

of applications will include the complete application package submitted to the Rural Development State Office. Points will be ranked as compared with other applications 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. Each factor will receive equal weight.

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 (5 percent in the case of 1994 Institutions) with private funds and in-kind contributions;

(7) Demonstrate 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 2003 Application Submission

Applications must include a clear statement of the goals and objectives of the project and a plan which describes the proposed project as required by the statute and 7 CFR part 4284, subpart F. Each application received in the State Office will be reviewed to determine if the application is consistent with the eligible purposes outlined in 7 CFR part 4284, subpart F. Applications without supportive data to address selection criteria will not be considered. All submissions must conform to the required standard Times New Roman, 12 point font.

Since the primary objective of the cooperative center concept is to provide technical assistance services, including feasibility analysis, applications that do

not propose development or continuation of the cooperative center concept will not be considered. Also, applications that focus on assistance to only one cooperative within the project area will not be considered. To enhance the long-term viability of cooperative development centers, strengthening of technical assistance capacity within new and existing centers is strongly encouraged.

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.

Applications must be completed and submitted to the State Rural Development Office as soon as possible, but no later than June 27, 2003.

Applications received after this date will not be considered. Electronic submission of proposals as an email attachment is strongly encouraged.

Each application must contain the information required under 7 CFR 4284.528(a) and (b)(1) (copies of which may be obtained from the Agency) in addition to the following information which is required under 7 CFR 4284.528(b)(2):

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

(2) 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.

(3) 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 application which supports that criteria. This page should immediately follow the project summary.

(4) Description of the applicant's experience with similar projects, pursuant to 7 CFR 4284.528(a)(2)(vii). Applicants who have received funding under the Rural Cooperative Development Grant program in Fiscal Years 2001 or 2002 must provide a summation, not to exceed three pages, of progress and results for all projects funded fully or partially 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 item (3) documenting the location of evaluation criteria supporting material.

(5) A work plan that describes the specific tasks to be completed using grant and matching funds, pursuant to 7 CFR 4284.528(b)(1). The work plan should describe how customers will be identified (7 CFR 4284.528(a)(2)(vi)), key personnel to be involved (7 CFR 4284.528(a)(2)(vii) and the evaluation methods to be used to determine the success of specific tasks and overall objectives of Center operations (7 CFR 4284.528(a)(2)(xi)). A detailed budget must be submitted as part of the work plan and is required pursuant to 7 CFR 4284.528(a)(2)(iv). The budget must present a breakdown of the estimated costs associated with cooperative development activities as well as the operation of the Center and allocate these costs to each of the tasks to be performed in the work plan (7 CFR 4284.528(a)(2)(iii)). Matching funds as well as grant funds must be accounted for in the budget and estimate of total costs. The work plan, budget and estimate of costs, should not exceed 10 pages.

(6) The eight grant selection criteria in 7 CFR 4284.528(a)(2)(xiii)(G) must be addressed individually and in specific detail. This discussion should be in narrative form, should not exceed 40 pages, and should include all citations to supporting documentation. Do not include the referenced supporting documentation in the application package until and unless requested to do so by USDA.

Applications requesting Federal funds in excess of \$350,000 will not be considered.

The National Office will score applications 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 applicant's satisfactory submission of a formal application and related materials in accordance with subpart F. Entities submitting applications that are selected for awards will be invited by the Rural Development State office to submit all referenced supporting documentation and other required materials prior to September 1. As part of the award process, the State Office will review the referenced supporting documentation. Monitoring officials from the State Office must be satisfied as to the completeness and validity of any referenced documentation before grant funds will be obligated. It is anticipated