

January 29, 2010

SUBJECT: Request for Oregon RBEG proposals

Dear friend of rural business development in Oregon!

USDA Rural Development-Oregon is now seeking concept papers for our general Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) program in Oregon.

THE RBEG PROGRAM:

Through our RBEG program, USDA Rural Development (RD) provides grant funds for PRECISELY-TARGETED technical assistance, training, feasibility studies, and other activities that support the development of SPECIFICALLY-IDENTIFIABLE, small business enterprises in rural areas. Eligible applicants are nonprofits, public bodies, and tribes.

DEADLINE!

If you are interested, please review the following guidance and submit a proposal as outlined below by **March 5, 2010**.

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW:

Everything you need to know about the RBEG program and to respond to this opportunity is available on RD-Oregon's RBEG web site:

<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/or/rbeg.htm>

FUNDS AVAILABLE:

Although the exact amount of RBEG funding available is not yet certain, it is likely that there will be about \$315,000 of RBEG funds allocated to Oregon (roughly the same amount as last year). Although the RBEG program is relatively small, it can still be an invaluable tool in rural business development. Last year our office received 76 Oregon RBEG proposals seeking \$1,370,000, out of which we awarded 23 grants, with sizes ranging from \$3,000-\$25,000.

TYPES OF PROPOSALS WE ARE SEEKING:

In order to distribute the limited RBEG funds among as many worthy proposals as possible, we are encouraging proposals of \$15,000-\$20,000 or less, and not more than \$25,000. Smaller proposals in the \$10,000 range are greatly preferred.

Technical assistance/problem-solving proposals are encouraged over real estate and revolving loan fund projects.

In developing your proposal, please pay particular attention to the priority scoring system described in the “RBEG program overview” link on our web site. It is used by USDA to select among RBEG applicants. Design your project to maximize your project’s priority score and thereby improve your prospects of success.

Note that in order to be competitive, a minimum 1:1 match with nonfederal funds is advised.

In FY2010, USDA’s State Director discretionary points will be awarded to projects emphasizing:

- » Projects that are likely to lead to **immediate job creation**
- » Downtown and historic-district revitalization (especially for projects being done in connection with the State of Oregon’s “Main Street” Program)
- » Value-added agriculture
- » Telecommunications
- » Minority business development
- » Rural health care
- » Helping small business & farms become more energy efficient or add renewable energy
- » New and creative approaches to rural business development

In all cases, we are looking for projects that will have an immediate job benefit for rural Oregon.

A CONCEPT PAPER IS REQUESTED:

Since we expect to receive many more RBEG proposals than we can fund, instead of seeking full, detailed applications, we are only seeking a brief “concept paper” from prospective applicants. This will save everyone time and effort while still allowing USDA to survey the field of candidate projects.

The RBEG “Concept Paper” can be downloaded from our RBEG web site (see above). Please be succinct and clear in completing it. When finished, a “Concept Paper” should not need to be more than 2 pages, and no advantage will be given to longer proposals. Remember, we are soliciting concepts, not full RBEG application packages.

DEADLINE FOR CONCEPT PAPERS:

Your RBEG “Concept Paper” should be submitted to the Oregon Rural Development State Office – preferably by e-mail to jeff.deiss@or.usda.gov – by not later than **March 5, 2010**. If you wish to send it by regular mail, our address is: USDA Rural Development, Attn: Business & Cooperative Programs, 1201 NE Lloyd Blvd., Ste. 801, Portland, OR 97232.

THE REVIEW & SELECTION PROCESS:

This year we will again use a geographic allocation of RBEG funds within Oregon corresponding to RD’s organizational structure of four Area Offices – one in eastern Oregon (Pendleton), one in central Oregon (Redmond), one in northwestern Oregon (Corvallis), and one in southwestern Oregon (Roseburg). 20% of the RBEG funds will be allotted to each area, with the remaining 20% used as either a state reserve or for projects that transcend area boundaries.

Concept proposers are strongly encouraged to discuss their proposals with the RD Business Programs Specialist in the Area Office responsible for the part of the state where the project will focus. Contact information for these individuals is online at: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/or/bizcontact.htm>

Feedback will be provided to all Concept Paper proposers. Proposals that appear to be most competitive will be especially encouraged to submit full applications, though of course everyone will be welcome to apply formally.

Tentatively, we will be asking for full applications by around April 2. This should allow us to make RBEG award announcements in May so that projects can start by not later than June.

ADDITIONAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

Historically, once State allocations are expended, it has been common practice for USDA to consider additional RBEG applications for funding from a national competition process. It is still too soon to know any details about this, but we will work with the RBEG applicant community on this opportunity once Oregon’s State RBEG funds have been awarded.

QUESTIONS?

If you have questions or concerns, please contact anyone on Oregon's Business & Cooperative Programs staff. Our contact information is on-line at:

<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/or/bizcontact.htm>

Thanks for your efforts in Oregon rural business development. We look forward to working with you on your innovative proposals!

Jeff Deiss

Business & Cooperative Program Director

USDA Rural Development, Oregon State Office

1201 NE Lloyd Blvd., Ste. 801, Portland, OR 97232-1274

jeff.deiss@or.usda.gov

503-414-3367 phone; 503-414-3397 fax

Visit our web site, <http://www.ruralOregon.biz>

For energy programs, <http://energy.ruralOregon.biz>