



# NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture • Rural Development  
World Wide Web: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>

---

Alisa Harrison (202) 720-4623

Tim McNeilly (202) 720-1019

Nebraska Contact: Cliff Kumm (402) 223-3125 ext. 4

**USDA ANNOUNCES INVESTMENT OF \$10.9 MILLION IN BUSINESS  
DEVELOPMENT FUNDS FOR RURAL AMERICA**  
*Funding to Create or Save Over 900 Rural Jobs/55 Rural Business Ventures*

WASHINGTON, April 6, 2004 – Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman announced the selection of 34 loan and grant recipients in 17 states that will receive \$10.9 million in rural business development funds. The loans and grants will support 55 business ventures and assist in the creation or saving of over 900 rural jobs and as part of the Bush Administration’s ongoing efforts to spur economic development in rural areas.

“The Bush Administration is committed to the future of America’s rural communities,” said Veneman. “The funds will provide continued support for locally-driven community and economic development efforts.”

The grants and loans are awarded through USDA Rural Development to cooperative organizations, which in turn provide loans or grants to support local economic or community development efforts. Funds can be used for a variety of purposes, including community facilities and infrastructure, improving access to local medical care and other projects that encourage a favorable climate for jobs and growth. Of the \$10.9 million announced, \$1.3 million will be used to assist in the development of renewable energy ventures that support President Bush’s Energy Plan for greater use of renewable energy. Many of the awards are made in conjunction with assistance from other sources, “leveraging” USDA funds for greater effect.

Benkelman Telephone Company is the Nebraska recipient of a rural economic development zero-interest loan of \$450,000 to be used to assist in financing the \$600,000 Dundy County Hospital renovation/addition project. The hospital will contribute the remainder of the needed funds. The project consists of remodeling approximately 1,550 square feet of space and adding 2,592 square feet to the hospital to provide increased privacy of health care information in compliance with the newly enacted Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA) regulations. Also, the project will meet the needs of this growing Critical Access Hospital by providing the means that physicians, nurses and lab technicians need to better serve the people in need of health care.

Dundy County Hospital and Healthcare Clinic is a 14 bed rural hospital in Benkelman, Neb. with rural healthcare clinics in Stratton and Benkelman, and satellite clinics in Wauneta and Imperial. The hospital services a 70 mile radius covering Dundy, Chase and Hitchcock counties in Nebraska, Yuma county in Colorado, and Cheyenne and Rawlins counties in Kansas.

Dundy County Hospital is currently the third largest employer in the county with a staff of 80. The proposed project is anticipated to add 9-10 new jobs. Without the additional space the remodeling and addition is providing, these new jobs could not be supported. Local community leaders established a mission to ensure that Dundy County Hospital continued to function as a strong business and a significant part of the community as the success of the community's economic development is directly tied to the hospital remaining a viable employer.

Funding of selected applicants will be contingent upon meeting the conditions of the loan and/or grant agreement. A list of the awards can be found at [www.rurdev.usda.gov/rd/newsroom/2003](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rd/newsroom/2003).

<b>Alabama</b>	<b>\$400,000</b>	<b>Illinois</b>	<b>\$450,000</b>
<b>Indiana</b>	<b>\$200,000</b>	<b>Iowa</b>	<b>\$1,286,000</b>
<b>Kansas</b>	<b>\$1,994,000</b>	<b>Kentucky</b>	<b>\$300,000</b>
<b>Minnesota</b>	<b>\$2,725,000</b>	<b>Mississippi</b>	<b>\$450,000</b>
<b>Missouri</b>	<b>\$100,000</b>	<b>Nebraska</b>	<b>\$450,000</b>
<b>New Mexico</b>	<b>\$450,000</b>	<b>North Carolina</b>	<b>\$210,000</b>
<b>North Dakota</b>	<b>\$200,000</b>	<b>Oklahoma</b>	<b>\$352,000</b>
<b>South Dakota</b>	<b>\$300,000</b>	<b>Tennessee</b>	<b>\$450,000</b>
<b>Wisconsin</b>	<b>\$225,000</b>		

USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs in a way 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. Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>. Visit <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ne> to find the USDA Rural Development office in Nebraska nearest you or contact the USDA Rural Development State Office at 402-437-5551, 402-437-5093 TDY, Rm. 152 Federal Building 100 Centennial Mall North Lincoln, Nebraska 68508.

#

**USDA Rural Development is an Equal Opportunity Lender, Provider, and Employer. Complaints of discrimination should be sent to: USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410.**