

Development Partnership, MAIL STOP 3205, Room 4225, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., Washington, DC 20250-3205, telephone (202) 690-1534, e-mail tia.trout@usda.gov. Information may also be obtained at the following Web site: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/nrdp>.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Programs Affected

This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under number 10.353. This program is subject to the provisions of Executive Order 12372, which requires intergovernmental consultation with State and local officials.

Information Collection and Recordkeeping Requirements

In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. chapter 35), USDA invites comments on the information collection requirement in this notice. These requirements have been granted emergency clearance by the Office of Management and Budget under OMB Control Number 0570-0043.

Comments on this notice must be received by April 21, 2003.

Comments are invited on (a) whether the collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of burden including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

Comments on these information collections should refer to the OMB control number. Organizations and individuals desiring to submit comments on the information collection requirements should direct them to Renita Bolden, Regulations and Paperwork Management Branch, Support Services Division, Rural Development, U.S. Department of Agriculture, STOP 0742, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., Washington, DC 20250-0742. Mail courier service deliveries requiring a street address delivery should be sent to the same attention at 300 E Street, SW., 3rd Floor, Washington, DC 20546.

Title: National Rural Development Partnership.

Type of Request: New collection.

Estimate of Burden: Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 6.0 hours per Application.

Respondents: Joint proposals among public bodies, non profit and for-profit entities, including associations, in incorporated form or limited liability companies, tribal governments, and cooperatives.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 50.

Estimated Number of Responses per Respondent: 1.

Estimated Number of Responses: 50.

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 300 hours.

Background

The National Rural Development Partnership began in 1990 as a component of the President's Initiative on Rural America. Eight pilot SRDCs were formed in 1990; ten years later, 40 SRDCs were in place.

The 2002 Farm Bill authorizes the continuation of the National Rural Development Partnership, with a slightly modified membership structure. The Farm Bill specifies that membership in the reconstituted National Rural Development Partnership is to consist of a National Rural Development Coordinating Committee (NRDCC) and the SRDCs. The National Rural Development Coordinating Committee will be the subject of a separate appointment process and notice.

The 2002 Farm Bill statutorily recognizes the National Rural Development Partnership and authorizes appropriations specific to it and its members. The statute provides eligibility criteria for recognition as a State Rural Development Council. It is contemplated that the NRDP and its components (SRDCs and the NRDCC) will receive funding from a variety of sources: Federal, state, and private. USDA is responsible for recognizing, and entering into a recognition agreement with, each selected SRDC in accordance with statutory criteria.

Each SRDC that previously participated in the National Rural Development Partnership, and is interested in continuing to be recognized as an SRDC, must apply and be recognized pursuant to this Notice. New applicants are also invited to apply. Potential applicants within a state are encouraged to work together to develop a single application. Only one SRDC per state will be recognized.

A more extensive history can be found at the following Web site: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/nrdp/about>.

Definitions

Funding Entity refers to the responsible legal entity which is to receive, hold and disburse funds received from the National Rural Development Partnership for a SRDC.

National Rural Development Partnership (NRDP) refers jointly to recognized State Rural Development Councils and the National Rural Development Coordinating Committee.

National Rural Development Coordinating Committee (NRDCC) refers to a group to be composed of entities and representatives to be approved by the Secretary pursuant to a separate notice further implementing section 6021 of the 2002 Farm Bill.

Rural Area means all the territory of a State that is not within the boundaries of any standard metropolitan statistical area, and all territory within any standard metropolitan statistical area within a census tract having a population density of less than 20 persons per square mile, as determined by the Secretary according to the most recent census of the United States as of any date.

State includes each of the several States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands of the United States, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and, to the extent the Secretary determines it to be feasible and appropriate, the Freely Associated States and the Federated States of Micronesia.

State Rural Development Council (SRDC) refers to an entity recognized as such by the Secretary in an agreement with USDA that confirms the Council meets the eligibility criteria in the 2002 Farm Bill.

2002 Farm Bill refers to Farm Security and Rural Investment Act, Public Law 107-171, enacted on May 13, 2002. Section 6021 of this Act authorizes the Secretary to continue the National Rural Development Partnership and authorizes appropriations for this program.

Eligibility Requirements

As specified in the 2002 Farm Bill, a State Rural Development Council shall:

1. Be composed of representatives of Federal, State, local and tribal governments, nonprofit organizations, regional organizations, the private sector, and other entities committed to rural advancement;

2. Operate with a nonpartisan and nondiscriminatory membership that is broad and representative of the economic, social, and political diversity of the state;