTMENT

- Cooperatives are user-owned
- Cooperatives are user-controlled
- Cooperatives benefit users

BENEFITS OF COOPERATION

- Responsive to its member-owners and, in turn, the local community
- Puts power in the hands of community members
- Develops, sustains and grows an organized base of people and leaders who act together through democratic structures





THANK YOU!

AALIYAH NEDD | DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS
| NCBA CLUSA

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EESI Brief: Unlocking Rural Economies: Farm Bill Investment in Rural America

RESP, Weatherization, and Broadband

Gary Stooksbury

Chief Executive Officer
Aiken Electric Cooperative, Inc.
Aiken, SC

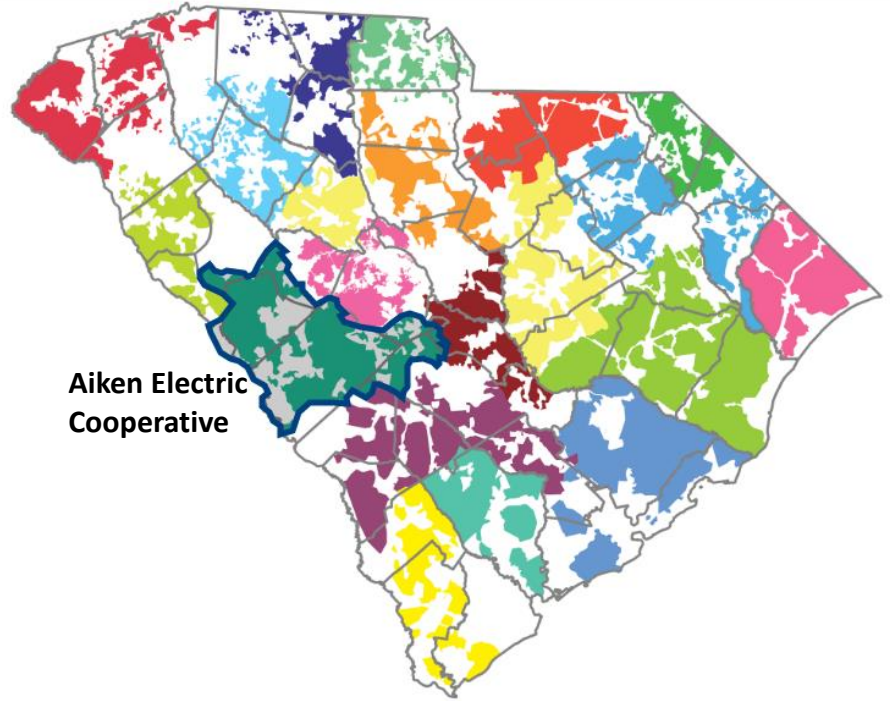


Wednesday, May 24, 2023




Aiken Electric Cooperative

- 51,000 members
- 9 counties
- 5,600 miles of line
- 137 employees



**Aiken Electric
Cooperative, Inc.**

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 



THANK YOU, REP. CLYBURN!

Rural Energy Saving Program
and Help My House





Shape Up Your Home for Energy Savings

**Began in 2011 as a pilot, and AEC
followed with their own HMMH
program in 2012**

Average Energy Savings (HMH Pilot)

\$1,157

\$288

Annual
Net Savings

\$869



Maxine Stroman

Homeowner,
Aiken, SC



Diane Taylor

Homeowner,
Monetta, SC

Annual
Energy Savings

Annual
Loan Repayment

HELP MY HOUSE BASICS

1. Convenient

- On-bill repayment (2010 S.C. law)
- Improves comfort and energy savings

2. Consistent Quality

- Trained, qualified contractors
- Co-op manages QA, QC

3. Affordable Financing

- Low-interest loan tied to the meter;
Transfers if home sells
- No money down, no credit checks required



