SUMMARY:

ACTION: Notice of Solicitation of Applications

AGENCY: Rural Housing Service, Rural Business-Cooperative Service

FY 2024 Notice for application deadline information.

DATES: Each of the participating covered programs has a different established deadline for receipt of applications. Please refer to the RD website or the appropriate covered program’s Federal Register Notice for application deadline information.

ADDRESSES: SECD applications, except for the covered Water and Waste Loans and Grant Programs, must be submitted electronically to the USDA RD Office servicing the area where the project is located. Applications for Water and Waste Loans and Grants Programs must be submitted electronically at https://rdapply.sc.egov.usda.gov/. For lenders assigned a CRM, SECD applications must be submitted to their assigned CRM.

All applicants are responsible for any expenses incurred in preparing and submitting applications.

To apply for SECD funding in FY 2024, applicants must follow the instructions as published in this notice:


• SECD applications, except for the Water and Waste Loans and Grant Program SECD applications, must be submitted electronically to the USDA RD Office servicing the area where the project is located. A list of the USDA RD State Offices can be found at: https://www.rd.usda.gov/about-rd/state-offices.

For all other inquiries, you may contact Dr. Gregory Batson, Rural Development Innovation Center, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Room 6138, Stop 0793, Washington, DC 20250, Telephone: (573) 239–2945, Email: gregory.batson@usda.gov.

A checklist of all required application information for regional planning priority can be found at: https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/strategic-economic-and-community-development.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Overview


Funding Opportunity Title: Strategic Economic and Community Development.

Announcement Type: Notice of Solicitation of Applications.

Funding Opportunity Number: The following covered programs with their Assistance Listing (AL) numbers are listed as flows:

• Community Facilities Loans; see 7 CFR part 1942, subpart A.
• Community Facilities Grants; see 7 CFR part 3570, subpart B.
• Community Facilities Guaranteed Loans; see 7 CFR part 5001.
• Water and Waste Disposal Programs Guaranteed Loans; see 7 CFR part 5001.
• Water and Waste Loans and Grants; see 7 CFR part 1780.
• Rural Business Development Grants; see 7 CFR part 4280, subpart E. Dates: See information provided in the DATES section of this notice.

Rural Development Key Priorities: The Agency encourages applicants to consider projects that will advance the following key priorities:

• Addressing Climate Change and Environmental Justice.
• Advancing Racial Justice, Place-Based Equity, and Opportunity.
• Ensuring all rural residents have equitable access to RD programs and benefits from RD funded projects.
• Creating More and Better Market Opportunities. Assisting rural communities recover economically through more and better market opportunities and through improved infrastructure.

For further information on FY 24 Rural Development Priorities, please visit the following website: Rural Development Priorities.

A. Program Description

1. Purpose of the Program

SECD supports projects that promote and partially or completely implement strategic community investment plans. These plans use the unique strengths of rural communities to advance prosperity. USDA RD helps finance and/or fund these projects to build community prosperity by using community assets, identifying resources, convening partners, and leveraging Federal, state, local or private funding.

In FY 2024, the Agency plans to implement SECD through reserving funds from the covered programs’ appropriations as provided in 7 CFR part 1980, subpart K. This notice provides requirements to applicants submitting applications for the covered programs’ reserved funds and establishes the above-mentioned priority effective upon the publication of this notice.

2. Statutory and Regulatory Authority

These funds are made available under Section 379H of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act, as amended (7 U.S.C. 2008v).

3. The Covered Programs

Section 379H of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act, as amended (7 U.S.C. 2008v.), authorizes any program under the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act (Pub. L. 87–128), as determined by the Secretary, to give priority to any program under the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act, as amended, for FY 2024. Successful applications will be selected by the Agency for funding and subsequently awarded to the extent that funding may ultimately be made available through appropriations. The Agency advises that all interested parties bear the financial burden of preparing and submitting an application in response to this Notice whether or not funding is appropriated for this program in FY 2024.

For FY 2024 applications, the following table specifies the percentage of funds being reserved for the covered SECD programs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Percentage of funds reserved for SECD (percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Facilities Loans</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Facilities Grant Program</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Facilities Guaranteed Loans</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water and Waste Disposal Programs</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guaranteed Loans</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Direct Loans</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water and Waste Disposal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Business Development Grants</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Award Amounts: Guaranteed loans, direct loans and grants will be awarded in amounts consistent with each applicable covered program.

Anticipated Award Dates: Awards for SECD applications submitted to the covered programs in FY 24 will be obligated on or before June 30, 2024. The Agency will return any reserved funds that are not obligated by the obligation deadline to each covered program’s regular funding account for obligation of eligible projects in that program.

Performance Period: Performance period will vary by covered program.

Renewal or Supplemental Awards: N/A.

Type of Assistance Instrument: Grants, direct loans, and loan guarantees.

C. Eligibility Information

1. Eligible Applicants

To be considered for SECD reserved funds, both the applicant and project must meet the eligibility requirements of the covered program. These requirements vary among the covered programs and applicants should refer to the regulations for those programs, which are referenced in Section A.2. of this notice.

The agency supports community and regional planning through the SECD regulation without making any changes to the applicant eligibility requirements of the covered programs. The SECD regulation includes three criteria that a project must meet to be considered for the SECD reserve funding (see 7 CFR 1980.1010):

The first criterion, as noted above, is that the project meets the applicable eligibility requirements of the covered program for which the applicant is applying.

