



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Office of Tribal Relations

June 09, 2023

1400 Independence Ave SW
Ste. 501-A
Washington, D.C. 20250

Subject: Tribal Consultation and Listening Session Invitation on the Rural Business Development Grant (RBDG) Program Proposed Rule

Phone # 202-205-2249

Dear Tribal Leaders,

On behalf of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) you are cordially invited to a virtual Tribal consultation and listening session on **July 12, 2023, from 2:00pm – 3:30pm EDT**. Through this consultation and listening session, USDA seeks your input on Tribal specific amendments to the RBDG program.

Background: RBDG Proposed Rule

The RBDG program is intended for governmental entities and non-profits that foster economic development, job creation and business creation in rural and Tribal communities. Eligible applicants for RBDG assistance include rural towns, communities, State agencies, authorities, nonprofit corporations, institutions of higher education, Federally recognized Tribes and cooperatives (if organized as a private nonprofit corporation).

On May 24, 2023, USDA Rural Development published a Proposed Rule designed to amend the RBDG program regulations to clarify and expand eligibility for federally recognized Tribes to support wholly-owned Tribal-government entities as program beneficiaries. The proposed rule can be reviewed in its entirety here: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2023-05-24/pdf/2023-10631.pdf>.

More specifically the proposed changes aim to:

- Expand the “Small and Emerging Business” definition to include Tribal governments and Tribal-owned entities.
- Clarify the definition for “Conflict of Interest” to explain how the agency defines the relationship between Tribal Nations and their Tribal-owned entities.

During this consultation, Tribal leaders will learn more about the proposed changes and can make recommendations relating to the proposed amendments. The Tribal consultation portion of the session will take place first and is reserved for dialogue between the USDA Consulting Officials and Tribal officials and/or their delegated proxies only. The consultation will be followed by a Listening Session where other speakers will have the opportunity to contribute recommendations and feedback.

Registration:

Tribal Caucus:

- **Date:** July 12, 2023
- **Time:** 1:00-2:00pm EDT
- **Register at:** <https://www.zoomgov.com/meeting/register/vJIsd-murj8rHP1-HgFIWEqfd0CSHVmsaKc>
- **Note:** Tribal caucus is an opportunity for Tribal leaders to discuss relevant consultation issues, typically facilitated by a recognized Tribal organization, without federal policymakers online.

Tribal Consultation and Listening Session:

- **Date:** July 12, 2023
- **Time:** 2:00-3:30pm EDT
- **Register at:** <https://www.zoomgov.com/meeting/register/vJIsd-murj8rHP1-HgFIWEqfd0CSHVmsaKc>
- **Note:** Tribal Leaders registered for the caucus do not have to register again for the consultation.

Proxies:

In the event you cannot attend and wish to send a proxy, please submit a proxy form to aian@usda.gov by Friday, July 7, 2023. To designate a proxy for this meeting, please copy and paste the attached delegation form to Tribal letterhead. This delegation cannot be in perpetuity.

You are also encouraged to bring program leadership and staff from your Nation to the Tribal consultation as observers. Other representatives from Indian Country who do not have a proxy delegation to represent their Tribal Nation are welcome to provide comment during time allotted for the listening session.

Written Comment:

USDA encourages Tribal Leaders to submit written consultation remarks by email no later than August 14, 2023, at aian@usda.gov.

Press/Media:

USDA consultations and listening sessions are closed press. Press may contact aian@usda.gov for questions on this proposed rule.

Questions:

Please contact aian@usda.gov if you have any questions.

Thank you,

Debra DuMontier
Acting Director, Office of Tribal Relations

Karama Neal
Administrator, Rural Business-Cooperative Service,
USDA Rural Development