

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**National Resources Conservation Service****Buena Vista Watershed, Rockbridge County and City of Buena Vista, Virginia**

AGENCY: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service.

ACTION: Notice of Availability of Record of Decision.

SUMMARY: M. Denise Doetzer, Responsible Federal Official for projects administered under the provisions of Public Law 83-566, 16 U.S.C. 1001-1008, in the State of Virginia, is hereby providing notification that a record of decision to proceed with the installation of the Buena Vista Watershed project is available. Single copies of this record of decision may be obtained from M. Denise Doetzer at the address shown on the next page.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ms. M. Denise Doetzer, State Conservationist, USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Culpeper Building, Suite 209, 1606 Santa Rosa Road, Richmond, Virginia 23229-5014, telephone (804) 287-1691.

This activity is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Under No. 10.904, Watershed and Flood Prevention, and is subject to the provisions of Executive Order 12372, which requires intergovernmental consultation with State and local officials.)

Dated: March 31, 1999.

M. Denise Doetzer,
State Conservationist.

[FR Doc. 99-8978 Filed 4-9-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-16-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**Rural Business-Cooperative Service****Inviting Preapplications for Rural Cooperative Development Grants**

AGENCY: Rural Business-Cooperative Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBS) announces the availability of approximately \$1.75 million in competing Rural Cooperative Development Grant (RCDG) funds for fiscal year (FY) 1999. This action will comply with legislation which authorizes grants for establishing and operating centers for rural cooperative development. The intended effect of this notice is to solicit preapplications for FY 1999 and award grants before September 1, 1999.

DATES: The deadline for receipt of a preapplication is May 28, 1999. Preapplications received after that date will not be considered.

ADDRESSES: Entities wishing to apply for assistance should contact their USDA Rural Development State Office to receive further information and copies of the preapplication package.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: James E. Haskell, Assistant Deputy Administrator, Cooperative Services, Rural Business-Cooperative Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Stop 3250, Room 4016, South Agriculture Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, DC 20250-3250. Telephone (202) 720-8460.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Rural Cooperative Development Grants (RCDG) is authorized by section 310B(e) of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act (7 U.S.C. 1932(e) and regulations are contained in 7 CFR part 4284, subpart F. The primary objective of the RCDG program is to improve the economic condition of rural areas through cooperative development. The program is administered through USDA Rural Development State Offices acting on behalf of RBS.

Grants will be awarded on a competitive basis to nonprofit corporations and institutions of higher education based on specific selection criteria. The priorities described in this paragraph will be used by RBS to rate preapplications. RBS review of preapplications will include the complete preapplication package submitted to the Rural Development State office. Points will be distributed according to ranking as compared with other preapplications on hand. Points will be awarded to each factor on a 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 basis depending on the applicant's ranking compared to other applicants.

(A) Preference will be given to applications that:

(1) Demonstrate a proven track record in administering a nationally coordinated, regionally or State-wide operated project;

(2) Demonstrate previous expertise in providing technical assistance to cooperatives in rural areas;

(3) Demonstrate the ability to assist in the retention of business, facilitate the establishment of cooperatives and new cooperative approaches, and generate employment opportunities that will improve the economic conditions of rural areas;

(4) Demonstrate the ability to create horizontal linkages among cooperative businesses within and among various sectors in rural areas of the United

States and vertical linkages to domestic and international markets;

(5) Commit to providing technical assistance and other services to underserved and economically distressed rural areas of the United States;

(6) Commit to providing greater than a 25 percent matching contribution with private funds and in-kind contributions;

(7) Evidence transferability or demonstration value to assist rural areas outside of project area; and

(8) Demonstrate that any cooperative development activity is consistent with positive environmental stewardship.

Fiscal Year 1999 Preapplication Submission

Preapplications must include a clear statement of the goals and objectives of the project and a plan which describes the proposed project. Each preapplication received in the State office will be reviewed to determine if the preapplication is consistent with the eligible purposes outlined in 7 CFR part 4284, subpart F. Preapplications without supportive data to address selection criteria will not be considered. Copies of 7 CFR part 4284, subpart F, will be provided to any interested applicant by making a request to the Rural Development State office or RBS National office. Preapplications must be completed and submitted to the Rural Development State office as soon as possible, but no later than May 28, 1999. Preapplications received after May 28, 1999, will not be considered.

Each preapplication must contain the following:

(A) A detailed Table of Contents containing page numbers for each component of the preapplication.

(B) A project summary of 250 words or less on a separate page. This page must include the title of the project and the names of the primary project contacts and the applicant organization, followed by the summary. The summary should be self-contained and should describe the overall goals, relevance of the project, and a listing of all organizations involved in the project. The project summary should immediately follow the Table of Contents.

(C) A separate one-page information sheet which lists each of the eight evaluation criteria followed by the page numbers of all relevant material and documentation contained in the preapplication which supports that criteria. This page should immediately follow the project summary.