The second criterion is that the project is “carried out in a rural area” as defined in 7 CFR 1980.1005. As defined, this means either the entire project is physically located in a rural area, or all the beneficiaries of the service(s) provided through the project must either reside in or be located in a rural area. Note that the definition of “rural” varies among the covered programs and the SECD regulation (7 CFR part 1980, subpart K) does not change those definitions. Therefore, the applicable program regulations as outlined in Section A.2. of this notice should be reviewed as necessary.

The third criterion is that the project supports partial or complete implementation of a strategic community investment plan on a multi-jurisdictional and multi-sectoral basis as defined in 7 CFR 1980.1005.

To be considered for the reserved funds from covered programs in FY 2024, applicants must: (1) meet all requirements of the covered program; (2) meet all requirements in accordance with 7 CFR part 1980, subpart K (7 CFR 1980.1010); and (3) submit Form RD 1980-68 and the supporting documentation required in 7 CFR 1080.1015 with their program application which includes:
25.

The Agency will prioritize applications competing for a covered program’s reserved funds based on the covered program’s awarded points plus the SECD earned points to determine which projects receive reserved funds. SECD points awarded are added to the covered program’s application score to elevate and prioritize projects for accessing reserved funds. The RD covered programs reserve the right to offer the applicant less than the funding requested.

F. Federal Award Administration Information

1. Federal Award Notices

The Agency will notify SECD applicants who receive funding in a manner consistent with award notifications for the covered program.

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Any and all additional requirements of the applicable covered programs apply to projects receiving funding in response to this notice. Please see the regulations for the applicable covered program.

3. Reporting Requirements

Any and all post-award covered program reporting requirements apply to all projects receiving reserved funds in response to this notice.

G. Federal Awarding Agency Contact(s)

For general questions about this notice, please contact your respective Rural Development State Office listed at: https://www.rd.usda.gov/about-rd/state-offices and other points of contact provided in the FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT section of this notice.
H. Build America, Buy America

Funding to Non-Federal Entities. 
Awardees that are Non-Federal Entities, defined pursuant to 2 CFR 200.1 as any State, local government, Indian tribe, Institution of Higher Education, or nonprofit organization, shall be governed by the requirements of Section 70914 of the Build America, Buy America Act (BABAA) within the IIJA. Any requests for waiver of these requirements must be submitted pursuant to USDA’s guidance available online at https://www.usda.gov/ocfo/federal-financial-assistance-policy/USDABuyAmericaWaiver.

I. Other Information

Paperwork Reduction Act

In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, the information collection requirements contained in 7 CFR part 25, must have an UEI number. Any requests for waiver of these requirements must be submitted pursuant to USDA’s guidance available online at https://www.usda.gov/ocfo/federal-financial-assistance-policy/USDABuyAmericaWaiver.

National Environmental Policy Act

All projects to be financed under this notice are subject to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 seq.), and RD’s environmental regulation at 7 CFR part 1970 (Environmental Policies and Procedures).

Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act

All applicants, in accordance with 2 CFR part 25, must have an UEI number and must be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) prior to submitting an application. Applicants may register for the SAM and locate or register for a UEI number at http://www.sam.gov/SAM. All recipients of Federal financial grant assistance are required to report information about first-tier sub-awards and executive total compensation in accordance with 2 CFR part 170. Applicants must ensure they complete the Financial Assistance General Certifications and Representations in SAM.

Civil Rights

Programs referenced in this Notice are subject to applicable Civil Rights Laws. These laws include the Equal Credit Opportunity Act, title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, and section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Nondiscrimination Statement

In accordance with Federal civil rights laws and USDA civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Mission Areas, agencies, staff offices, employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language) should contact the responsible Mission Area, agency, staff office, or the 711 Relay Service.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a complainant should complete a Form AD–3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, which can be obtained online at https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632–9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant’s name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation.

The completed AD–3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

1. Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20250–9410; or
2. Fax: (833) 256–1665 or (202) 690–7442; or
3. Email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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Roger Glendenning,
Acting Under Secretary, Rural Development.
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BILLING CODE 3410–XY–P

COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

Notice of Public Meeting of the Nebraska Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

AGENCY: U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

ACTION: Announcement of meeting.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given, pursuant to the provisions of the rules and regulations of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (Commission) and the Federal Advisory Committee Act that the Nebraska Advisory Committee (Committee) to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights will hold a business meeting via web conference. The purpose of the meeting will be to discuss their project on to the Effects of the Covid–19 Pandemic on K–12 Education in the state.

DATES: Tuesday, March 19, 2024 at 12:00 p.m. Central Time.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held via Zoom.

March 19th Business Meeting:
Registration Link (Audio/Visual):
https://www.zoomgov.com/s/1608362566?pwd=bmlwQVBYoTNMStldDkvRms4MRHUT709I

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:
Victoria Moreno, DFO, at vmoreno@usccr.gov or by phone at 434–515–0204.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Members of the public may listen to the discussions through the above call-in numbers (audio only) or online registration links (audio/visual). An open comment period at each meeting will be provided to allow members of the public to make a statement as time allows. Callers can expect to incur regular charges for calls they initiate over wireless lines, according to their wireless plan. The Commission will not refund any incurred charges. Callers will incur no charge for calls they initiate over land-line connections to the toll-free telephone number. Individuals who are deaf, deafblind, and/or hard of hearing may also follow the proceedings by first calling the Federal Relay Service at 1–800–877–8339 and providing the Service with the conference call number and meeting ID.

Members of the public are entitled to submit written comments; the comments must be received in the regional office within 30 days following the meetings. Written comments may be emailed to Victoria at vmoreno@usccr.gov.