

January 29, 2010

SUBJECT: Request for Oregon Native American RBOG proposals

Dear friend of rural Native American business development in Oregon!

USDA Rural Development-Oregon is now seeking concept papers for our Rural Business Opportunity Grant (RBOG) program for projects that will assist Native American business development.

THE RBOG PROGRAM & THE NATIVE AMERICAN SET-ASIDE:

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.

Every year, RD reserves a portion of its RBOG funding for Native American projects. These are projects where at least 75% of the benefits of the project will be received by members of a Federally Recognized Native American Tribe. Alternatively, the beneficiary may be a tribally-owned business venture.

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 \$990,000 of Native American RBOG funds available for award via a single national competition (roughly the same amount as last year).

There is no Oregon state set-aside for this program. Native American RBOG applications from Oregon compete with other Native American RBOG applications from around the nation. Based on past experience, only one or perhaps two Native American RBOG grants will be awarded to Oregon applicants.

In 2009, there were 15 RBOG awards made nationwide last year ranging from \$31,500 to \$150,000. Oregon received a single \$60,000 RBOG for a leadership development program at the Celilo Village. Although the program is relatively small, it can still be an invaluable tool in rural economic development.

TYPES OF PROPOSALS WE ARE SEEKING:

Since it is likely that only one (or perhaps two) RBOG grant of will be awarded to an Oregon applicant, we are only seeking well-designed, highly-competitive proposals. In developing your proposal, please pay particular attention to the priority scoring system described in the “RBOG program overview” link on our web site. Design your project to maximize your project’s priority score and thereby improve your prospects of success.

Note that in order to be competitive, priority points are given to projects with greater relative leveraging of the RBOG grant. A greater than 1:1 match with RBOG funds is advised.

There is no maximum or minimum grant amount, but typically, successful RBOG applications come in around \$50,000 and rarely exceed \$100,000.

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 (or two) RBOG will be awarded 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 for the Native American set-aside 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 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>