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More than $28 Million Expected Under New Rural Business Development Grant Program Created Under the 2014 Farm Bill. Eligible applicants include public bodies, government entities, Indian tribes and non-profit organizations.

WASHINGTON – Agriculture Under Secretary Lisa Mensah announced Wednesday that the USDA is seeking applications for grants to support rural businesses and help create jobs.

“This USDA funding will ensure continued investments in rural businesses,” Mensah said. “Too often, rural businesses and the communities they serve lack access to the capital and resources they need to grow and thrive. These grants will help remedy that and allow all Americans the chance to share in the nation’s economic recovery.”

More than $28 million is expected to be available under the Rural Business Development Grant (RBDG) program. Eligible applicants include public bodies, government entities, Indian tribes and non-profit organizations.

Congress established the RBDG program under the 2014 Farm Bill by combining USDA’s Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) and Rural Business Opportunity Grant (RBOG) programs. The new program, like its predecessors, is designed to assist the startup or expansion of small and emerging private businesses and/or non-profits in rural communities.

RBDG grants can be used to acquire or develop land, buildings, plants and equipment; build or improve access roads, parking areas, utility extensions, and water and waste disposal facilities; provide technical assistance; establish revolving loan funds; and to support rural distance learning programs that provide educational or job training. There are no substantive programmatic or operational changes to the RBEG and RBOG programs as a result of this consolidation.

Applications are due by May 29, 2015. For additional information on how to apply, contact the USDA Rural Development Wisconsin State Office at 715-345-7620 or RD.BCP.SO@wi.usda.gov, or see Page 15665 of the March 25 Federal Register.

Grants made before the implementation of the RBDG program will continue to be governed by the terms of the applicable RBOG and RBEG regulations in effect at the time the grants were made.

During the past year, USDA Rural Development invested nearly $558 million throughout rural Wisconsin and helped a record number of residents receive funding for economic development projects and quality of life improvements. The agency's investment in Wisconsin helped create or retain more than 1,400 jobs; aided 3,400 families in buying their own homes; and assisted more than 100 communities in improving community facilities and upgrading local infrastructure.

For more information on USDA Rural Development programs visit USDA's web site at http://www.rd.usda.gov/wi.