

## USDA Rural Development Announces Partnership with Northeast Rural Michigan Communities

**EAST LANSING, Sept. 13, 2011** – U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Rural Development State Director for Michigan James J. Turner [today](#) announced the selection of the Northeast Michigan Regional Economic Alliance for training under the Stronger Economies Together initiative.

“USDA Rural Development has developed a series of excellent partnerships to help revitalize rural Michigan’s economy,” said Turner. “The Stronger Economies Together initiative builds upon those networks and helps communities take an integrated and cooperative approach to restoring prosperity.”

SET is designed to help regional teams develop new approaches to strengthen and enhance regional economic development activities. The SET program is an opportunity for current or newly formed multi-county teams to receive the latest tools, training, and technical assistance to help their region move forward and take advantage of positive growth and quality of life opportunities.

“Fourteen counties are coming together to create the Economic Alliance of Northeast Michigan as unifying our efforts just makes sense,” said Northern Transformation President Mark L. Berdan. “This training will assist the alliance in pulling information as a region to leverage collective resources to solve problems faced by businesses and the general public. Collectively we can do much more than individually. Our thanks to USDA Rural Development and Jim Turner’s office for their assistance with this worthwhile project.”

The Northeast Michigan Regional Economic Alliance includes Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Iosco, Ogemaw, Roscommon, Alcona, Alpena, Cheboygan, Crawford, Montmorency, Oscoda, Otsego and Presque Isle counties. It is one of two teams selected from all applications received by the [May 13, 2011](#) deadline.

The selected applicants will receive:

- Valuable intensive strategic planning training for their regional team, including the newly developed “Stronger Economies Together” program, a program designed to help each regional team develop new approaches to strengthen and enhance regional economic development activities;
- Database tools specifically designed to help the regional teams examine the critical drivers of their region and identify emerging growth sectors and regional competitive advantages;
- Technical assistance and educational support from the North Central Regional Rural Development Center, Rural Development staff, and Michigan State University Extension staff; and
- Other educational and information-sharing opportunities with other SET program participants around the country.

USDA, through its Rural Development mission area, administers and manages housing, business and community infrastructure and facility programs through a national network of state and local offices. These programs are designed to improve the economic stability of rural communities, businesses, residents, farmers and ranchers and improve the quality of life in rural America. Rural Development has an existing portfolio of nearly \$150 billion in loans and loan guarantees. Visit <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov> for additional information about the agency’s programs or to locate the USDA Rural Development office nearest you.

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