STAKEHOLDER ANNOUNCEMENT

USDA Seeks Applications for Grants to Improve the Rural Economy by Strengthening Cooperative Development Centers

WASHINGTON, May 30, 2018 – Assistant to the Secretary for Rural Development Anne Hazlett today announced that USDA is seeking applications for grants under USDA's Rural Cooperative Development Grant program (RCDG).

This program helps improve the economic condition of rural areas by helping individuals and businesses start, expand or improve rural cooperatives and other mutually-owned businesses. Nonprofit corporations and institutions of higher education are eligible to apply. Public bodies, for-profit business and individuals are not eligible. USDA expects to award up to $5.8 million for FY 2018.

The maximum grant award is $200,000. Grants may be used to develop and operate a Rural Cooperative Development Center that could provide the following technical assistance and other services to rural businesses:

- Conducting feasibility studies
- Developing business plans
- Providing leadership and operational improvement training

Questions about the application process may be directed to the Rural Development State Office where the applicant is located. For a list of offices, visit the state office website. Paper applications are due July 30, 2018. Electronic applications are due July 24, 2018. For more information, see page 24726 of the May 30 Federal Register.

USDA encourages applications that will support recommendations made in the report to the President from the Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity to help improve life in rural America. Applicants are encouraged to consider projects that provide measurable results in helping rural communities build robust and sustainable economies through strategic investments in infrastructure, partnerships and innovation. Key strategies include:

- Achieving e-Connectivity for Rural America
- Developing the Rural Economy
- Harnessing Technological Innovation
- Supporting a Rural Workforce
- Improving Quality of Life

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