



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture • Rural Development

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USDA Announces Application Period For High Energy Cost Grant Program

WASHINGTON, August 9, 2010 – Agriculture Under Secretary Dallas Tonsager today announced that USDA is accepting applications for the High Energy Cost Grant program.

“Under this program, the funding awarded will improve energy generation, transmission and distribution facilities that serve extremely high energy cost rural areas—those with average home energy costs exceeding 275 percent of the national average,” Tonsager said.

In 2009, for example, USDA Rural Development awarded a \$1,081,392 grant to Maine School Administration District No. 58 (MSAD 58) in Franklin County. This rural area in Maine is heavily dependent on fuel oil for its heating needs. With funding provided by USDA, MSAD 58 partnered with Skanden Energy LLC, from San Diego, CA, to purchase and install wood pellet heating system to provide heat and hot water to the school buildings.

Grants ranging from \$75,000 to \$5 million will be awarded to businesses, non-profit entities, states, local governments, and federally recognized Indian tribes. These grants will be used for on-grid and off-grid renewable energy projects serving eligible communities. USDA will award approximately 20 grants with the \$15.5 million provided through this notice of funding availability.

The application guide and more information on this program can be found at <http://www.usda.gov/rus/electric/hecgp/index.htm> or the August 9, 2010 *Federal Register*. Applications are due September 8, 2010. Funding for recipients is contingent upon their meeting the conditions of the grant agreement.

Through its Rural Development mission area, USDA administers and manages more than 40 housing, business and community infrastructure and facility programs through a network of 6,100 employees located in the nation’s capital and 500 state and local offices. 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. Rural Development has an existing portfolio of nearly \$140 billion in loans and loan guarantees.

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Committed to the future of rural communities.

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Further information on USDA Rural Development may be obtained by visiting USDA's website at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>. In West Virginia, call 1-800-295-8228 to be put in touch with the appropriate personnel serving your county. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202.720.2600 (voice and TDD).

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