U.S. Department of Agriculture

1. Small Town Resource Guide

Policy Priority: USDA Rural Development helps improve the quality of life for families in rural communities through technical assistance and a range of grant and loan programs, including for housing, essential community facilities, infrastructure, and small business development.

Problem: Many small towns lack the capacity/human capital to take advantage of programs (e.g. grants and low cost loans for broadband, health facilities, water systems, businesses, housing) for which they are eligible. Often times the "grant writer" for a rural community is its part-time mayor, who fills out applications on her dining room table after work. Recognizing stretched local capacity, community leaders and residents would benefit from information regarding available programs and funds.

Use case:
> • A volunteer firefighter in St Mary's county, MD has been selling donuts all year to raise funds for a new fire truck. He uses a tool to look up his town and types of emergency services. He then sees that his town has FAR fewer emergency vehicles than its neighbors, realizes that his town had not taken advantage of RD's grant and loan programs for emergency equipment and vehicles, and is better able to allocate local resources.

2. Summer Food Programs

Policy Priority: The Food and Nutrition Service promotes nutrition and food security for families nationwide.

Problem: During the academic year, many students rely on school meals for breakfast and lunch. In the summer, students and families seek a reliable alternative, but information on summer meals sites is often lacking.

Use Case:
> • The Mayor of town X knows that with summer just around the corner, many kids and families who count on school breakfast and lunch during the school year will be desperate for alternatives during the summer. Recognizing limited capacity in the community to host more than a handful of summer meals sites, she wants to be strategic about which nonprofits and organizations she engages, based on the number of children they can potentially serve. She would benefit from data and digital tools that would help her identify the locations in her community with closest proximity to public transportation, highest number of families qualifying for free and reduced school lunch, and a host of other factors to maximize impact