

## 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)

A Notice of Solicitation of Applications (NOSA) for the USDA Rural Development's Rural Community Development Initiative (RCDI) Program was published in the Federal Register. Application deadline is August 13, 2015. This program provides funding to help non-profit housing and community development organizations support housing, community facilities, and community and economic development projects in rural areas.

### Farm Labor Housing Loan & Grant Program (FLHLG)

USDA Rural Development is soliciting pre-applications for Farm Labor Housing loans and grants to construct off-farm units and related facilities for domestic farm laborers, or to purchase and substantially rehabilitate non-farm labor housing properties. Pre-applications are due June 23, 2015. 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](mailto:mary.traxler@wa.usda.gov).

### Washington State

Rural Developments is published monthly by USDA Rural Development, Washington State Office, located at 1835 Black Lake Blvd., SW, Suite B, Olympia, WA 98512

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Director, Office of Adjudication,  
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by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at  
[program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

Washington State



# Rural Developments

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## A More Diverse, Modern and Efficient USDA

I have seen a lot of innovation and change since coming on as the State Director for USDA Rural Development in Washington State. I have seen real commitment to a better tomorrow for rural residents starting from the top, when President Obama signed an executive order to establish the White House Rural Council early in his administration to address challenges in Rural America.



State Director  
Mario Villanueva

"Strong rural communities are key to a stronger America," said the President. "That's why I've established the White House Rural Council to make sure we're working across government to strengthen rural communities and promote economic growth."

The Council seeks to improve accessibility and the effectiveness of federal programs which benefit rural residents and business owners. Through smarter government, our leadership is coming together to try and find ways for us to do even better, showing the outcomes of these programs and lowering the costs to the American taxpayer by engaging stakeholders, including farmers, ranchers, and local citizens, on issues and solutions in rural communities.

While creating and coordinating opportunities for direct dialogue between the Administration and Rural America, the Council promotes and coordinates private-sector partnerships and continues to find new ways for the government to partner with private organizations in solving shared problems, and developing new, innovative models of partnership.

USDA Rural Development is working in lock step to Rural Council objectives, by focusing on community economic development and job creation by working with our rural partners to increase the flow of capital to rural areas, job creation and workforce development. In fact, all of USDA partners with com-

munities across the country to create greater economic impact for rural Americans, ensure access to safe and nutritious foods for all, and preserve our nation's waters and lands.

Just like the Rural Council, USDA Rural Development's focus is to move investments to rural America with housing, business and infrastructure loans and grants to create jobs and strengthen local economies – with emphasis to assist areas of persistent poverty. We are also working to expand telecommunications and broadband, renewable energy and energy efficiency systems, and identify new markets through our Rural Business and Cooperative Programs for rural communities.

Another major focus for Rural Development is to improve the quality of life for all rural residents by increasing access to quality health care, education, and housing, particularly in persistent poverty counties and Native American Tribes.

"Creating jobs and economic opportunity in rural America is a priority for the Obama Administration, and the White House Rural Council has used an 'all hands on deck' approach to leverage resources across the federal government to achieve that goal," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "By bringing new capital, job training, and additional investments to our rural communities, we are working to ensure the people who live in these towns have a better, brighter future."

Like I said, I have seen many changes and innovations since coming on board nearly six years ago. I have seen both the President and Secretary Vilsack, and the entire USDA Team, work together to help build a stronger rural America through partnership, progress, and promise.

Mario Villanueva  
State Director

## Export 101 Seminar June 4

Pierce County Economic Development Department will be co-sponsoring an Export 101: From Your Door to the World Seminar on Thursday, June 04, 2015 at the Dacca Barn in Fife, Washington.

This seminar might be of interest to you, and your colleagues and to other business located in Washington State who are interested in learning more about exporting.

This seminar is unique as it walks companies through the exporting process. The presenters are from the Washington Export Outreach Team (WEOT) which is a group of Local, State and Federal agencies involved in trade and export promotion who are resources that can assist them with this process. These resources can help companies in all stages of the export business continuum including New to Business (NTBs), New-To Export (NTEs), New-To-Market (NTMs), and Expanding Market (EMs) companies. The companies will also have the opportunity for one-on-one networking with the Local, State and Federal resources at the end of the event.

Space is limited. Cost is \$75 to attend, including lunch and materials.

[Register Here](#)

## Rural Business Development Grant Deadline June 5

USDA Rural Development announced the availability of its new Rural Business Development Grant (RBDG) program last month. The national website did not clarify what constitutes a complete application package. Please contact us if you are working on an application so that we can email you the required forms for completion.

Applications must be received by 4:30 pm PST on June 5, 2015. All applications must be sent or delivered to the USDA Rural Development Washington State Office, 1835 Black Lake Blvd. SW, Suite B, Olympia, WA 98512.

