

**§ 4284.512 Evaluation process.**

(a) Applications will be evaluated by qualified reviewers appointed by the Agency.

(b) After all proposals have been evaluated using the evaluation criteria and scored in accordance with the point allocation specified in the applicable RFP, the Agency will present to the Administrator of RBS a list of all applications in rank order, together with funding level recommendations.

**§ 4284.513 Evaluation criteria and weights.**

Unless supplemented in a RFP, the criteria listed in this section will be used to evaluate grants under this subpart. Preference will be given to items in paragraphs (a) through (f). The distribution of points to be awarded per criterion will be identified in the applicable RFP.

(a) *Administrative capabilities.* The application will be evaluated to determine whether the subject Center has a track record of administering a nationally coordinated, regional or state-wide operated project. Centers that have capable financial systems and audit controls, personnel and program administration performance measures and clear rules of governance will receive more points than those not evidencing this capacity.

(b) *Technical assistance and other services.* The Agency will evaluate the applicant's demonstrated expertise in providing technical assistance in Rural areas.

(c) *Economic development.* The Agency will evaluate the applicant's demonstrated ability to assist in the retention of businesses, facilitate the establishment of cooperatives and new cooperative approaches and generate employment opportunities that will improve the economic conditions of Rural areas.

(d) *Linkages.* The Agency will evaluate the applicant's demonstrated ability to create horizontal linkages among businesses within and among various sectors in rural areas of the United States and vertical linkages to domestic and international markets.

(e) *Commitment.* The Agency will evaluate the applicant's commitment to providing technical assistance and other services to underserved and economically distressed areas in Rural areas of the United States.

(f) *Matching Funds.* All applicants must demonstrate Matching Funds equal to at least 25 percent (5 percent for 1994 Institutions) of the grant amount requested. Applications exceeding these minimum commitment levels will receive more points.

(g) *Delivery.* The Agency will evaluate whether the Center has a track record in providing technical assistance in Rural areas and accomplishing effective outcomes in Cooperative development. The Center's potential for delivering effective Cooperative development assistance, the expected effects of that assistance, the sustainability of cooperative organizations receiving the assistance, and the transferability of the Center's Cooperative development strategy and focus to other States will also be assessed.

(h) *Work plan/Budget.* The work plan will be reviewed for detailed actions and an accompanying timetable for implementing the proposal. Clear, logical, realistic and efficient plans will result in a higher score. Budgets will be reviewed for completeness and the quality of non Federal funding commitments.

(i) *Qualifications of those performing the tasks.* The application will be evaluated to determine if the personnel expected to perform key center tasks have a track record of positive solutions for complex Cooperative development or marketing problems, or a successful record of conducting accurate feasibility studies, business plans, marketing analysis, or other activities relevant to Cooperative development center success.

(j) *Local support.* Applications will be reviewed for previous and expected local support for the Center, plans for coordinating with other developmental organizations in the proposed service area and coordination with state and local institutions. Support documentation should include recognition of rural values that balance employment opportunities with environmental stewardship and other positive rural amenities. Centers that demonstrate strong support from potential beneficiaries and formal evidence of the Center's intent to coordinate with other developmental organizations will receive more points than those not evidencing such support and formal intent.

(k) *Future support.* Applications that demonstrate financial independence beyond the year for which grant funding is sought will receive more points for this criterion. Points will be awarded only where future funding sources are documented by letters of commitment.

(l) *Amount requested.* Points may be awarded based on the size of the grant request. Lower requested amounts will receive more points. The points to be awarded and request ranges will be established in the applicable RFP.

**§ 4284.514 Grant closing.**

(a) *Letter of Conditions.* The Agency will notify an approved applicant in writing, setting out the conditions under which the grant will be made.

(b) *Applicant's intent to meet conditions.* Upon reviewing the conditions and requirements in the letter of conditions, the applicant must complete, sign and return the Agency's "Letter of Intent to Meet Conditions," or, if certain conditions cannot be met, the applicant may propose alternate conditions to the Agency. The Agency must concur with any changes proposed to the letter of conditions by the applicant before the application will be further processed.

(c) *Grant agreement.* The Agency and the grantee must enter into the Agency's "Agriculture Innovation Center Grant Agreement" prior to the advance of funds.

**§§ 4284.515–4284.599 [Reserved]****§ 4284.600 OMB control number.**

The reporting and recordkeeping requirements contained in this subpart have been approved by the Office of Management and Budget and have been assigned OMB control number 0570–0006 in accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995.

**PART 1951—SERVICING AND COLLECTIONS**

6. The authority citation for part 1951 continues to read as follows:

**Authority:** 5 U.S.C. 301; 7 U.S.C. 1932 Note; 7 U.S.C. 1989; 31 U.S.C. 3716; 42 U.S.C. 1480.

7. Revise § 1951.201 to read as follows:

**Subpart E—Servicing of Community and Direct Business Programs Loans and Grants****§ 1951.201 Purposes.**

This subpart prescribes the Rural Development mission area policies, authorizations and procedures for servicing the following programs: Water and Waste Disposal System loans and grants, Community Facility loans and grants, Rural Business Enterprise/Television Demonstration grants; loans for Grazing and other shift-in-land-use projects; Association Recreation loans; Association Irrigation and Drainage loans; Watershed loans and advances; Resource Conservation and Development loans; Direct Business loans; Economic Opportunity Cooperative loans; Rural Renewal loans; Energy Impacted Area Development Assistance Program grants; National Nonprofit Corporation grants; Water and