Homes Weatherized

Aiken Electric Co-op

- 419 homes
- \$4.3M loaned

All HMMH homes

- 1,031 homes
- \$10.3M loaned

Broadband

- Partnering with Carolina Connect – a fiber optic communications cooperative
- Bringing affordable high-speed internet to the unserved and underserved
- Started in 2021, a 3-year work plan to install 350 miles of 288-strand fiber optic backbone to connect 4 offices, 27 substations and all down-line devices

Where we started — 2021

CarolinaConnect Partnership

- Affordable, reliable high-speed internet for unserved and underserved in AEC service area

CarolinaConnect Sister Co-Op's

- Mid-Carolina Electric Cooperative
- Newberry Electric Cooperative
- Aiken Electric Cooperative

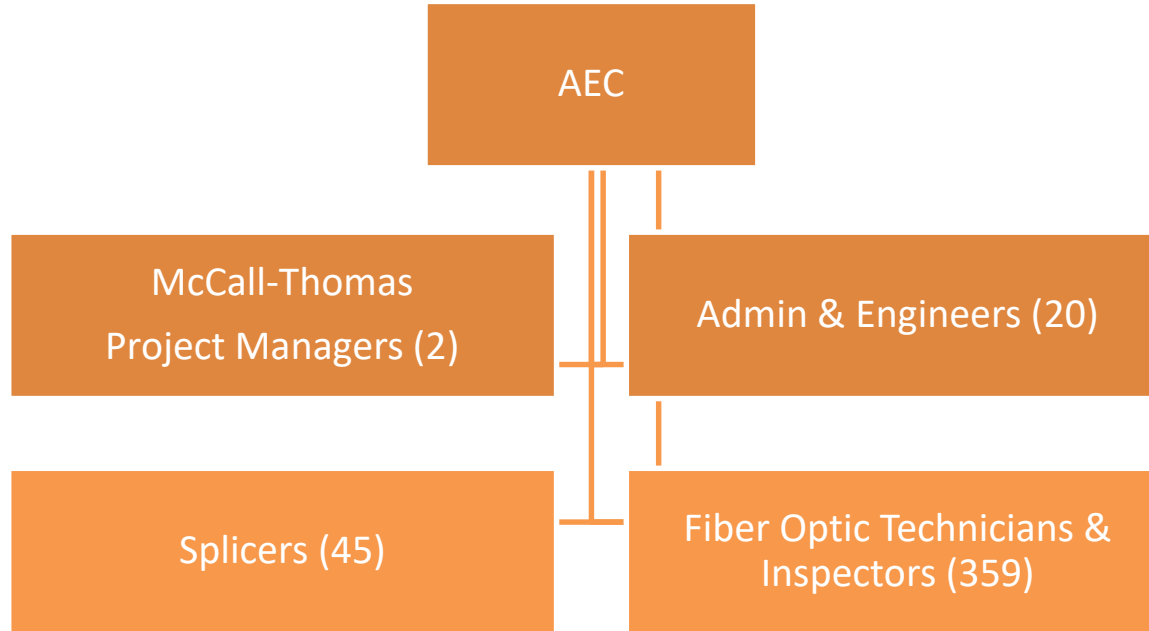
What makes our service different? *Everything!*

- VoIP (Voice over the Internet Protocol) telephone service
- Superior performance and affordable pricing
- Extraordinary customer service
- Access free technical support

Our service culture is born of the electric cooperative's longstanding commitment to reliable, friendly customer care.

Workforce behind the scenes

426
Fiber
Employees



Funding Secured to date

- Cares Act: **\$554,575**
Wi-Fi to Aiken and Orangeburg counties schools
- Office of Regulatory Staff (ORS): **\$3,939,368**
Service Orangeburg and Barnwell counties and the town of Springfield and Monetta area
- Office of Regulatory Staff (ORS): **\$6,478**
Last Mile Grant Program to complete service in Edgefield

Funding Secured to date

- Aiken County: **\$3 million**
- Saluda County: **\$1 million**
- Edgefield County: **\$47,579**
for engineering study
- Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) Award: **\$45,666**

APPROVED GRANTS
TO DATE

\$8,593,666

internet made better

Get a bigger bang for your
broadband buck!

