

STAKEHOLDER ANNOUNCEMENT

USDA Invites Applications for Grants to Help Disadvantaged Groups

ST. PAUL, May 30, 2018 – USDA Rural Development State Director Brad Finstad today announced that USDA is seeking applications for grants under the [Socially-Disadvantaged Groups Grant program](#).

The purpose of this program is to provide technical assistance to socially-disadvantaged groups in rural areas. Eligible applicants include cooperatives, groups of cooperatives and cooperative development centers. This program supports Rural Development’s mission of improving the quality of life for rural Americans and commitment to direct agency resources to those who most need them. A socially-disadvantaged group is one whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities. A majority of the applicant’s board of directors or governing board must be comprised of individuals who are members of socially-disadvantaged groups.

For FY 2018, USDA plans to award up to \$3 million in grants. The maximum grant award is \$175,000. Grants may be used to develop and operate a Rural Cooperative Development Center that could provide the following technical assistance and other services to rural businesses:

- Conducting feasibility studies
- Developing business plans
- Providing leadership and operational improvement training

Paper applications are due July 30, 2018. Electronic applications are due July 24, 2018. Questions about the application process may be directed to your local Rural Development [Area Office](#). For more information, see page 24719 of the May 30 [Federal Register](#) or visit www.rd.usda.gov/mn.

USDA encourages applications that will support recommendations made in the report to the President from the [Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity](#) to help improve life in rural America. Applicants are encouraged to consider projects that provide measurable results in helping rural communities build robust and sustainable economies through strategic investments in infrastructure, partnerships and innovation. Key strategies include:

- Achieving e-Connectivity for Rural America
- Developing the Rural Economy
- Harnessing Technological Innovation
- Supporting a Rural Workforce
- Improving Quality of Life

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