

# News Briefs

## Public Comments Needed For Single Family Housing Loan Eligibility Rules

USDA proposes to create a two-tier income structure to determine eligibility for USDA single family housing loans. Under the proposal, there would be two categories for household income limits: one category for one- to four-person households, and a second category for five- to eight-person households. Currently, there are eight categories.

The Department also proposes to exclude certain types of assets – such as retirement and education savings – when calculating an applicant’s down payment ability.

A USDA pilot that began in 2016 found that using a two-tier income eligibility structure resulted in increased homeownership opportunities for low-income families.

The deadline to submit comments is Oct. 30, 2018. For more information on the proposed changes and how to submit comments, see [page 44504 of the Aug. 31, 2018, Federal Register](#).



[www.rd.usda.gov/wa](http://www.rd.usda.gov/wa)

Washington State

# USDA



# Rural Developments

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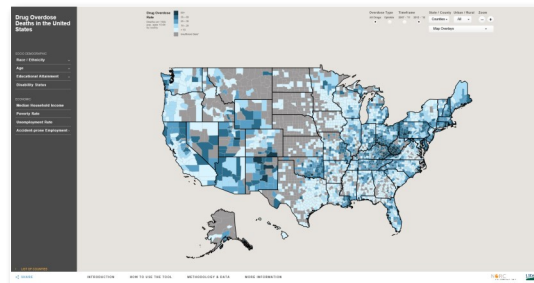
## USDA Launches Interactive Data Tool to Help Rural Communities Address the Opioid Crisis

USDA has launched an interactive data tool to help community leaders build grassroots strategies to address the opioid epidemic.

“Under the leadership of President Trump, USDA is committed to being a strong partner to rural America in addressing this monumental challenge,” said Anne Hazlett, Assistant to the Secretary for Rural Development. “Local leaders in small towns across our country need access to user-friendly and relevant data to help them build grassroots solutions for prevention, treatment and recovery.”

The opioid misuse [Community Assessment Tool](#) enables users to overlay substance misuse data against socioeconomic, census and other public information. This data will help leaders, researchers and policymakers assess what actions will be most effective in addressing the opioid crisis at the local level.

The Community Assessment Tool is free and available to the public. It can be accessed on [USDA’s Rural Opioid Misuse Webpage](#) or at [opioidmisusetool.norc.org/](http://opioidmisusetool.norc.org/).



*New Community Assessment Tool empowers rural leaders to make data-driven decisions to help build resilient communities.*

USDA’s launch of the Community Assessment Tool closely follows President Trump’s declaration of October as [National Substance Abuse Prevention Month](#). Approximately 72,000 Americans died from drug overdoses in 2017; 49,000 of those deaths involved an opioid. Many of these deaths have been fueled by the misuse of prescription pain medications. The severity of the current opioid misuse crisis requires immediate action.

See Data Tool next page

## Washington State Rural Developments

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## USDA Farm to School Grant Funding Available for 2019

USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service’s (FNS) Office of Community Food Systems has released the FY 2019 Farm to School Grant Request for Applications (RFA). Grants are designed to expand farm to school programs that improve access to local foods in eligible schools.

Awards are up to \$100,000 for implementation Grants and \$50,000 for Planning and Training Grants. Application deadline is December 4, 2018.

Register to participate in the following RFA Webinars:

- [Submitting a Grant Application](#)- October 16, 2018, 1 – 2 PM EST
- [Developing and Writing a Successful Application](#)- October 17, 2018, 1 – 2 PM EST

More information can be found on the web at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/resources-farm-school-grant-program-applicants>

Additionally, an **FY 2019 Farm to School Training & Curricula Request for Proposals (RFP)** is also available. This RFP process will establish one or more Cooperative Agreements with one or more organizations to create a **producer-focused training curriculum** designed to build producer capacity to launch or expand farm to school efforts. Up to \$2 million is available for the Cooperative Agreements. Application deadline is Nov. 26, 2018.

Find more details at <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?opId=309260>.

## Data-Tool

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Rural Development partnered with the Walsh Center for Rural Health Analysis at NORC at the University of Chicago to create the Community Assessment Tool.

NORC at the University of Chicago is a non-partisan research institution that delivers reliable data and rigorous analysis to guide critical programmatic, business and policy decisions.

Today, government, corporate and nonprofit organizations around the world partner with NORC to transform increasingly complex information into useful knowledge.

The Walsh Center focuses on a wide array of issues affecting rural providers and residents, including health care quality and public health systems.

## Essential Community Facilities Direct Loan Program

USDA's Community Facilities Direct Loan 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.

More than 100 types of projects are eligible for Community Facilities funding. Funds can be used to purchase, construct, and / or improve essential community facilities, purchase equipment and pay related project expenses.



For example in Washington State, Grays Harbor Fire District #7 will receive \$219,500 to purchase a new fire engine to serve 56 square miles around Copalis Beach.

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. Loan amounts have ranged from \$10,000 to \$165 million.

For more information contact a specialist near you from the left column.

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## Housing Preservation & Revitalization Demonstration

Applications are currently being accepted for USDA's Housing Preservation and Revitalization Demonstration Program, which restructures loans for existing Rural Rental Housing and Off-Farm Labor Housing projects to help improve and preserve the availability of safe, affordable rental housing for low-income residents.

Current multi-family housing project owners with Rural Rental Housing and Off-Farm Labor Housing loans. Borrowers must continue to provide affordable rental housing for 20 years or the remaining term of any USDA loan, whichever is later.

Funds may be used to preserve and improve existing Rural Rental Housing and Off-Farm Labor

Housing projects in order to extend their affordable use without displacing tenants through increased rents.

For More information, please contact Mary Traxler, Multi-Family Housing Program Director, by emailing her at [mary.traxler@wa.usda.gov](mailto:mary.traxler@wa.usda.gov).

## Rural Energy For America Program Funding Available

USDA Rural Development is seeking applications for loan guarantees and grants for renewable energy systems and energy efficiency improvement projects.

These loan guarantees and grants are part of USDA's Rural Energy for America Program (REAP), which was created under the 2008 Farm Bill and reauthorized under the 2014 Farm Bill.

This notice seeks applications for Fiscal Year 2019 funding. The deadlines to apply for grants are Oct. 31, 2018, and April 1, 2019. Applications for loan guarantees are accepted year-round.

REAP helps agricultural producers and rural small businesses reduce energy costs and consumption by purchasing and installing renewable energy systems and making energy efficiency improvements in their operations.

Eligible systems may derive energy from wind, solar, hydro-electric, ocean, hydrogen, geothermal or renewable biomass (including anaerobic digesters).

[Additional information about the program and how to apply for this funding is available on page 40216 of the Aug. 14, 2018, Federal Register.](#)