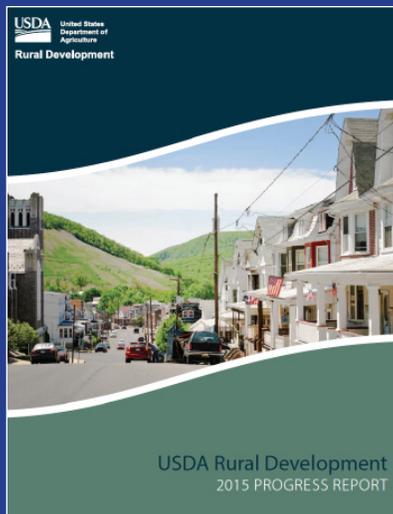


News Briefs

RCDI Grant Deadline Approaching

The Deadline for the Rural Community Development Initiative (RCDI) grant July 22, 2016. RCDI helps develop the capacity and ability of qualified entities to undertake projects related to housing, community facilities, or community and economic development in rural areas. Applicants must provide matching funds in an amount at least equal to the grant. For more information, please contact Peter McMillin by calling 360.704.7737 or by emailing him at peter.mcmillin@wa.usda.gov



USDA Rural Development
2015 PROGRESS REPORT

Washington State

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Washington State

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USDA Continues to Make Progress in Food Safety

Summer is here and now is a good time to raise awareness about what USDA has been doing to improve food safety in the United States.

It's no secret that USDA is involved in managing changes related to many areas of food processing and food distribution. From the inspection of domestic product, imports, and exports; conducting risk assessments; and educating the public about the importance of food safety.

USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) ensures that our nation's meat, poultry and processed egg supply is wholesome, safe and properly labeled. Through prevention-based policies and practices USDA is meeting the foodborne challenges of the 21st century head on and using science to craft the best ways forward.

The work we have done since 2009 is one of the most important contributions made by the federal government for the health and safety of Americans. In fact, under the Obama Administration USDA has made the most significant updates to America's food safety system and standards since the 1950s.



State Director
Mario Villanueva

For example, USDA estimates new food safety standards implemented under the Obama Administration will reduce illnesses from Salmonella and Campylobacter by about 67,000 annually. We have tightened standards for the companies who process and prepare thousands of food products and we have upgraded technology and internal systems to track and report safety issues to regulators and the public in real time.

Additionally, we have knitted together the federal agencies overseeing America's food safety system to ensure standards are tough on behalf of the consumer, vigilant against emerging risks and consistent and coordinated. And we have introduced new consumer-facing tools that allow anyone to guard themselves and their family against food borne illnesses.

If you want to learn more about what we are doing in food safety, check out USDA's Food Safety Zone on the web at www.fsis.usda.gov.

Sincerely,

Mario Villanueva
Washington State Director

USDA Announces New Assistance to Help Rural Utility Customers Conserve Energy, Lower Bills

USDA Rural Development announced a new program that will help rural residents conserve energy and save money on their utility bills. The new Rural Energy Savings Program (RESP) will make \$52 million in loans available to energy providers to help rural families and small businesses reduce their energy use.

RESP will provide loans to rural energy providers who in turn fund projects for consumers to make energy efficiency improvements in their homes or businesses that will lower their energy use. Eligible applicants include current and former Rural Utilities Service (RUS) borrowers, subsidiaries of current or former RUS borrowers, and entities that provide retail electric service in rural areas.

Congress authorized the program in the 2014 Farm Bill. RUS administers RESP as well as the similar Energy Efficiency and Conservation Loan Program (EECLP). RESP is open to a broader pool of eligible borrowers, has a zero percent interest



rate, and has a longer loan term than EECLP.

To be considered for RESP funding, applicants should submit a letter of intent by August 5, 2016. E-mail the letter of intent to RESP@wdc.usda.gov. Applications will be processed on a first-come/first-served basis until funds are expended. For additional information, see page 40262 of the June 21 Federal Register.

National Homeownership Month Highlights



Our Mount Vernon Area Office crew came together on June 15 with Habitat for Humanity of Island County to help build a participant home in Oak Harbor, Whidbey Island. Joining us from Washington D.C. was Rural Housing Service Deputy Administrator Bryan Hooper (second to the end).



Rural Development helped Whatcom Skagit Housing celebrate the completion of a 10-family Mutual Self-Help Housing project in Ferndale.



Additionally, RHS Deputy Administrator Bryan Hooper presented Whatcom Skagit Housing Executive Director Nancy Larsen with a Certificate of Commendation for 40 years of service.



USDA Rural Development east of the Cascades came together with representatives of Catholic Charities Housing Services of Yakima to work at a New Life Home project in Tieton, Yakima County. RD representatives from Wenatchee, Yakima, and Spokane worked at the Mutual Self-help Housing project for an afternoon on June 1, 2016, in commemoration of National Homeownership Month.

USDA Seeking Applications for CF Direct Relending Program

USDA Rural Development is seeking applications for loans to re-lenders under its Community Facility Loan Program.

USDA's Rural Housing Service (RHS) amended the Community Facility Direct Loan regulations to enable the Rural Development to make loans to qualified Re-lenders who will loan those funds to applicants primarily for projects in or serving persistent poverty counties or high poverty areas that are eligible under the Community Facility Loan Program.

This program provides affordable funding to develop essential community facilities in rural areas. An essential community facility is defined as a facility that provides an essential service to the local community for the orderly development of the community in a primarily rural area, and does not include private, commercial or business undertakings.

Eligible borrowers include public bodies, community-based non-profit corporations, and Federally-recognized Tribes.

Funds can be used to purchase, construct, and /or improve essential community facilities, purchase equipment and pay related project



expenses. To apply for funds, USDA Rural Development must receive a complete application by 5 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time on August 8, 2016. Applications must be submitted to: Kristen Grifka, 1400 Independence Ave. SW., Stop 0787, Room 0175, Washington, DC 20250-0787.

USDA Rural Development will make available \$500 million for loans. Awards will be made on or before Sept. 30, 2016.

For more information, refer to the July 6, 2016 issue of the Federal Register (Vol. 81, No. 129) or contact Kristen Grifka at (202) 720-1504 or via email at kristen.grifka@wdc.usda.gov.

USDA Seeks Applications For Socially Disadvantaged Groups Grant

USDA Rural Development is seeking applications for grants to provide assistance to socially-disadvantaged business groups in rural areas.

"Rural America is an incredibly diverse place with many types of businesses and business owners participating in the economy," said Rural Business-Cooperative Service Administrator Sam Rikkers. "This funding will give small, rural businesses the technical assistance they need to compete in the global marketplace."

The funding is being provided through the Socially Disadvantaged Groups Grant (SDGG) program. USDA provides grants to local cooperatives and other organizations that provide technical assistance to socially disadvantaged groups in rural areas.

Examples of technical assistance include providing leadership training, conducting

feasibility studies and developing business and strategic plans. Recipients eligible for these grants include groups of cooperatives, individual cooperatives and cooperative development centers that serve socially-disadvantaged groups. The cooperatives or development centers can be based in

any area, but the groups that receive technical assistance must be located in an eligible rural area. USDA is encouraging applications for projects in census tracts with poverty rates of 20 percent or higher.

USDA is making \$3 million in grants available. The maximum award a recipient may receive is \$175,000.

All grants are awarded through a national competition. More information on how to apply can be found on page 36254 of the June 6, 2016, Federal Register. Applications must be submitted by August 5, 2016, or electronically by August 1, 2016.

For more information, please contact Washington State Business Program Director Brian Buch by calling (360) 704-7707 or email him at brian.buch@wa.usda.gov.

