



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture • Rural Development
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MINORITY BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AGENCY AND USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT ENTER INTO AGREEMENT TO SPUR RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AMONG MINORITIES

WASHINGTON, June 15, 2004 -- Agriculture Acting Under Secretary for Rural Development Gilbert G. Gonzalez and U.S. Department of Commerce's Minority Business Development Agency's National Director, Ron Langston signed an agreement to undertake a national outreach effort to educate minority business owners about funds available for rural economic development.

"The Bush Administration is committed to increasing economic opportunities for all Americans. This partnership of concentrated outreach and sharing of resources will be a catalyst for expanding the number of minority-owned firms in rural America," said Gonzalez.

"Minority-owned firms are growing faster than other businesses," said Langston. "But, the number and size of minority firms relative to the minority population is significantly lower than it should be. Support for these businesses, including making sure that they know about resources available to them through USDA and other government agencies, is one way we can help bridge the opportunity gap that currently exists for minority-owned firms nationwide."

USDA Rural Development programs are committed to helping increase economic opportunity and improve the quality of life in rural communities. Since the beginning of the Bush Administration, over \$37 billion has been invested in programs that support homeownership, community and economic development and utilities infrastructure, helping to create or save over 500,000 jobs. USDA's business programs range from grants to assist non-profits and community organizations spur local business development to business loan guarantees for start-up or expansion of rural businesses. More information on USDA Rural Development's business programs is available on the Internet at: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>.

MBDA is the only federal agency created specifically to foster the establishment and growth of minority-owned businesses in America. MBDA provides business counseling and program services to assist minority-owned companies to grow and expand. MBDA is expanding and strengthening strategic alliances with U.S. Department of Commerce agencies, other federal government agencies and the private sector.

In Nebraska, contact the USDA Rural Development State Office at Rm. 152 Federal Building 100 Centennial Mall North Lincoln, Neb. 68508, 402-437-5551 or visit www.rurdev.usda.gov/ne, for further information on programs available.

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