



Partners for Rural Transformation

The Partners for Rural Transformation (PRT) is a national coalition dedicated to advancing economic mobility in persistent poverty areas.

Collectively, the members of the PRT provide financial products and services that advance quality jobs, housing, infrastructure, and address other vital needs in the counties in America where the poverty rate has exceeded 20 percent for at least three consecutive decades. We are creating healthy communities with access to healthcare, financial security, resident leadership, and economic development to reach our vision of bringing all communities of persistent poverty out of poverty.

Who We Are

Our collective footprint which includes the Rio Grande Valley, Native American Communities, Appalachia, and the Mississippi Delta represents the great diversity of America, its richness, and challenges. Each member of the Partners for Rural Transformation holds deep ties in their respective communities. We have expertise in attracting capital and building economic opportunity and a commitment to ensure no communities are left behind.

Approximately 21 Million people live in persistent poverty areas. We seek to change that by increasing and leveraging federal investment, deploying impactful resources to communities via high-capacity, regional development organizations such as CDFIs, CDC's, etc., and catalyzing job creation, affordable housing development, and increased access to financial and human services.

13 regional and national organizations participate in the PRT. Currently the group is led by a steering committee comprised of the following members:

- Fahe (Appalachia)
- HOPE (Delta/Deep South)
- Oweesta (Native American Communities)
- CDC of Brownsville (Colonias)
- RCAC (Rural National)
- Communities Unlimited (Rural National)

Why We Work Together

We represent people in Appalachia, the Mississippi Delta, Native American Country, and the Colonias, and our similarities far outweigh our differences. The people we serve desire to live in thriving communities where they contribute to the health and welfare of the country. They want their children to have the choice to stay where they are raised to find opportunity instead

of seeking it elsewhere. However, one of the biggest similarities that we also share is the prevalence of persistent poverty on our front doorsteps. Even more, we know that communities of color often face higher rates of poverty. By working together across geographical boundaries we are able to share knowledge that leads to greater impact, allowing us to reach more of the markets we serve. Our strategy is to advocate for resources, communicate the needs and opportunities in the regions, insource expertise within the collaborative which will build our capacity, and research and develop innovative solutions to help eliminate persistent poverty and provide equitable access to opportunity to our communities.

What Have We Accomplished

The PRT has achieved considerable success in establishing public/private partnerships and positively influencing decision-makers and



attention and commitments of elected officials on both sides of the aisle, including: Hal Rogers, Thad Cochran, Joe Manchin, and many more. As well, the PPWG's established relationships with USDA-RD, HUD, ARC, DRA, and other agencies that have survived despite drastic staffing changes implemented by the current administration.



federal agencies to prioritize persistent poverty areas in the administration of impactful programs.

• **Advocated for 10-20-30 language in USDA & Treasury appropriations bills with Congressman Rogers and Senator Cochran – this is still included in appropriations today.**

The PRT successfully promoted the “10-20-30” approach to funding into the Federal Budget to positively influence the flow of targeted funding into persistent poverty areas. This “formula” promotes targeting at least 10 percent of Rural Development investments towards persistent poverty communities, counties where 20 percent or more of the population had lived below the poverty line for the last 30 years.

• **Community Facilities Relending Program & Uplift America Fund Award**

The Uplift America Fund is a public/private partnership of government,

philanthropy, and finance aimed at addressing poverty in rural America by directing significant capital towards creating needed community services and strengthening community-based lenders. The collaborative's first “big win” in the fall of 2016 was making available \$401 million of Community Facilities (CF) program funds to CDFIs/CDCs with a track record of successfully serving their communities and reducing poverty. Fahe and HOPE received CF loan commitments totaling \$90M, and are working closely with other Members of the PRT to identify the next big opportunity we will pursue as a group.

• **Mobility Summit in Birmingham**

The PRT co-hosted a Mobility Out of Poverty Summit in Birmingham, Alabama in June 2018. Several national partners joined us for the event including representatives from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and many more national funders and thought leaders. The Mobility Summit highlighted the need for financial equity and changing the narrative around persistent poverty.

• **Created bi-partisan, multi-agency support for persistent poverty-focused programs and funding**

The PRT's congressional delegation includes some of the longest serving and best-positioned representatives and senators. Members of the PRT have captured the

• **Submitted Public Comments on the Duty to Serve Program**

Over the summer, the PRT drafted and submitted comments on the FHFA Proposed Underserved Market Plans. Through the Underserved Market Plans, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac (the two Federal Housing Enterprises) were required to submit plans to provide housing for low-income people and communities. Among a number of goals, the expansion of access to high quality rural housing was one of three priorities. Members of the PRT submitted joint comments to inform the development of the rural housing strategy.

• **Rural Places / Rural Spaces**

In February 2019, HOPE hosted the Rural Spaces / Rural Places event in Mississippi. We were joined by the Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board of Governors, Jerome H. Powell who provided keynote remarks. National organizations were also present including Fannie Mae, NAACP, Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation, Opportunity Finance Network, and Bank of America. Several members of the PRT Steering Committee presented and moderated.

What Does the Future Hold?

The PRT continues to develop and strengthen partnerships and secure essential investment for persistent poverty regions in the country. We are currently developing a multi-billion dollar fund that PRT CDFIs could access investment capital for lending and to meet matching fund requirements across federal programs. We are also hosting a summit in Knoxville, TN in late 2019 with partners and stakeholders and we are developing a new white paper strategy to better inform potential funders and policy makers of the real opportunity we can create in persistent poverty areas.

We have a history of success with relatively little funding in relation to the scale of the issues we are attempting to solve. With more investment, we know we could do bigger and greater things and have a greater impact on the lives of the 21 Million people in our service areas. As we move forward, we invite you to join us in ending persistent poverty so that all communities, particularly rural and communities of color can experience the opportunity in life we all desire.

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