



STAKEHOLDER ANNOUNCEMENT

USDA Rural Development Announces Latest Innovation in Simplified Application Process for Rural Water and Waste Infrastructure Improvements

WASHINGTON, Feb. 5, 2018 – Assistant to the Secretary for Rural Development Anne Hazlett today announced the latest innovation in the simplified application process for affordable rural water and waste infrastructure improvements.

Applicants for loans and grants in USDA’s [Water and Environmental Program \(WEP\)](#) are now able to submit [preliminary engineering reports](#) electronically. A new software tool, known as e-PER, is built around a multi-agency format that uses a series of automated features, such as population projections and a life cycle cost analysis, that greatly reduce the amount of time required to submit applications. Prior to the implementation of this new tool, customers had to do cumbersome manual calculations, such as those for population projections of a service area. The e-PER tool makes these projections automatically based on industry standard methods and the latest Census Bureau data. This modernization will standardize the level of engineering information needed and will save the customers time and money. It also performs automated life cycle cost analysis using the latest real interest rates from the Office of Management and Budget.

“These improvements to the application process make it easier for rural communities to access affordable financing to rebuild their infrastructure,” Hazlett said. “This innovation is another example of how USDA is making our services more efficient, more effective, and more customer-focused.”

The e-PER tool analyzes various cost alternatives, such as building a new system versus rehabilitating one, and provides customers a recommended option based on the lowest cost. It also allows users to upload various types of files – jpeg, PDF, Excel, Word – to accommodate multi-agency and state requirements.

Collectively, these enhancements result in a quicker review of applications, a faster response time for funding decisions, and allow for applications to be submitted to various partner agencies.

The changes became effective at the beginning of January.

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