For more information on the RBDG program, please contact Carlotta Donisi by calling (360) 704-7724 or email her at [carlotta.donisi@wa.usda.gov](mailto:carlotta.donisi@wa.usda.gov).

## Funding Available for Value Added Producer Grant Program

USDA Rural Development will make \$30 million available to farmers, ranchers and food entrepreneurs to develop new product lines through USDA's Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) program, which supports beginning, veteran, and socially-disadvantaged farmers and ranchers to expand businesses

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 market-

ing opportunities for these type of operators.

Tuana Jones, Business Program Director for USDA Rural Development in Washington State, said her agency has invested over \$5.14 million in 41 projects throughout Washington since 2009. "The program is popular and growing," said Jones, who noted that they received a record number of applications for a wide range of agricultural value-added products last year. "We look forward to another strong year working with producers and ranchers."

Information on how to apply was published in the Federal Register today and can be viewed at: [https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2015/05/08/2015-10440/inviting-applications-for-value-added-producer-grants?utm\\_campaign=subscription+mailing+list&utm\\_medium=email&utm](https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2015/05/08/2015-10440/inviting-applications-for-value-added-producer-grants?utm_campaign=subscription+mailing+list&utm_medium=email&utm)

[source=federalregister.gov](http://source=federalregister.gov).

For more detail information and for access to application forms, agricultural producers and ranchers can visit the web at <http://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/value-added-producer-grants>.

Or contact:

- Greg York in western Washington at 360-704-7729 or [gregory.york@wa.usda.gov](mailto:gregory.york@wa.usda.gov)  
- Roni Baer in eastern Washington at 509-454-5743, Ext. 134 or [veronica.baer@wa.usda.gov](mailto:veronica.baer@wa.usda.gov)

Congress increased funding for the VAPG program when it passed the 2014 Farm Bill. That law builds on historic economic gains in rural America over the past six years, while achieving meaningful reform and billions of dollars in savings for taxpayers.

## Single Family Housing Programs In Washington State Update

Washington State received a Fiscal Year (FY) allocation of over one million dollars to assist very low income households repair, improve or modernize their home through the 504 Repair program. Applicants must be the owner-occupant of a rural dwelling with a market value not to exceed the area loan limit and generally no more than 1,800 square feet of above grade living area. The following website may be used to determine if the property is in an eligible area: <http://eligibility.sc.egov.usda.gov/eligibility/>.

Items which may be financed with these funds include:

- Health and safety hazards – such as electrical, sewage disposal, water, roof repair or replacement, structural repairs, disability accommodations, etc. (note that ALL major Health and Safety items must be remedied before any additional work may be completed)
- Home weatherization - such as insulation, window replacement, heating, etc.
- Utility hookup, installation and/or assessment fees
- Home Improvement or modernization (using loan funds) - such as flooring, modernization of kitchens and baths, etc.

- Repairs to a manufactured home, provided that the applicant owns the land and the structure is on a permanent foundation (or will be placed on a permanent foundation with the repair funds)

In order to qualify for up to \$20,000 with the 1% interest rate loan program, applicants must meet minimum eligibility requirements which include, but are not limited to:

- Adjusted household income which is at or below 50% of median income.
- A reasonable credit history. Typically, a credit score of 640 or above indicates satisfactory credit. However, applicants with lower scores, or who have had credit difficulties, may be eligible in limited circumstances.
- A stable source of income, which provides adequate ability to repay the loan.
- Be a U.S. Citizen or legally admitted U.S. resident who is 18 years of age or older and is able to enter into a binding contract.

A maximum loan amount of \$20,000 for the full repayment term of 20 years, at the fixed 1% interest rate, results in an affordable monthly payment of \$92. All applications are reviewed for loan eligibility first.

However, applicants age 62 or older, may be considered for partial grant funding to remove health and safety issues if the applicant cannot repay a portion of the loan request. Grant funds may not be used for modernization or remodeling.

For a FREE Pre-Qualification or for additional information about how you or someone you know can apply for this program, please contact one of our offices today!

### Single Family Housing Contacts

Mount Vernon - (360) 428-4322, Ext 4. (Island, King, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish and Whatcom counties)

Port Angeles – (360) 452-8994 (Clallam, Jefferson, & Kitsap counties)

Olympia - (360) 704-7760 (Clark, Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Lewis, Mason, Pacific, Pierce, Thurston, & Wahkiakum counties)

Wenatchee – (509) 663-4019 (Chelan, Douglas, Ferry, Grant, Lincoln, Okanogan, Pend O'Reille, Stevens and Spokane counties)

Yakima – (509) 454-5740 (Adams, Asotin, Benton, Columbia, Franklin, Garfield, Kittitas, Klickitat, Skamania, Walla Walla, Whitman, Yakima counties)