



RURAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT GRANT PROGRAM FY 2018 APPLICATIONS REQUESTED

DELAWARE AND MARYLAND LETTER OF INTENT DUE: MONDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2018

COMPLETE APPLICATION DUE: MONDAY, APRIL 30, 2018

USDA Rural Development invites applications for the 2018 Rural Business Development Grant (RBDG) Program. Eligible applicants include rural public entities such as non-profit corporations, municipalities, institutions of higher education, development corporations, state agencies, and more.

The Rural Business Development Grant Program funds two types of projects:

- **Rural Business Enterprise Projects** benefit specific small and emerging businesses in rural areas. Enterprise projects must have a reasonable prospect to result in the development or financing of small and emerging businesses. Benefiting businesses can be private and/or nonprofit, but must employ 50 or fewer new employees and have less than \$1MM in gross revenue. Funds can support technical assistance activities to help businesses create and retain jobs through marketing assistance, website design, expert consultancy services, assistance with business plans, and more. Purchasing equipment, such as shared-business incubator equipment, is acceptable, but the grantee must retain ownership.
- **Rural Business Opportunity Projects** promote sustainable economic development in rural communities. Opportunity projects must have a reasonable prospect to result in economic development. Funds can train, identify, and provide technical assistance to existing and/or prospective rural entrepreneurs and/or managers. Funds can also provide for economic planning. Support for comprehensive regional economic planning may be possible, but please contact Rural Development for more information.

PLEASE NOTE: In 2018, Rural Development anticipates making 7 grants in Maryland and 4 grants in Delaware using this notice. Due to limited statewide funding, applications of \$30,000 or less are encouraged. Funding for opportunity projects is limited to 10% of available funds.

LETTER OF INTENT DEADLINE: 4:30pm (EST) on Monday, February 5, 2018.

Beginning in 2018, Rural Development will require RBDG applicants in Delaware and Maryland to submit a letter of intent (LOI) prior to submitting a full application. USDA will use an applicant's LOI to review eligibility and provide timely feedback on an application's competitiveness for funding. USDA will provide feedback on LOIs by Tuesday, February 20, 2018. If the above LOI deadline is not met, please contact Rural Development for more information. [Access the "FY18 Letter of Intent" template.](#)

REVISED APPLICATION DEADLINE: 4:30pm (EST) on Monday, April 30, 2018

The application deadline for the 2018 Rural Business Development Grant Program has been extended. To compete for FY2018 funding, **complete applications must be received by 4:30pm (EST) on Monday, April 30, 2018.** Applications will NOT be accepted after this deadline.

AGENCY INITIATIVES: Nearly all business sectors can benefit from the Rural Business Development Grant Program. However, Rural Development is placing specific emphasis on the following business sectors in 2018:

1. Projects supporting USDA's Bioeconomy Initiative.
2. Projects impacting locally produced/locally manufactured food networks and/or distribution systems.

Although not expected, if emphasis on these sectors changes an update will be distributed.

APPLICATION STEPS: To apply for the 2018 Rural Business Development Grant Program, applicants must:

1. Submit a letter of intent to Rural Development by 4:30pm (EST) on Monday, February 5, 2018.

[Access the "FY18 Letter of Intent" template.](#) LOIs must be received by 4:30pm (EST) on February 5, 2018. LOIs will be accepted by mail or via email. Submit by email to lisa.fitzgerald@de.usda.gov with the subject line "RBDG Letter of Intent". Submit by mail to the following address:

USDA Rural Development
ATTN: Lisa Fitzgerald, Business Programs Specialist
1221 College Park Drive, Suite 200
Dover, DE 19904

2. Submit a complete application to Rural Development by 4:30pm (EST) on Monday, April 30, 2018.

Complete applications must be received by 4:30pm (EST) on Monday, April 30, 2018 to compete for FY 2018 funding. Applications will only be accepted by mail and should be sent to:

USDA Rural Development
ATTN: Lisa Fitzgerald, Business Programs Specialist
1221 College Park Drive, Suite 200
Dover, DE 19904

For more information about this year's application process, please contact either of the following:

Lisa Fitzgerald
Business & Cooperative Programs Specialist
USDA Rural Development

Delaware and Maryland State Office
1221 College Park Drive, Suite 200
Dover, DE 19904

Email: lisa.fitzgerald@de.usda.gov

Phone: (302) 857-3592 • Fax: (855) 389-2243

www.rd.usda.gov/de or www.rd.usda.gov/md

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