



## **STAKEHOLDER ANNOUNCEMENT**

### **Innovation Center Hosts Stakeholders to Share Innovative Ideas to Bring Prosperity Back to Rural Communities**

WASHINGTON, March 16, 2018 – National stakeholders recently convened at the United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) newly established Rural Innovation Center to discuss ways to enhance program delivery services. Assistant to the Secretary for Rural Development Anne Hazlett and Chief Innovation Officer Gina Sheets engaged attendees on approaches and methodologies the agency could consider around the priorities of infrastructure, partnerships, and innovation.

“Secretary Perdue created the Rural Development Innovation Center to work directly with you – no matter where you are – to help innovate the way we partner with rural communities in building their future,” said Hazlett. “The challenges and opportunities in rural America are multifaceted and constantly evolving. Rural communities need a forward-focused agency and Innovation to assist local leaders with new and fresh solutions.”

The Center is working directly with Rural Development program and state staff to make program delivery more effective and efficient for USDA customers through four approaches:

- First, by identifying ways Rural Development can leverage new and existing partnerships to increase the number of customers served by current Rural Development resources.
- Second, through the development and revision of policies (Farm Bill) that enable our resources to best serve rural communities.
- Third, by removing barriers preventing Rural Development customers from accessing our resources through regulatory reform.
- Fourth, by enhancing data-based decision making through increased accessibility to data about Rural Development investments.

Director Gina Sheets closed the meeting with a strong call for action from all stakeholders as she invited them to “Stay connected and let staff at the Innovation Center know how it can continue to move toward results that will further share innovative best practices that create rural prosperity and improve the quality of life in rural communities.”



***Chief Innovation Officer Gina Sheets (far right) engages with stakeholders sharing best practices and opportunities for partnerships on behalf of the new Innovation Center.***

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