



Rural Development

July 29, 2020

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Acting Administrator

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TO: State Directors
Rural Development

ATTN: Program Directors
Single Family Housing

FROM: Chad Parker /s/ *Chad Parker*
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SUBJECT: Self-Help Housing Flexibilities due to COVID-19

PURPOSE:

This Unnumbered Letter (UL) is issued to extend flexibilities for Self-Help Housing due to COVID-19. COVID-19 has had an impact on the ability of 523 Mutual Self-Help Housing grantees to deliver projects as planned. Limited outreach and face to face training, work from home challenges, and onsite construction limitations due to social distancing and safety requirements have created adaptations that are disruptive and slowed progress. While regional and state by state situations vary, all grantees have been impacted by COVID-19. Because of this, it is important for USDA to provide flexibility on expectations of production and costs now and in the near future.

BACKGROUND:

On March 20, 2020 a [Stakeholder Announcement](#) on Single Family Housing Direct programs provided guidance on continuity of operations in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. For Mutual Self Help grantees, this guidance included limiting workers to family members or small groups of 10 or less at work sites, and discouraging volunteer labor. At the time, Rural Development (RD) acknowledged this alternative method of construction may require additional grantee coordination and scheduling and may cause delays in construction. Grantees were reminded of the process for grant amendments and time extensions under RD Instruction 1944-I, section 1944.420.

EXPIRATION DATE:
September 30, 2020

FILING INSTRUCTIONS:
Housing Programs

IMPLEMENTATION RESPONSIBILITIES:

RD will evaluate amendments, time extensions and refunding in light of the current situation and the obstacles grantees have encountered due to COVID-19. Lower rates of production, Equivalent Units (EUs) and Technical Assistance (TA) cost per EU during COVID-19 will be considered in the evaluation of grantee requests for amendments, time extensions, and refunding. Grantee organizations must work along with their regional Technical and Management Assistance (T&MA) Contractors to develop realistic extension requests and refunding applications. The T&MA Contractors are aware of the potential for needed flexibilities and are ready to assist in any way they can.

For questions pertaining to this UL, please contact Andria Hively, Finance and Loan Analyst, at andria.hively@usda.gov, or phone (360) 990-0252.