

News Briefs

Home Repair Program

USDA is seeking applications for grants to make housing repairs for low- and very-low-income rural residents. The grants are being provided through USDA's Housing Preservation Grant program.

Eligible applicants include town or county governments, public agencies, federally recognized Indian tribes, and nonprofit and faith-based organizations. USDA does not provide funding directly to homeowners under this program.

For additional eligibility information, see page 29529 of the June 25, 2018 Federal Register.

Applications are due by 5:00 p.m. local time on August 9, 2018 at the state office where the project will be located. For a list of offices, visit the state office website.



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Washington State Rural Developments

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Housing Eligibility for Temporary Farm Workers

USDA released internal guidance on changes made to farm labor housing eligibility. The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018 amended a section of the Housing Act of 1949 to extend the Farm Labor Housing tenant eligibility to agricultural workers legally admitted to the United States and authorized to work in agriculture. Due to this rule change, domestic farm laborers legally admitted into the country under an H-2A work visa are now eligible for this state-inspected housing.

"Finding suitable housing for temporary agriculture workers has always been a challenge faced by our farmers and producers," Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue said. "The seasonal workers coming to the United States do tremendous work for American



Tulip harvest in Skagit County. USDA Photo by Bonny Rigley.

agriculture. I am pleased that USDA programs can now better assist farmers needing to provide housing while they're here. I thank Congress for addressing this issue in its most recent funding bill and hope to continue the conversation on farm labor for our agriculture industry."

USDA has released [internal guidance for implementing this new rule](#). The [application period is now open](#), with a deadline of August 27, 2018.

Applications Wanted for Farm Labor Housing Program

USDA is seeking pre-applications for Farm Labor Housing Direct Loans and Grants for Fiscal Year 2018.

This program provides funding to construct, improve, repair and purchase housing for domestic farm laborers. Eligible applicants include farmers, associations of farmworkers, most state and local government entities, nonprofit organizations and federally recognized tribes.

A full list of funding uses and eligible applicants can be found in [Title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations](#).

For FY 2018, USDA plans to award up to \$23.8 million in low-interest loans and \$8.3 million in grants. The maximum grant is \$1.5 million and cannot exceed 90 percent of the project cost. Pre-applications are due Aug. 27, 2018, to the Rural Development State Office where the project is located. For a list of offices, visit the [state office website](#).

For additional details, [see](#) page 30106 of the June 27 [Federal Register](#).

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

SDGG Grant

USDA is accepting applications for the Socially Disadvantaged Groups Grant (SDGG) program, which provides technical assistance to socially-disadvantaged groups through cooperatives and Cooperative Development Centers. Completed applications for grants must be post-marked and mailed, shipped, or sent overnight no later than July 30, 2018. For more information, contact Carlotta Donisi at carlotta.donisi@wa.usda.gov.

Repowering Assistance

USDA is accepting applications to encourage the use of renewable biomass as an alternative for fossil fuels to operate eligible biorefineries. Funding is being made available under the Repowering Assistance Program. To be eligible, biorefineries must have been in existence on or before June 18, 2008.

Applications are due July 19, 2018. For more information, see page 17522 of the April 20 Federal Register or contact Randy Baird, USDA Rural Development Washington State Energy Coordinator by emailing Randy Baird at randy.baird@wa.usda.gov.

Rural Broadband

USDA is accepting applications for loans under its Rural Broadband Access Loan and Loan Guarantee Program to extend broadband infrastructure in eligible rural communities. USDA plans to make more than \$100 million available through the program. Loan applications ranging from \$100,000 to \$25 million will be processed on a first come, first served basis. USDA will review and rank applications every 90 days through Sept. 30, 2018. Applications must be submitted online at <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/rd-apply>. For details, see page 13225 of the March 26 Federal Register.

RCDG Program

USDA is accepting applications for the Rural Cooperative Development Grant (RCDG) program, which helps improve the economic condition of rural areas by helping individuals and businesses start, expand or improve rural cooperatives and other mutually-owned businesses through Cooperative Development Centers. Nonprofit corporations and institutions of higher education are eligible to apply for this program. Public bodies, for-profit business and individuals are not eligible. Electronic applications must be received by July 24, 2018, to be eligible for grant funding. For more information, please contact Carlotta Donisi; carlot-ta.donisi@wa.usda.gov.

Community Facilities Projects Funded In Wash. State

USDA Rural Development is investing \$237 million in [119 rural community service facilities](#) in 29 states, including three projects in Washington State.

"At USDA, we believe in rural America and in the promise of small towns and the people who call them home," said Anne Hazlett, Assistant to the Secretary for Rural Development. "Under Secretary Perdue's leadership, we are committed to being a strong partner to local leaders in building healthy, prosperous futures for their communities."

USDA is supporting these quality-of-life projects through the [Community Facilities Direct Loan Program](#). For example, in Washington State:

- The Town of Almira in Lincoln County will receive a loan and grant combination of \$49,000 to finance a utility vehicle, tractor and equipment to better serve the community with more reliable equipment to improve community services.
- The City of Soap Lake in Grant County will receive a loan and grant combination of \$43,500 to finance a new police vehicle needed to provide city residents with better public safety resources.
- The City of Tonasket in Okanogan will also



Photo by Steven Pavlov

receive a loan and grant combination of \$42,000 to improve public safety through the finance of two police vehicles.

More than 100 types of projects are eligible for USDA Community Facilities funding. Eligible applicants include municipalities, public bodies, nonprofit organizations and federally and state-recognized Native American tribes. Applicants and projects must be in rural areas with a population of 20,000 or less. There is no limit on the size of the loans. Loan amounts have ranged from \$10,000 to \$165 million.

The 2018 Omnibus bill increased the Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 budget for the Community Facilities Direct Loan program to \$2.8 billion, up \$200 million from FY 2017.

USDA Seeking Applications for REDLG Program

USDA is seeking applications for the Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant (REDLG) Programs for Fiscal Year 2018. The REDLG Program provides funding for rural projects through local utility organizations. USDA provides zero-interest loans to local utilities which they, in turn, pass through to local businesses (ultimate recipients) for projects that will create and retain employment in rural areas. The ultimate recipients repay the lending utility directly. The utility is responsible for repayment to USDA.

USDA provides grants to local utility organizations which use the funding to establish revolving loan funds (RLF). Loans are made from the revolving loan funds to projects that will create or retain rural jobs. When the revolving loan fund is terminated, the grant is repaid to USDA.

To be eligible to apply, applicants must be:

- A former Rural Utilities Service borrower who borrowed, repaid or pre-paid an insured, direct, or guaranteed loan
- Nonprofit utilities that are eligible to receive assistance from the Rural Development Electric or Telecommunication Programs; or
- Current Rural Development Electric or Telecommunication Programs borrowers

This notice is being issued in order to allow applicants sufficient time to leverage financing, prepare and submit their applications, and give the Agency time to process applications within FY 2018.

For more information, please contact Cindy Mason at (202) 690-1433; cindy.mason@wdc.usda.gov.