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Release No. 0152.04

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USDA LAUNCHES RURAL EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOP PILOT TO HELP FAITH-BASED AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS OBTAIN FINANCING

WASHINGTON, April 16, 2004 – Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman today unveiled a new USDA faith-based and community organization pilot program to help educate nonprofit organizations on the Rural Development Community Facilities Guaranteed Loan Program and connect them to local lending institutions.

“To further support our nation’s rural communities, these workshops will help faith-based and community organizations get the information they need about available resources,” said Veneman. “This Administration remains committed to helping faith-based and community organizations get access to federal resources to enhance their capacity to serve their communities.”

Through an Executive Order on December 12, 2002, President Bush incorporated USDA into his Faith-Based and Community Initiative. As part of its faith-based and community focus, USDA ensures that faith-based and community organizations have equal access to USDA programs and benefits and works in conjunction with the Department's many mission areas to reach out and educate faith-based and community organizations about USDA programs and benefits. The best opportunities for federal assistance to faith-based and community organizations are outlined on USDA’s faith-based and community initiatives Web site at <http://www.usda.gov/fbcj>.

USDA Rural Development’s [community facility loan guarantee program](#) allows lenders to finance and facilitate essential community facilities such as health care clinics, police and fire stations, schools and child care centers. Through this program, USDA can provide a lender a guarantee of up to 90% of the total loan amount. In fiscal year 2003, the average loan guarantee was \$1.6 million with a range from \$55,000 to \$22.5 million.

Information about the dates and locations of the educational workshops will be announced soon and will be made available through USDA Rural Development field offices. Local contact information is available on USDA’s Rural Development Web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov> under [USDA Rural Development--State and Field Office Locations](#).

USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of rural residents. As a venture capital entity, Rural Development provides equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure. Additional information about rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or on USDA's Web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>.