



NEWS RELEASE

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USDA Announces Rural Economic Development Funding for Historically African-American Land-Grant Universities

SELMA, Ala., October 28, 2011 – Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced funding to provide business development assistance to entrepreneurs, agribusinesses, cooperatives and communities in economically challenged rural areas. USDA Rural Development is providing the assistance through cooperative agreements with ten 1890 Land-Grant Colleges and Universities. The announcement was made on the Secretary's behalf by Rural Development Deputy Under Secretary Doug O'Brien while attending a local Farm Bill listening session in Selma, Ala.

"These 1890 institutions have some of the best agricultural science and business education programs in the nation," Vilsack said. "They also have the capacity and expertise to help small and emerging rural businesses develop income-producing projects."

The institutions will use funding from USDA Rural Development to deliver entrepreneurial training, business start-up assistance, renewable energy and energy efficiency programs, website development training, and other programs designed to cultivate new business opportunities and create jobs. For example, Delaware State University's Delaware Center for Enterprise Development is among this year's recipients. The Center's mobile training facility is receiving a \$75,000 USDA award to increase the capacity of entrepreneurs, small and limited-resource farmers, community leaders and others to develop and use renewable energy.

Langston University, the only historically African-American university in Oklahoma, will also receive \$75,000. It will deliver one-on-one business management assistance, promote local and regional food systems, teach digital technology applications, and provide entrepreneurship training to youth in rural communities plagued by severe poverty and unemployment.

"Projects like these will increase employment and income opportunities for rural Americans, which is a key priority for USDA and the Obama Administration," Tonsager said.

A complete list of awards included in the current announcement is provided below.

Alabama A&M University AL \$75,000

Delaware State University DE \$75,000

Committed to the future of rural communities.

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Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD).

Florida A&M University FL \$75,000

Fort Valley State University GA \$75,000

Langston University OK \$75,000

North Carolina A&T State University NC \$75,000

Southern University and A&M College LA \$75,000

University of Arkansas – Pine Bluff AR \$75,000

University of Maryland Eastern Shore MD \$75,000

West Virginia State University WV \$75,000

Since taking office, President Obama's Administration has taken historic steps to improve the lives of rural Americans, put people back to work and build thriving economies in rural communities. From proposing the American Jobs Act to establishing the first-ever White House Rural Council – chaired by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack – the President wants the federal government to be the best possible partner for rural businesses and entrepreneurs creating job opportunities and for people who want to live, work, and raise their families in rural communities.

USDA, through its Rural Development mission area, administers and manages housing, business and community infrastructure and facility programs through a national network of state and local offices. Rural Development has an active portfolio of more than \$155 billion in affordable loans and loan guarantees. These programs are designed to improve the economic stability of rural communities, businesses, residents, farmers and ranchers and improve the quality of life in rural America.

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