

## STAKEHOLDER ANNOUNCEMENT

### USDA Seeks Comment on Ways to Help Businesses Start, Expand and Improve Cooperatives in Rural America

WASHINGTON, Aug. 24, 2021 – U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Deputy Under Secretary for Rural Development Justin Maxson today announced that the Department is seeking input on ways to make it easier for nonprofit groups and other organizations to help businesses form cooperatives.

The Department is interested in stakeholders' recommendations to streamline application requirements and make other improvements to the [Rural Cooperative Development Grant](#) (RCDG) program. This program helps Cooperative Development Centers deliver programs to assist individuals and businesses to start, expand or improve rural cooperatives and other mutually-owned businesses.

For example, the Department is seeking comments on topics including:

- How it should evaluate what constitutes an applicant's proven track record of providing development assistance.
- How many years of experience are appropriate to show that an applicant has experience providing cooperative development technical assistance in rural areas.
- What criteria USDA should use to document and measure the effectiveness of an applicant's rural economic development efforts.
- What criteria or factors USDA should focus on in determining eligibility for an applicant who seeks funding for a multi-year award.

USDA will hold a virtual listening session on these topics on Thursday, Sept. 16, 2021 at 2:00 p.m. Eastern Time. Interested parties may register at <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/2283339721495353867>.

Written comments on proposed changes to the RCDG program must be submitted via the Federal eRulemaking Portal at [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov) by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on Oct. 25, 2021. For additional information, see page 47289 of the Aug. 24 2021, [Federal Register](#).

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