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August 21, 2020

Mark Brodziski  
Acting Administrator  
Rural Business-Cooperative Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Mail Stop 3201, Room 5803-S  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Mr. Brodziski:

Western Governors appreciate U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) efforts to engage with states and stakeholders in the development of the Rural Innovation Stronger Economy (RISE) program regulations, which are being drafted by the USDA Rural-Business Cooperative Service pursuant to Section 6424 of the 2018 Farm Bill. This engagement will enhance the effectiveness of the program and ensure it meets the needs of rural communities.

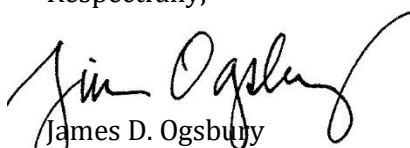
Strengthening rural economies is a priority of Western Governors. The Western Governors' Association (WGA) recently undertook a year-long initiative, *Reimagining the Rural West*, to examine rural development challenges. Among other things, the effort developed strategies to expand economic opportunity in rural communities. The initiative's findings are detailed in the *Reimagining the Rural West [Special Report](#)*. Western Governors also recently adopted WGA Policy Resolution [2020-07, Rural Development](#), outlining policy recommendations to improve rural economic development, infrastructure and quality of life.

The goals of the RISE program – to create high-wage jobs, accelerate business formation, and help communities identify and leverage local assets – are closely aligned with Western Governors' recommendations. Supporting small businesses, fostering entrepreneurs and building community assets will result in rural communities that are attractive places to live and work.

Western Governors also emphasize the importance of building local capacity so that rural communities are better able to address their economic development needs. We are pleased that the RISE program contemplates capacity-building (to help address challenges such as housing and infrastructure) as an allowable use of grant funds.

For more details, I commend your attention to the Special Report and Policy Resolution 2020-07 and their recommendations to support rural economies. WGA appreciates USDA's critical work in support of rural communities. Please let us know how Western Governors may be of assistance as we both work to promote vibrant and prosperous rural communities.

Respectfully,



James D. Ogsbury  
Executive Director