



STATE OF MICHIGAN
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
LANSING

GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

GARLIN GILCHRIST II
LT. GOVERNOR

EXECUTIVE DIRECTIVE

No. 2022-1

To: State Department Directors and Autonomous Agency Heads
From: Governor Gretchen Whitmer
Date: January 4, 2022
Re: Creating the Michigan Office of Rural Development

As governor, I aim to put Michiganders first, no matter where they live. Rural development is integral to the growth of Michigan's rural housing and infrastructure, the agricultural and food-processing industries, and the overall economy of the state. To better serve rural communities, state government must recognize rural Michigan's unique challenges and opportunities. The creation of an Office of Rural Development will facilitate the state's efforts to build a more prosperous rural economy and richer rural communities.

The work of building a healthier, better connected, and more prosperous rural Michigan is underway in numerous places, both within state government and beyond. A dedicated office within state government will help ensure these efforts are as coordinated, focused, and effective as possible. The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development ("Department") is well positioned to house this critical work.

Acting under sections 1 and 8 of article 5 of the Michigan Constitution of 1963, I direct the following:

1. Under MCL 16.107, the Department must create the Michigan Office of Rural Development ("Office"). The Office must convene and coordinate departments and agencies on all rural matters, provide guidance on pressing issues in rural Michigan, and offer insight on how state government can invest in thriving rural communities.
2. The Department must designate a Deputy for Rural Development ("Deputy"), appointed by and reporting to the MDARD Director, to serve as head of the Office. The Deputy must have demonstrated competency in issues facing rural Michiganders. The Deputy will be the state's point of contact for community leaders on urgent rural issues. Additionally, the Deputy will help coordinate state activities

impacting rural areas, including but not limited to, economic and workforce development, infrastructure, public health, and environmental sustainability.

3. The Office must do all of the following:
 - (a) Collaborate with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and other stakeholders on rural economic development.
 - (b) Collaborate with the Michigan State Housing Development Authority and other stakeholders to facilitate rural affordable housing development.
 - (c) Promote sustainability, environmental preservation, and green energy development in rural areas.
 - (d) Evaluate, analyze, and address the ramifications of population and demographic trends in rural areas of this state.
 - (e) Work with the Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development, the department, and the governor's office to identify existing state and federal policies that impact rural areas and create new policy goals.
 - (f) Analyze and provide guidance on education-related issues and the effects on rural communities, students, schools, and economies.
 - (g) Evaluate energy issues facing rural areas of this state and analyze how energy issues are impacting the livability, local economies, and opportunities in rural areas of this state.
 - (h) Work with the Michigan High-Speed Internet Office to facilitate expansion of high-speed internet connections to individuals and anchor institutions in rural communities.
 - (i) Aid rural governments, businesses, individuals, and economic development organizations in accessing economic and cultural development resources.
 - (j) Coordinate with the department's tribal liaison and tribal leaders in this state.
 - (k) Implement funding and oversight for rural development grants and assist communities and organizations in applying for rural development grants.
4. All departments, agencies, committees, commissioners, and officers of this state must give to the Office, or to any member or representative of the Office, any necessary assistance required by the Office, or any member or representative of the Office, in the performance of the duties of the Office so far as is compatible with their duties and consistent with this directive and applicable law. Free access also must be given to any books, records, or documents in their custody relating to

matters within the scope of inquiry, study, or review of the Office, consistent with applicable law.

This directive is effective immediately.

Thank you for your cooperation in implementing this directive.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Gretchen Whitmer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "G" and "W".

Gretchen Whitmer
Governor