FOR HOME

RESIDENTIAL CONNECT

350 MBPS

\$49.95

PER MONTH

RESIDENTIAL CONNECT

700 MBPS

\$69.95

PER MONTH

RESIDENTIAL CONNECT+

1 GBPS

\$89.95

PER MONTH

FOR BUSINESS

BUSINESS CONNECT

350 MBPS

\$79.95

PER MONTH

BUSINESS CONNECT

700 MBPS

\$139.95

PER MONTH

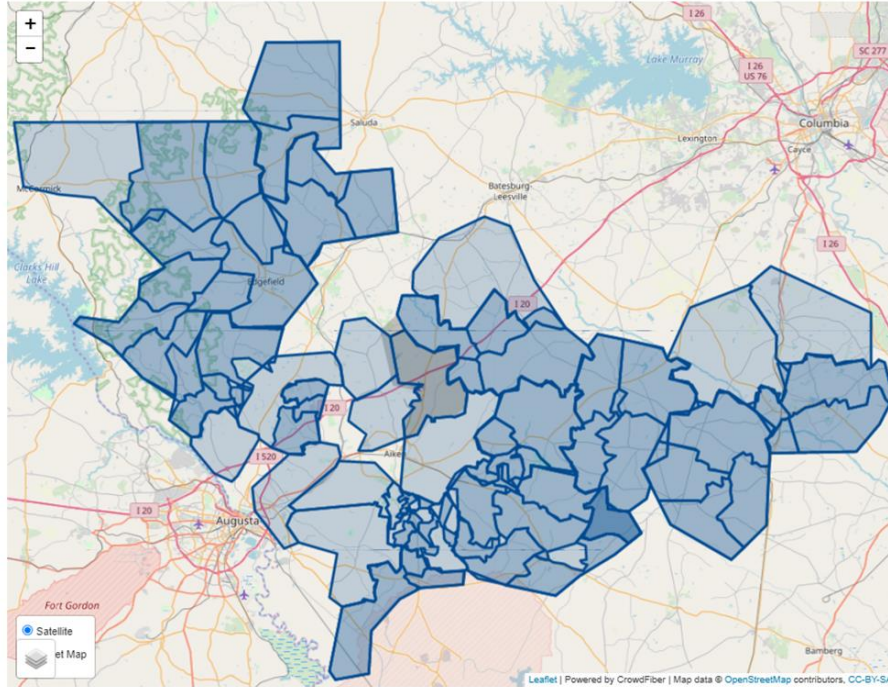
BUSINESS CONNECT+

1 GBPS

\$199.95

PER MONTH

Broadband Area





Rural
Community
Assistance
Partnership

USDA Water and Environmental Programs

Ted Stiger, RCAP

May 24, 2023

Washington, DC

Who is RCAP?

- RCAP is a non-profit organization made up of a network of regional non-profit partners (6) and a national office in Washington DC serving rural communities (under 10,000 pop.) across all 50 states, the U.S. territories and on Tribal lands
- RCAP has been providing TA and training services for 50 years
- RCAP is staffed by over 350 on the ground TA providers across the country that live and work in the communities they serve



Rural Community Assistance Partnership



RCAP National Office





Served more than **3,566,000** million rural and tribal residents and over **1,650** communities in all **50** states and four territories



Conducted **639** trainings, serving **6,680** systems reaching **~13,000** attendees



Helped rural communities across the country leverage **\$692,488,929** in infrastructure funding



Supported the smallest, often overlooked communities with an average population of **1,520** and median household income of **\$40,430**

The work that makes a difference



RCAP works with small, rural, Tribal, and often disadvantaged communities to access infrastructure funds, achieve compliance, address public health concerns, develop capacity, and create long-term sustainability and resilience.

