

December 31, 2008

Subject: Request for Oregon Native American RBOG proposals

Dear friend of rural Native American business development in Oregon!

We are contacting you because of your potential interest in applying for a “Rural Business Opportunity Grant” (RBOG) in Oregon that will assist Native American economic development.

We are contacting Native American organizations separately because special rules apply to tribal RBOG applicants which increase their chance of success.

[Note that this RBOG solicitation is separate and distinct from other grant opportunities that we have sent recently via e-mail – i.e., the general RBOG concept paper request and the general and Native American Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) concept paper requests.]

THE RBOG PROGRAM & THE NATIVE AMERICAN SET-ASIDE:

Through our RBOG program, USDA Rural Development (RD) provides grant funds for STRATEGIC planning, leadership development, and business opportunity analysis that will promote sustainable economic development for rural communities in need. Eligible applicants are nonprofits, public bodies, tribes, and coops.

Every year, RD reserves a portion of its RBOG funding for Native American projects. These are projects where at least 75% of the benefits of the project will be received by members of a Federally Recognized Native American Tribe.

DEADLINE!

If you are interested, please review the following guidance and submit a proposal as outlined below by February 23, 2009.

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW:

Everything you need to know about the RBOG program and to respond to this opportunity is available on RD-Oregon’s RBOG web site:

www.rurdev.usda.gov/or/rbog.htm

FUNDS AVAILABLE:

Although the exact amount is not yet known, it is likely that this year there will be \$990,000 of Native American RBOG funds available for award via a single national competition (roughly the same amount as last year).

Native American RBOG applications from Oregon compete with other Native American RBOG applications from around the nation. There is no Oregon state set-aside for this program. Based on past experience, only 1-3 Native American RBOG grants may be awarded to Oregon applicants.

In 2008, 12 separate Native American RBOG's were awarded nationally for a total of just under \$1.1 million, with grants ranging from \$22,500 to \$249,669. Oregon tribes received 1 of these RBOG awards totaling \$61,746.

Although the program is relatively small, it can still be an invaluable tool in rural economic development. For instance, last year Oregon received a \$61,746 RBOG for a tribal fishers marketing assistance project by the Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission.

TYPES OF PROPOSALS WE ARE SEEKING:

Since these grants are awarded through a national competition, applicants are encouraged to design their projects with the RBOG program's priority scoring system in mind. The RBOG priority scoring system is described in the "RBOG program overview" link on our web site. Design your project to maximize your priority score and thereby improve your prospects of success.

In FY2009, USDA's State Director discretionary points will be awarded to projects emphasizing:

- » Downtown and historic-district revitalization
- » Value-added agriculture
- » Telecommunications
- » Minority business development
- » Rural health care
- » Renewable energy & energy efficiency
- » New and creative approaches to rural business development

A CONCEPT PAPER IS REQUESTED:

Since it is likely that only one to three RBOG grants can be awarded to Oregon applicants, instead of seeking detailed, complete applications, we are only requesting a brief "concept paper" from prospective applicants. This will save everyone time and effort while still allowing USDA to survey the field of candidate projects.

The RBOG “Concept Paper” can be downloaded from our RBOG web site (see above). Please be succinct and clear in completing it. When finished, a “Concept Paper” should not need to be more than 2 pages, and no advantage will be given to longer proposals. Remember, we are soliciting concepts, not full RBOG application packages.

DEADLINE FOR CONCEPT PAPERS:

Your RBOG “Concept Paper” should be submitted to the Oregon Rural Development State Office – preferably by e-mail to jeff.deiss@or.usda.gov – by not later than February 23, 2009. If you wish to send it by regular mail, our address is: USDA Rural Development, Attn: Business & Cooperative Programs, 1201 NE Lloyd Blvd., Ste. 801, Portland, OR 97232.

Feedback will be provided to all Concept Paper proposers. Only proposals that appear to be most competitive will be encouraged to submit full applications, though of course everyone will still be welcome to apply formally.

THE APPLICATION & SELECTION PROCESS:

The official deadline for a full RBOG application for the Native American set-aside will be announced in the near future in the Federal Register. We do not yet know the deadline for applications, but in 2008 the deadline was March 31.

Full RBOG applications will need to be received in our office by this to-be-announced deadline, and these will be forwarded on to the national competition.

USDA Rural Development’s National Office will probably make award announcements sometime this summer.

QUESTIONS?

If you have questions or concerns, please contact anyone on Oregon’s Business & Cooperative Programs staff. Our contact information is on-line at: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/or/bizcontact.htm>

Thanks for your support of Oregon’s rural business development efforts. We look forward to working with you on your innovative proposals in support of Oregon’s rural economy!