

News Briefs

Renewable Energy for America Program (REAP)

June 30 is the deadline for the REAP grant and loan/grant combo application. REAP Guaranteed loan applications are on a continuous cycle. More information can be found in the **Dec. 29, 2014 issue of the Federal Register**.

Community Development Initiative Grant (RCDI)

August 18 is the application deadline for the Community Development Initiative Grant (RCDI) program. More information is available in the **Federal Register**.

Farm Labor Housing Loan & Grant Program (FLHLG)

Pre-applications are due June 23, 2015, for the Farm Labor Housing Loan & Grant Program (FLHLG). For additional details, please see **Page 15743 of the March 25 Federal Register**, or more information concerning this program, please contact Mary Traxler at mary.traxler@wa.usda.gov.

Community Programs Funding Available

Currently in Washington State, funding for all of USDA Rural Development's Water & Environmental Programs and Community Facilities Programs. For more information, please contact Peter McMillin at peter.mcmillin@wa.usda.gov.

Washington State

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Washington State



Rural Developments

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Building a Better Future Together:

Celebrating National Homeownership Month

As National Homeownership Month begins, we think specifically of the many rural families who have built their homes with their own hands – and have, quite literally, worked up a sweat as they toiled to build a better future through homeownership. To help them succeed, USDA and its partners provided the financial tool: an affordable mortgage.



State Director
Mario Villanueva

This year we are celebrating 50 years of the Mutual Self-Help Housing Program, which has helped rural families gain a foothold into the middle class by stepping on that first rung of what President Obama calls a ladder of opportunity.

USDA created this program to provide very low- and low-income families the opportunity to achieve the American Dream of homeownership. We have partnered with more than 100 non-profit Self-Help Housing Organizations and helped 50,000 rural families realize that dream.

The program provides grants to qualified organizations to help them carry out mutual self-help housing construction projects. Participants do their part by contributing "sweat equity" through the mutual labor on their home, as well as the other members of the building group.

This program rewards that special kind of person who's willing to roll up his or her sleeves, pick up a hammer or a power tool and essentially do whatever it takes to build a better life for themselves and their family.

This is not easy work. The owner-builders spend many long hours working on their homes. But their hard work reduces construction costs. And they collectively share in the joy of becoming homeowners since no one family can move into their

home until ALL homes are ready for occupancy.

More than any other public program we've seen, Mutual Self-Help increases minority homeownership in rural communities. Consistently, over 50 percent of the homes have been built by Hispanic, Latino, African-American and other people of color. Female head of households, also participate successfully in this program— gaining skills, strength, and confidence and achieving stability for themselves and their children.

Since 2008, 41 percent of self-help homes have been built and bought by women-led households.

In 2014, USDA helped about 1,000 families realize approximately \$25,000 in equity in their new homes. Here in Washington the program provided loan funds of \$8.5 million to construct 50 homes. The Housing Assistance Council (HAC) reports that every 100 homes built via the Self-Help program create 324 jobs, \$21.1 million in local income, and \$2.2 million in tax revenue for the local economy. The impact of the program is far reaching economically, beyond the loan funds alone.

In addition to the Self Help program, USDA invested more than \$19.9 billion in 2014 to help nearly 140,000 rural residents buy homes. Washington State assisted 3,219 households purchase, construct and/or repair a home with nearly \$607 million in funding assistance.

Rural America faces a unique set of challenges when it comes to combating poverty in our towns and communities. Too often, rural people and places that are hard to reach sometimes get left out of the equation. That's why we here at USDA Rural Development are committed to making sure rural communities receive quality service and opportunity.

Mario Villanueva
State Director

If you are an individual, an investor, or a non-profit looking for properties to purchase, repair and sell or repair and use for rental properties, you can find potential properties for sale on the Agency's Property resale website located at: <http://www.resales.usda.gov/resales/index.jsp>.

Funding Available For Distance Learning & Telemedicine Projects

USDA Rural Development is accepting applications for its Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) grant program, which provides increased access to education, training and health care resources in rural areas.

USDA's Rural Utilities Service, a Rural Development agency is making \$19 million available for fiscal year 2015. The Distance Learning and Telemedicine Program finances telecommunications equipment, computer networks and advanced technologies for use by students, teachers, medical professionals and rural residents.