Pre-Pre Development **(also termed planning)**

**When there is a need but
no vehicle to get there**

- Work with community leaders to create a governance structure
- Help seat a governing body
- Hire staff – operator, billing clerk, others
- Create operating budgets
- Develop operating policies, rules, and regulations
- Train decision-makers and staff
- Feasibility



Pre-Development

A need has been identified and a solution needs to be put in place

- Mapping/Asset Management
- ID compliance challenges and solutions
- Scope of work
- Procurement services
- Financial Review – Financial statements, budgets, rates
- Income surveys
- Financial, technical and environmental planning – PER & ER/EA
- Funding applications

Project Development

The PER & ER have been completed. We can apply!

- Work with the decision-makers on the alternative analysis
- RDApply
 - Work with utility staff
 - Upload documents
 - Ensure eligibility
- Resolutions
 - Draft and get decision makers to approve funding resolutions
- Community Engagement
 - Facilitate conversations with the community – financial impacts and beyond
- Funding application – Design, Construction

Letter of Conditions

RCAP TAPs help entities with:

- Policies – assist to develop missing policies – Drug-Free Workspace, LEP
- Permits – right-of-way, easements, water rights, etc.
- Rate Analysis - Review/Revise Rates
- Set up reserve set-asides
 - Annual targets
 - Reserve policies
- Work with the utility to develop the VA/RRA & ERP
- Provide board training (in some states)
- Others

Project Implementation

Work with decision-makers through the project implementation

- Will there be over \$750K spent in a year?
 - Does the utility have the budget to pay for an audit?
 - Does the utility need an RFP for an auditor with federal grant experience?
- Are all the permits in place?
- Is the project budget spending on track with the project implementation?
- Is there enough funding or is there a funding shortfall?
- Is the project meeting all the federal and state requirements?
- Is the community loving/hating their consultant(s)?

Project close-out and beyond

- RCAP's work with a community is a long-term relationship including building and maintaining trust
- RCAP will provide periodic reviews of the rates to ensure sufficient revenues to cover operating expenses including loans and reserve set-asides
- At the request of USDA, RCAP will:
 - Work with the utility to update the VA/RRA & ERP
 - Conduct Security Inspections
 - Submit required budget forms
 - Ensure debt repayment/maintenance of the debt and other reserves

RCAP's commitment is to make sure that every project is sustainable and provides technical, managerial and financial TA and training to build local capacity.

How is RCAP's work for communities supported: RD Title

- ❑ USDA Technical Assistance & Training Program (*Sections 306 Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act*)
 - ❑ In the last few years this has also included GIS TA, training and licensing

- ❑ USDA Technical Assistance & Training – Tribal
 - ❑ Includes the creation and maintenance of the Native American Water Masters Association (NAWMA)

- ❑ USDA Technical Assistance & Training – Colonias
 - ❑ Major focus of regional collaboration and water access

- ❑ USDA Solid Waste Management Program
 - ❑ Diverse set of TA service from the landfill to the classroom to ensure public/environmental health and water quality/pollution prevention

Leveraged Funding:

RCAP leverages USDA funds with other federal programs:

- EPA
- HHS
- EDA
- DOT

RCAP services are intended to be wrap-around services to ensure rural prosperity and sustainability

- Economic Development
- Broadband
- Leadership Development
- Regionalization
- Workforce Solutions
- Disaster and Climate Resiliency

Additional Resources

- [RCAP's 2023 Farm Bill Priorities](#)
- [CRS Report on USDA Rural Development Programs](#)
- [CRS Report on USDA Rural Definitions & Program Eligibility](#)
- [USDA Water & Environmental Programs Website](#)
- [RCAP Website](#)

Questions?

**To learn more about RCAP, please visit us at:
www.rcap.org**

Thank you for your time:

Ted Stiger

Chief External Affairs & Policy Officer

Rural Community Assistance Partnership

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What did you think of the briefing?

Please take 2 minutes to let us know at:
www.eesi.org/survey

Materials will be available at:
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