



USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AGRICULTURE SECRETARY VILSACK ANNOUNCES \$15.3 MILLION FOR 145 BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN RURAL AREAS

Recovery Act Projects Funded Include Business Expansions, Education and Training, Community Development and Technical Assistance

WASHINGTON, July 28, 2009 – Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced the selection of 145 recipients for more than \$15.3 million in grants to start or expand businesses in rural communities. Through Recovery Act funding, businesses will be able to access to critical capital that will help with start-up and working capital loans, building and plant renovations, transportation improvements, project planning and other business needs.

"These Recovery Act grants represent the Obama administration's ongoing efforts to ensure strategic investments and increased economic opportunities in rural America," said Vilsack. "Small businesses play an important role in building strong communities while providing vital products and services to local residents. This funding will help spur economic development to strengthen communities in dozens of states around the country."

In addition to the \$15.3 million that USDA Rural Development is providing for the 145 projects announced today, recipients have raised \$16 million from other sources.

For example, Impact Foundation, Fargo, N.D., has been selected to receive a \$181,000 grant to help locate, identify and match businesses with appropriate skill sets existing on North Dakota's five reservations. The funding also is expected to assist in developing financial packages, write business plans and conduct market feasibility studies to create incentives for individuals considering purchasing and relocating businesses. The funding also is expected to help lower chronically high unemployment and poverty rates among Native Americans who live on the reservations.

In Minnesota, the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe in rural northern Minnesota has been selected to receive an \$83,149 grant to help The Minnesota Chippewa Tribe's Business Development Center provide training for area businesses to expand, thereby creating new jobs and spurring economic growth in the region. The funding also is expected to help lower chronically high unemployment and poverty rates among Native Americans who live in the region. Since 1980, the Business Development Center has helped Native American-owned businesses grow, secure financing, write business plans and conduct market feasibility studies. Four Native American-owned businesses already have been selected to use the Rural Development funding to expand their operations. Businesses in the 12-county region that are not owned

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by Native Americans also expect to benefit from the jobs created by the tribe's business development center.

Loup City Public Schools in rural Nebraska has been selected to receive an \$8,800 grant to install a 1.8 kilowatt wind turbine on the school site to educate students on the importance of wind as an alternative energy source. Students will gain knowledge on wind energy as well as learn about career opportunities in the alternative energy field and wind energy's role in the economic future of rural America. Loup City Public Schools is one of the first six school jurisdictions in Nebraska to partner with the National Renewable Energy Lab's Wind for Schools program.

The funding announced today is being provided through USDA Rural Development's Rural Business Enterprise Program (RBEG), which helps finance new and existing businesses as well as employment-related adult education programs. RBEG funds can be used for start-up and working capital loans, building and plant renovations, transportation improvements, project planning and other business needs. Additional information on the RBEG program may be found at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/busp/rbeg.htm>.

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