

January 29, 2010

SUBJECT: Request for Oregon RBOG proposals

Dear friend of rural business development in Oregon!

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

THE RBOG PROGRAM:

USDA Rural Development's RBOG program provides grant funds for strategic planning, leadership development, and business opportunity analysis that will promote sustainable economic development for rural communities in need. Eligible applicants are nonprofits, public bodies, tribes, and coops. It is a highly competitive grant program in that typically Oregon will only receive one RBOG award

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 RBOG program and to respond to this opportunity is available on RD-Oregon's RBOG web site:

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

FUNDS AVAILABLE:

Although the exact amount is not yet known, it is likely that this year there will be about \$650,000 of non-earmarked RBOG funds available for award via a single national competition (roughly the same amount as last year).

There is no Oregon state set-aside, and RBOG rules make it difficult for any state to receive more than a single RBOG grant of \$50,000.

Although the program is relatively small, it can still be an invaluable tool in rural economic development. For instance, last year Oregon shared with Washington State and Idaho in a tri-state RBOG to promote energy efficiency among rural food processors.

TYPES OF PROPOSALS WE ARE SEEKING:

Since it is likely that only one (at most) RBOG grant of \$50,000 will be awarded to an Oregon applicant, we are only seeking well-designed, highly-competitive proposals. The RBOG priority scoring system is described in the “RBOG program overview” link on our web site. Design your project to maximize your priority score and thereby improve your prospects of success.

Note that there is no advantage given to projects seeking less than \$50,000 except insofar as priority points are given to projects with greater relative leveraging of the RBOG grant.

Requests greater than \$50,000 cannot be assisted with the RBOG program unless they are multi-state projects. If you have such a project in mind, you should discuss this with us.

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
- » Value-added agriculture
- » Telecommunications
- » Minority business development
- » Rural health care
- » Renewable energy & energy efficiency
- » New and creative approaches to rural business development

We are looking for projects that will have an immediate job benefit for rural Oregon.

A CONCEPT PAPER IS REQUESTED:

Since it is likely that only one RBOG can be awarded (at most) to an Oregon applicant, instead of seeking detailed, complete applications, we are only requesting 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 RBOG “Concept Paper” can be downloaded from our RBOG 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 RBOG application packages.

DEADLINE FOR CONCEPT PAPERS:

Your RBOG “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 APPLICATION & SELECTION PROCESS:

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

The official deadline for a full RBOG application will be announced in the near future in the Federal Register. We do not yet know the deadline for applications, but in 2009 the deadline was March 31.

Full RBOG applications will need to be received in our office by this-to-be-announced deadline, and these will be forwarded on to the national competition.

USDA Rural Development’s National Office will probably make award announcements sometime this summer.

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

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