

For: State and County Offices

USDA StrikeForce Initiative for Rural Growth and Opportunity (StrikeForce)

Approved by: Acting Deputy Administrator, Field Operations



1 Promoting Access to USDA Programs Through StrikeForce

A Background

In 2010, USDA piloted StrikeForce in Arkansas, Georgia, and Mississippi. StrikeForce was created as an effort to leverage partnerships in poverty stricken rural areas to promote access to USDA programs. In 2011, StrikeForce expanded to the southwest, adding Colorado, Nevada, and New Mexico. Over the next 2 years, the initiative grew to include 20 States, adding Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Kentucky, Louisiana, North Carolina, North Dakota, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, and West Virginia. In 2015, Oklahoma and Puerto Rico were added.

StrikeForce aims to increase investment in rural communities through intensive outreach and stronger partnerships. Agency governance of StrikeForce rotates with the Food and Agriculture Council (FAC) leadership, FSA, NRCS, and RD. RD is the current StrikeForce lead for calendar year (CY) 2015.

B Purpose

This notice provides:

- background, policy, and procedure about StrikeForce
- reporting requirements
- a link to access the StrikeForce web site.

C Contact

Questions about this notice and StrikeForce may be addressed to Linda Cronin, Lead Outreach Program Manager by either of the following:

- e-mail to linda.cronin@wdc.usda.gov
- telephone at 202-690-1299.

Disposal Date	Distribution
January 1, 2016 6-29-15	State Offices; State Offices relay to County Offices

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D Coordination

FAC, or a component thereof comprised of the USDA leadership, provides guidance and oversight of StrikeForce. Each State's FAC should meet quarterly, at a minimum, to formulate plans, monitor activities, and identify opportunities.

The lead Agency for StrikeForce designates a coordinator for each State, and the other 2 Agencies designate a lead to assist the coordinator. The lead represents their respective Agency and the coordinator represents USDA in collaboration with the leads. The coordinator is also the point-of-contact (POC) for StrikeForce. They provide support to FAC, ensuring full collaboration within USDA. These roles are addition to their regular duties.

The StrikeForce State coordinator and lead shall:

- provide day-to-day leadership of StrikeForce under the direction of FAC
- ensure timely submissions of success stories, activities, and events to the StrikeForce SharePoint site
- participate in monthly and quarterly StrikeForce teleconferences and video teleconferences (VTC's)
- attend training sessions designated by the National Office for StrikeForce coordinators and leads
- identify, create, and enhance partnerships with stakeholders
- assist in developing and implementing State strategic plans
- provide assistance in coordinating, arranging, scheduling, and conducting outreach and informational meetings
- identify opportunities for FAC to develop and implement internal and external training and educational programs related to StrikeForce activities
- identify Agency grants and other program funding opportunities available in StrikeForce designated areas
- track public and private investments within StrikeForce designated areas.

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E Communication Tools

The external StrikeForce web site at www.usda.gov/strikeforce:

- contains blogs and video that showcase the work being done in StrikeForce States
- has national and State fact sheets
- may be used as a reference when promoting StrikeForce.

The internal SharePoint site at <https://portal.usda.gov/sites/StrikeForce/default.aspx>:

- is used for reporting
- provides communication tools
- provides updates on various grants, webinars, and other important information
- provides base and background documents.

Note: Log into SharePoint using eAuthentication. New members will be prompted to request access.

F Reports

Activities and events should be uploaded into SharePoint under “Monthly Activity Report” that is due by the **9th of each month**. All activities and events for the previous month should be uploaded by the 9th day of the current month. For example, all of January’s events should be uploaded into SharePoint by February 9th.

There are 3 components to the Monthly Activity Report:

- activities
- success stories
- upcoming events (calendar).

Note: FSA-463, Photograph and Testimonial Consent/Release Form, or any other approved USDA consent document is **required** for any statement and/or photograph obtained. When submitting photographs, identify who is in the photograph and provide the name of the photographer.

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F Reports (Continued)

Items to be included are activity based. Do **not** include press releases, newsletters, flyers, etc. Loans made, programs payments issued, and similar data are obtained at the national level and should **not** be included in the Monthly Activity Report.

Each event that has taken place in the past month should be entered separately into the Monthly Activity Report. To do this, go to the SharePoint site at <https://portal.usda.gov/sites/StrikeForce/default.aspx>.

For:

- the Monthly Activity Report:
 - from the left menu, under “Lists”, CLICK “**Monthly Activities**”
 - CLICK “**New**” to start an entry
 - enter all the information requested throughout the online form that are notated with red stars, requiring response

Note: Items with checkboxes allow more than 1 selection. All others only allow 1 selection.

 - CLICK “**OK**” at the bottom of the page when completed
 - to make changes, scroll cursor to the event name until a small arrow is displayed to the right of event title, CLICK “**Small Arrow**”, and from the menu CLICK “**Edit Item**”
- Success Stories:
 - from the left menu, under “Documents”, CLICK “**Success Stories**”
 - CLICK “**2015 StrikeForce Stories**”
 - select the appropriate State folder

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F Reports (Continued)

- CLICK “**Upload**”, then “**Upload Document**” from the toolbar at the top
- follow the instructions to locate the document and upload it to the SharePoint site by clicking “**OK**”.

Notes: For the naming structure for success stories use the calendar month and year, State abbreviation, and the title ‘Success Stories’ in this format:

“**mmyyyy.State.successtories.docx (or PDF)**”

Word documents or PDF’s are acceptable.

Example: For a success story dated January 2014, from Tennessee, submitted in Word, the name would be, “**012014.TN.SuccessStories.docx**”.

G Calendar

The “Calendar” section should be used for all upcoming StrikeForce events and outreach activities, as follows:

- CLICK “Calendar”
- CLICK “**New**” to enter a new event
- enter the information required and CLICK “**OK**”
- to edit event, go to the date of the event and click on the title of the event in the calendar
- on the next page that will be displayed, CLICK “**Edit Item**” and make changes.

Note: The calendar should be updated to be a successful planning and scheduling tool. Ensure that the events are updated each time a change occurs or new details are available. The National Office StrikeForce team will use this information for scheduling purposes, such as proposed events for principals’ travel.

Any documents, such as articles, reports, press releases, photos, etc., should be submitted under the “Shared Documents” section. Click the 2015 folder and then upload documents to the applicable State folder.

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H Best Practices

The following actions should be taken to ensure success of StrikeForce in each State:

- bring community leaders, stakeholder organizations, and others together to hear the needs and goals of the community to allow USDA and other partners to work closely to align programs with community needs
- conduct a round table discussion to get feedback and identify opportunities

Note: Listening to others is critical in focusing efforts on the needs of the community.

- identify partners and learn what programs and services are offered to identify opportunities to leverage various resources and reach out to communities collaboratively
- develop a strategic plan and develop a work plan annually

Note: Review the work plan and adapt as necessary throughout the year to remain on task. Work plans are living documents that allow adaption for new opportunities that arise. The National StrikeForce Strategic goals are available on the DAFO Outreach SharePoint site under “Documents”, “Outreach Online Toolkit”, “Department Initiatives”, and “Secretary’s StrikeForce Initiative”.

- ongoing communication both internally and externally is critical
- to streamline communications and ease impact on the local office, designating POC for each Service Center may be helpful

Note: County outreach coordinators are recommended.

- POC’s are responsible for distributing information, facilitating the collection of information on events and activities for the Monthly Activity Report, and coordinating success stories and other actions as required by FAC.