



FoodHub in the News

USDA News Release

July 5, 2011

Agriculture Secretary Vilsack Invites Applications to Promote Regional Business Development and Job Creation Efforts

WASHINGTON – Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced that USDA is accepting applications for grants to support regional economic development strategies and promote job creation.

"The Obama Administration is working on a regional basis to build networks of strong, self-sustaining rural communities," Vilsack said. "This program will help create jobs and assist in identifying and developing business opportunities in rural areas."

Almost \$2.5 million is available through USDA Rural Development's Rural Business Opportunity Grant (RBOG) program. The program promotes sustainable economic development in rural communities and regions with exceptional needs. Last year, for example, Ecotrust in Oregon received a RBOG grant to increase recruitment of producers and buyers in rural communities throughout the Pacific Northwest. It also used the grant to provide training and assistance for FoodHub, which is an online directory and marketplace designed to connect wholesale food buyers and sellers. The system will help agricultural producers tap into the consumer demand for food, help link food buyers and producers and shorten the supply chain between producers and wholesalers.

The RBOG program provides training and technical assistance grants for business development, entrepreneurs, and economic development officials and assists with economic development planning. Funding is available to rural public bodies, nonprofit corporations, Native American tribes and cooperatives with primarily rural members that conduct activities for the mutual benefit of the membership.

Applications for Rural Business Opportunity Grants are due August 1, 2011. Application instructions may be obtained from the July 1, 2011 Federal Register, page 38604, www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2011-07-01/html/2011-16555.htm or by contacting a USDA Rural Development State Office.

In June, President Obama signed an Executive Order establishing the first White House Rural Council, chaired by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. The White House Rural Council will work throughout government to create policies to promote economic prosperity and a high quality of life in our rural communities.

Since taking office, President Obama's Administration has taken significant steps to improve the lives of rural Americans and has provided broad support for rural communities. The Obama Administration has set goals of modernizing infrastructure by providing broadband access to 10 million Americans, expanding educational opportunities for students in rural areas, and providing affordable health care. In the long term, these unparalleled rural investments will help ensure that America's rural communities are repopulating, self-sustaining, and thriving economically.

USDA, through its Rural Development mission area, administers and manages housing, business and community infrastructure and facility programs through a national network of state and local offices. Rural Development has an existing portfolio of more than \$150 billion in loans and loan guarantees. These programs are designed to improve the economic stability of rural communities, businesses, residents, farmers and ranchers and improve the quality of life in rural America.

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