



Rural Development

Rural Business–Cooperative
Service
Office of the Administrator
1400 Independence Ave, SW
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Washington, D.C. 20250

Telephone: (202) 720-6165

TO: State Directors, Rural Development

ATTN: Business Programs Directors

SUBJECT: Intermediary Relending Program
Rural Business Development Grant
Unemployment Rate, Poverty Line Figures, and Loan
Program Priorities

The purpose of this unnumbered letter (UL) is to provide the overall national unemployment rate for fiscal year 2025 and provide guidance to Business Programs' officials in calculating Intermediary Relending Program (IRP) and Rural Business Development Grant (RBDG) application priority scores.

Unemployment Rate

[7 CFR 4274.341\(b\)\(6\)](#) provides for the awarding of priority points to IRP applications based on unemployment rates. The overall national unemployment rate for January 2025 was 4.0 percent. This unemployment rate will be used to compute the unemployment rate priority points until updated by the National Office. This supersedes the national unemployment rate announced in an UL issued on March 29, 2024. The RBDG regulation at [7 CFR 4280.435\(d\)](#) provides for the awarding of priority points to RBDG applications based on unemployment rates compared to the State's unemployment rate.

Poverty Line Figures

The poverty line referred to in the current IRP regulation published on December 21, 2021, is \$32,150 for all States except Alaska and Hawaii. The applicable poverty line is \$40,190 for Alaska and \$36,980 for Hawaii. This will remain in effect until March 31, 2026. Prior unnumbered letters for Fiscal Years 2024 and 2023 are available at the following links: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/media/file/download/irp-rbdg-unemployment-rate.pdf> (2024) and <https://www.rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/03-27-23-IRP-RBDG-Unemployment-Rate-Poverty-Line-Figures-and-Loan-Program-Priorities.pdf> (2023). Please be careful to use this current guidance issued when considering applications in this Fiscal Year 2025.

EXPIRATION DATE:
March 31, 2026

FILING INSTRUCTIONS:
Community/Business Programs

Loan Program Priorities

[7 CFR 4274.341\(b\)](#) of the IRP regulation establishes a priority scoring system. This UL provides guidance for using the latest decennial Census income data updated according to changes in the consumer price index so as to have a current income figure. For 2025, the index factor to be used is 1.2272. That figure will be multiplied by the 2020 census median household income data for the service area to determine the median household income, which is then compared to the poverty line.

When addressing the above priorities, continue to review statutory and regulatory requirements regarding rurality, project eligibility, borrower eligibility, financial feasibility, and security for each loan application. Compliance with these requirements and guidelines is necessary to protect the integrity of the IRP and ensure consistency in its implementation.

If you have any questions, please contact Lori Pittman, Loan and Grant Analyst, Program Management Division, (202) 692-2533.

NOTES TO FILE:

Current unemployment rate obtained from The Employment Situation, published February 2, 2025, by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor.

Poverty line updated information is now available at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services on the internet: <https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines>.

Lori Pittman logged on to the Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics home page on the internet: <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/cpi.pdf> and obtained the consumer price index (CPIU) required by RD Instruction 4274-D and 7 CFR 4274.341(b)(5). The current CPIU is divided by the now available 2020 CPIU. The new index should be 1.2272 ($317.6/258.8 = 1.2272$.)

Sincerely,

Victoria Collin
Acting Administrator
Rural Business-Cooperative Service