(D) An additional requirement for those applicants who have received funding under the RCDG program in

fiscal years 1997–98 is a summation, not to exceed three pages, of progress and results for all projects fully or partially funded by the RCDG program in those years. This summary should include the status of cooperative businesses organized and all eligible grant purpose activities listed under 7 CFR 4284.515. The summary should immediately follow the page described above in paragraph (c) documenting the location of evaluation criteria supporting material.

The National office will score applicants based on the grant selection criteria contained in 7 CFR part 4284, subpart F, and will select awardees subject to the availability of funds and the awardee's satisfactory submission of a formal application and related materials in accordance with subpart F. Entities submitting preapplications that are selected for award will be invited by the State office to submit a formal application prior to September 1, 1999. It is anticipated that grant awardees will be selected by September 1, 1999.

Dated: March 31, 1999.

Dayton Watkins,

Administrator, RBS.

[FR Doc. 99–8983 Filed 4–9–99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–XV–U

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Business–Cooperative Service

Request for Proposals: Fiscal Year 1999 Funding Opportunity for Research on Rural Cooperative Opportunities and Problems

AGENCY: Rural Business–Cooperative Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Rural Business–Cooperative Service (RBS) announces the availability of approximately \$1.0 million in competitive cooperative agreement funds allocated from FY 1999 appropriations. RBS hereby requests proposals from institutions of higher education or nonprofit organizations interested in applying for competitively awarded cooperative agreements for research related to agricultural and nonagricultural cooperatives serving rural communities. The intent of the funding is to encourage research on critical issues vital to the development and sustainability of cooperatives as a means of improving the quality of life in America's rural communities.

DATES: Cooperative agreement applications must be received on or before June 30, 1999. Proposals received

after June 30, 1999, will not be considered for funding.

ADDRESSES: Send Proposals and other required materials to Dr. Thomas H. Stafford, Director, Cooperative Marketing Division, Rural Business–Cooperative Service, USDA, Stop 3252, Room 4204, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20250–3252. Telephone: (202)690–0368.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Thomas H. Stafford, Director, Cooperative Marketing Division, Rural Business–Cooperative Service, USDA, Stop 3252, Room 4204, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20250–3252. Telephone: (202) 690–0368.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

General Information

This solicitation is issued pursuant to the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 1999 making appropriations for programs administered by USDA's Rural Business–Cooperative Service (RBS) for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1999. The Rural Business–Cooperative Service (RBS) was established by the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994. The mission of RBS is to improve the quality of life in rural America by financing community facilities and businesses, providing technical assistance, and creating effective strategies for rural development. RBS has authority to enter into cooperative agreements pursuant to section 607(b)(4) of the Rural Development Act of 1972, as amended by section 759A of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996.

The primary objective of this funding is to encourage research through cooperative agreements on critical issues vital to the development and sustainability of user-owned cooperatives as a means of improving the quality of life in America's rural communities. Issue areas on which proposals should focus are:

- (1) Production cooperatives (including joint management of farm operations) as a tool for small farm operators, as recommended by the National Commission on Small Farms.
- (2) New generation cooperative equity management issues and their impact on the user-owned nature of the cooperative business.
- (3) Cooperative structure, conduct and performance in selected industries.
- (4) Can cooperatives compete for value-added markets?

(5) Governance and control issues in evolving cooperative structures and environments.

(6) The role of nonagricultural cooperatives in rural development.

(7) Evaluation of group action strategies, dispute resolution mechanisms, and justifiable terms available to contract growers and cooperatives in an increasingly industrialized agriculture.

(8) Assessment of farmer's markets organized as cooperatives. A cooperative agreement reflects a relationship between the United States Government and an eligible recipient where (1) The principal purpose of the relationship is the transfer of money, property, services, or anything of value to the eligible recipient to carry out research related to rural cooperatives; and (2) substantial involvement is anticipated between RBS acting for the United States Government, and the eligible recipient during the performance of the research in the agreement. A cooperative agreement is not a grant. Cooperative agreements are to be awarded on the basis of merit, quality, and relevance to advancing the purpose of federally supported rural development programs that increase economic opportunities in farming and rural communities.

All forms required to apply are available from the Cooperative Services Program web-site at www.usda.gov/rbs/coops/rrcop.htm, by calling (202) 690–0368, or faxing (202) 690–2723. Forms may also be requested via Internet by sending a message with your name, mailing address (not E-mail) and phone number to "thomas.stafford@usda.gov". When calling or e-mailing Cooperative Services, please indicate that you are requesting forms for Fiscal Year 1999 (FY 1999) Research on Rural Cooperative Opportunities and Problems (RRCOP). Forms will be mailed to you (not e-mailed or faxed) as quickly as possible. Forms are also usually available from the local university grants office.

Use of Funds

Funds may be used to pay up to 75 percent of the total cost for carrying out relevant projects. Applicants' contribution may be in cash or in-kind contribution and must be from nonfederal funds. Funds may not be used to: (1) Pay more than 75 percent of relevant project or administrative costs; (2) pay costs of preparing the application package; (3) fund political activities; or (4) pay costs incurred prior to the effective date of the cooperative agreement. Indirect costs may not exceed current negotiated rates. If no