

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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USDA Seeks Applications for Value-Added Producer Grants

USDA Rural Development State Director, Jay Healy has announced that USDA is accepting applications for grants to assist agricultural producers seeking to add value to the commodities they produce. About \$18 million will be awarded nationwide.

USDA plans to award planning grants of up to \$100,000 and working capital grants of up to \$300,000 to successful applicants. Applicants are encouraged to propose projects that use existing agricultural products in non-traditional ways or merge agricultural products with technology in creative ways. Businesses of all sizes may apply, but priority will be given to operators of small and medium-sized family farms – those with average, annual gross sales of less than \$700,000. The competitive grants to be awarded under this notice are part of USDA Rural Development's annual budget and are not funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

Applicants must provide matching funds equal to the amount of the grant requested. Ten percent of the funding being made available is reserved for beginning farmers or ranchers and socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers. An additional 10 percent is reserved for projects involving local and regional supply networks that link independent producers with businesses and cooperatives that market value-added products.

To view the Notice of Funding Available (NOFA) in the Federal Register please see the following website:
http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/VAPG%20NOFA%20REISSUE_09012009.PDF

Paper applications must be submitted to the Rural Development state office for MA, CT and RI in Amherst, MA (USDA Rural Development, 451 West Street, Suite 2, Amherst, MA 01002. Attention: Dan Beaudette). Electronic applications must be submitted through www.Grants.gov (<http://www07.grants.gov/search/search.do;jsessionid=Lj08KfjQ0xds952dvtpNY7NZRM6TbJQkL4Zjqy07LD4f15hmXPp!1968739494?oppId=49282&mode=VIEW>). Applications submitted by electronic mail or facsimile will not be accepted. Each application submission must contain all required documents in one envelope, if by mail or courier delivery service. Paper applications for both reserved and unreserved funds must be postmarked and mailed, shipped, or sent overnight no later than November 30, 2009, to be eligible for FY 2009 grant funding. Late applications are not eligible for FY 2009 grant funding. Electronic applications for both reserved and unreserved funds must be received by November 30, 2009, to be eligible for FY 2009 grant funding. Late applications are not eligible for FY 2009 grant funding.

Applicants are encouraged to contact their State Offices well in advance of the deadline to discuss their projects and ask any questions about the application process. Applicants may submit drafts of their applications to their State Offices for a preliminary review any time prior to October 1, 2009. The preliminary review will only assess the eligibility of the application and its completeness. The results of the preliminary review are not binding on the Agency.

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