

## Jacki Ponti-Lazaruk



### Rural Development Chief Innovation Officer

Jacqueline Ponti-Lazaruk is the Chief Innovation Officer for USDA, Rural Development (RD) and leads the RD Innovation Office (IC). The IC's mission is to identify best practices and bring continuous improvement in program delivery to enhance the quality of life in rural communities. The Center works to transform rural communities through strategic partnerships, data analytics and evaluation, regulatory reform and enterprise risk management. Through her leadership, RD has improved and standardized its commercial guarantee programs, developed Strategic Investment Data Tools to improve program delivery, built performance dashboards and shepherded the agency through Farm Bill and other regulations development and implementation.

Jacki has served in various senior positions in RD over the last 16+ years. Prior to becoming the Innovation Officer, she served as Rural Development's first CRO and was responsible for implementing Enterprise Risk Management and integrating it at all staff levels and into key Agency functions. She was the Assistant Administrator for the RUS Water and Environmental Programs where, for nine years, she led RD's record investments in rural water and waste infrastructure and streamlined policies and processes to improve customer service and program results. Under her leadership, the program invested more than \$14 billion in new loans and grants for rural water and waste disposal systems across the Nation. As a result, 21 million rural residents benefited from increased access to reliable and sustainable water and waste services. Her programs also provided environmental support for all Rural Utilities Service Programs, including the Electric and Telecommunications Programs. *She was also the first woman to lead the program, despite the fact that the program had been in place for nearly 70 years at the time she was appointed.*

From 2006 to 2008 she served as the Rural Development Assistant Administrator for Telecommunications Program, promoting and supporting rural broadband deployment. *She was only the second woman to lead this program area.* She has also been called upon to lead major agency-wide efforts. She was the career senior executive in charge of leading Rural Development's implementation of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), lead the consolidation and streamlining of environmental regulations and facilitated the implementation of the 2010 census. She has also served as the Rural Utilities Service Chief of Staff and as Acting Administrator at various times during her tenure.

Prior to joining USDA, she served in various positions over a 15-year span at the Federal

Communications Commission, including as Associate Bureau Chief for Outreach and Chief of Staff for the International Bureau. In February 2022 she marked the completion of her 31<sup>st</sup> year

in public service. Ms. Ponti-Lazaruk is a graduate of James Madison University in rural

Virginia.