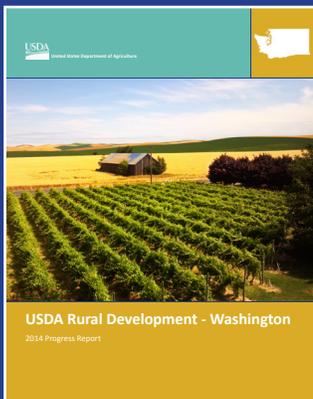
Minimum grant amounts are \$50,000; maximum amounts are \$500,000 for fiscal year 2015.

Since 2009, USDA has provided more than \$182 million to expand access to learning at nearly 4,700 rural educational facilities and to improve delivery of medical care at more than 2,500 rural health facilities.

The application deadline is July 6, 2015. *Details of the DLT funding are on Page 29602 of the May 22 Federal Register.*

For more information, please contact Peter McMillin at peter.mcmillin@wa.usda.gov.

2014 Annual Report



USDA Seeks Applications for Grants to Help Repair Housing in Rural Communities

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

Eligible applicants for Housing Preservation Grants include town or county governments, public agencies, federally recognized Indian Tribes, and non-profit and faith-based organizations. USDA does not provide funding directly to homeowners under this program.

Nationally, USDA Rural Development is making up to \$3.3 million in grants



available this fiscal year. Pre-applications are due by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on July 6, 2015.

For additional eligibility information, see page 28943 of the May 20, 2015 Federal Register.

USDA Funding Available to Help Socially Disadvantaged Rural Business Owners

USDA is now accepting applications to provide technical assistance to socially-disadvantaged groups in rural areas.

Funding will be made available through USDA's Socially-Disadvantaged Groups Grant (SDGG) Program (formerly the Small, Socially-Disadvantaged Producer Grant Program), which assists organizations that provide technical assistance to socially-disadvantaged groups in rural areas. Examples of technical assistance are conducting feasibility studies, developing business and strategic plans, and providing leadership training.

Eligible applicants include groups of cooperatives, cooperative development centers and individual cooperatives that serve

socially-disadvantaged groups. The cooperatives or centers can be located in any area, but the groups assisted must be located in an eligible rural area. Also, the majority of the governing body of the organization must be comprised of individuals who are members of socially-disadvantaged groups.

USDA Rural Development is encouraging applications for projects in census tracts with poverty rates of 20 percent or higher. All grants are awarded through a national competition. The program is making a difference in many rural areas, especially by providing technical assistance to help immigrant and minority farmers improve their productive capacity, increase revenue, and strengthen their ability to govern and manage their cooperative businesses. USDA plans

to make up to \$3 million in grants available. The maximum award under this notice is \$175,000.

Applications submitted by mail must be postmarked by July 20, 2015. Electronic applications must be submitted at www.grants.gov no later than midnight Eastern Time July 14, 2015.

For more information on SDGG:

Western Wash: - Greg York
gregory.york@wa.usda.gov
360-704-7729

Eastern Wash: - Roni Baer
veronica.baer@wa.usda.gov
509-454-5743, Ext. 134.

More information on how to apply can be found on page 28937 of the May 20 Federal Register.

Funding Available Through USDA Rural Development's Value Added Producer Grant

Funding is available through USDA Rural Development's Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) program, which enables farmers and ranchers to develop new product lines to grow their businesses and expand their contributions to the economy. This support is especially important for beginning farmers, military veterans engaging in farming and smaller farm operations participating in the local and regional food system."

VAPG grants can be used to develop new product lines from raw agricultural products or additional uses for already developed product

lines. Military veterans, socially disadvantaged, and beginning farmers and ranchers; operators of small- and medium-sized family farms and ranches; farmer and rancher cooperatives; and applicants that propose mid-tier value chain projects are given special priority in applying for VAPGs. Additional priority is given to group applicants who seek funding for projects that "best contribute" to creating or increasing marketing opportunities for these type of operators.

The deadline to submit paper applications is July 7. Electronic

applications submitted through grants.gov are due July 2.

For more information on VAPG:

Western Wash: - Greg York
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Eastern Wash: - Roni Baer
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509-454-5743, Ext. 134

More information on how to apply is on page 26528 of the May 8 Federal Register.