

Regional Convening Addresses Economic Development Challenges in Rural West

Rural LISC Hosts Three Dozen Community Partners as Response to Call for Regional Collaboration

PHOENIX, AZ, UNITED STATES, December 2, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Rural LISC](#), the rural arm of the Local Initiatives Support Corporation ([LISC](#)), one of the country's largest nonprofit community development financial institutions (CDFI) with more than 30 offices across the United States, completed its lineup of 2025 Rural LISC Regional Convenings with in-person events in Phoenix, AZ and Sacramento, CA, connecting peers from rural communities across several Western states.

The 12-event series, transpiring in regions across the country, was conceived after Rural LISC surveyed over 150 program partners who expressed a desire to connect and share best practices and strategies for economic development.

“We are very excited to bring so many partners together in person to confront these issues head on,” said Nadia Villagrán, vice president and Rural LISC director. “It’s clear that when rural communities are supported, they can become powerful hubs for innovation and opportunity, and events like these are critical to making sure we direct our resources in the best



LISC CEO Michael T. Pugh alongside Rural LISC Director Nadia Villagrán (left) during LISC’s Rural Convening in Phoenix.



ways possible.”

Community development leaders and practitioners from across Arizona and New Mexico joined LISC CEO Michael Pugh and LISC Phoenix staff to learn how Rural LISC and other community development leaders are navigating changes to the CDFI funding landscape.

Attendees of the Phoenix event addressed limited affordable housing options; access to quality, livable wage careers; as well as ways to strengthen the small business ecosystem and address a lack of access to technology and internet connectivity. They discussed best practices for supporting the projects and partnerships that have propelled Rural LISC for the past 30 years.

One such local partner is [Comite de Bien Estar](#), a nonprofit working to empower an agricultural community in San Luis, Arizona, a town of about 36,000 in the southwestern corner of the state where agriculture is the major industry. A Rural LISC partner since 1995, Comite serves the area with day care facilities; housing programs; nutrition assistance; land development for public schools and job training. To date, LISC has invested nearly \$9 million to help Comite to build over 1,000 self-help homes and 17,000 square feet of commercial space.



From left: Keegan McChesney of Rural LISC, Suzanne Anarde of Rural Community Assistance, Joshua Williams of Rural LISC, Pam Maxwell of U.S. Bank, Nova Flor of U.S. Bank, Alicia Sebastian of California Coalition for Rural Housing, John Moon of LISC Green,

“For over 30 years, LISC has focused on investing in rural communities across the country. Rural America contributes over \$2 trillion, or nearly 6.5%, to our GDP annually, representing a strong economic and societal driver in our country — one that deserves our collective action, ideas, and resources,” said Michael T. Pugh, president and CEO of LISC. “Our rural convenings reinforce the

importance of bringing different groups together to align resources with local priorities so that we can solve some of the most pressing and difficult problems rural populations face.”

Attendees of the Sacramento event discussed the Community Housing Improvement Program (CHIP), a nonprofit building affordable housing projects for residents of Butte, Glenn, Tehama, Shasta, Colusa, Sutter and Yuba counties. LISC is investing a \$30k pre-development grant for a 72-unit homeownership project in Gridley, CA. A Rural LISC partner since 2004, LISC has invested nearly \$4 million in CHIP to build hundreds of homes and serve thousands of individuals across Northern California.



Rural LISC is also supporting Northern Circle Indian Housing Authority (NCIHA) with a pre-development grant for the Maidu Mountain Lion housing project, a multiphase affordable housing development, totaling 22 units, intended for low- to moderate-income Berry Creek Rancheria tribal members in Butte County. This new partnership will help bring about the first affordable housing development for the Tribe since 1992.

The 2025 Rural LISC Regional Convenings are aimed at continuing dialogue with partners on the ground and respond directly to insights learned from a recent survey sent to organizations across the U.S. and its territories. Other cities hosting rural convenings this fall include Memphis, Tenn.; Duluth, Minn.; Kansas City, Mo.; and Greenville, S.C.

Rural LISC is a national organization that partners with 150 rural community-based organizations in all 50 states and three U.S. territories to help identify challenges and opportunities in delivering supportive services to meet local needs. Over the last 30 years, Rural LISC's investments in its partners have totaled \$3.11 billion in capacity-building grants, predevelopment, and repayable investments.

Rural LISC has leveraged that investment into \$9 billion from public and private sources, ultimately producing 57,723 affordable homes and 9.04 million square feet of commercial and community space. That investment has also assisted 2,908 businesses, created 24,014 jobs and supported 20 early childhood centers.

Rural LISC uses a comprehensive community development strategy to support its partners in expanding investment in housing and real estate, increasing family income and wealth,

stimulating economic development, improving access to quality education, and growing healthy communities.

About LISC

LISC is one of the country's largest community development organizations, helping forge vibrant, resilient communities across America. LISC works with residents and partners to close gaps in health, wealth, and opportunity so that people and places can thrive. Since its founding in 1979, LISC has invested \$35.1 billion to create more than 530,457 affordable homes and apartments, develop 83.5 million square feet of retail, community, and educational space, and help tens of thousands of people find employment and improve their finances. For more, visit www.lisc.org.

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