

Bitterroot Forest Plan site-specifically for the duration of the project.

**Christine Dawe,**

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## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Rural Utilities Service

#### Announcement of Funding Availability, Loan Application Procedures, and Deadlines for the Rural Energy Savings Program (RESP)

**AGENCY:** Rural Utilities Service, USDA.

**ACTION:** Notice of Solicitation of Applications (NOSA).

**SUMMARY:** The Rural Utilities Service (RUS), a Rural Development agency of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), is soliciting Letters of intent for loan applications under the Rural Energy Savings Program (RESP), announcing the application process for those loans and deadlines for applications from eligible entities for funding in fiscal year (FY) 2021, until expended or further notice.

**DATES:** To be considered for this funding, applications under this NOSA will be accepted immediately. The RESP application process is described in detail pursuant to 7 CFR 1719. In brief, the RESP is comprised of two steps:

Step 1: To be considered for financing, an Applicant seeking financing must submit a Letter of intent, in an electronic portable display format (PDF) not to exceed 10 Megabytes (10 MB) by electronic mail (email) to *RESP@USDA.GOV*. No paper Letters of intent will be accepted. The Letters of intent will be queued as they are received. If it advances program and policy goals, RUS may consider loan applications from Eligible entities that have submitted Letters of intent under prior funding announcements but were not invited to proceed with a loan application.

Step 2: A RESP applicant that has been invited in writing by RUS to proceed with the loan application, will have up to ninety (90) days to complete and submit to RUS the documentation for a complete loan application. The ninety (90) day timeframe will begin on the date the RESP applicant receives RUS' invitation to proceed. If the deadline to submit the completed loan application falls on Saturday, Sunday, or a Federal holiday, the application is due the next business day. The loan application package must be marked

with the subject line "Attention: Christopher McLean, Assistant Administrator for the Electric Program; RESP Loan Application."

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Robert Coates, Electric Program, Rural Utilities Service, Rural Development, United States Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, STOP 1568, Room 4121 0257-S, Washington, DC 20250-1510; Telephone: (202) 260-5415; Email: *Robert.Coates@usda.gov*.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Authority:

These loans are made available under the authority of 7 U.S.C. 8107a (Section 6407 of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, as amended,) and the Rural Electrification Act of 1936, 7 U.S.C. 901 *et seq.*

#### General Information

The purpose of the RESP is to help rural families and small businesses achieve cost savings by providing loans to qualified consumers through eligible entities to implement durable cost-effective energy efficiency measures pursuant to 7 U.S.C. 8107a(a) of the RESP authorizing statute. The Secretary may use this funding to allow eligible entities to offer energy efficiency loans to customers in any part of their service territory in accordance to § 7 CFR part 1719. The Administrator may approve loans proposing to include these eligible activities for entities currently in the queue provided they still meet all of the application requirements. Additionally, subject to appropriations, funding for projects may be used to replace manufactured housing units with another manufactured housing unit if the replacement would be more cost effective in saving energy.

The Agency encourages applications that will support recommendations made in the Rural Prosperity Task Force report to help improve life in rural America, see <https://www.usda.gov/topics/rural/rural-prosperity>. Applicants are encouraged to consider projects that provide measurable results in helping rural communities build robust and sustainable economies through strategic investments in infrastructure, partnerships and innovation. Key strategies include: Achieving e-Connectivity for rural America, developing the rural economy, harnessing technological innovation, supporting a rural workforce, and improving quality of life.

#### Application and Submission Information

*Application Requirements:* All requirements for submission of an

application under the RESP are subject to 7 CFR part 1719.

*Application Materials/Submission:* The Letter of intent must be submitted by the Applicant in an electronic PDF format not to exceed 10 Megabytes (10 MB) by electronic mail (email) to *RESP@USDA.GOV*. No paper letters of intent will be accepted. The completed loan application package must be submitted following the instructions that will be outlined in the RUS Invitation to proceed to the RESP Applicant. The loan application package must be marked with the subject line "Attention: Christopher McLean, Assistant Administrator for the Electric Program; RESP Loan Application."

#### Paperwork Reduction Act

In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. chapter 35), OMB approved this information collection under OMB Control Number 0572-0151. This NOSA contains no new reporting or recordkeeping burdens under OMB control number 0572-0151 that would require approval under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. Chapter 35).

#### USDA Non-Discrimination Statement

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and USDA civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs).

Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (*e.g.*, braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339 (English) or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish). Individuals who wish to file a Program Discrimination Complaint must complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form (PDF). To file a program discrimination complaint, you may obtain a complaint form by sending an email to *Cr-*

[info@ascr.usda.gov](mailto:info@ascr.usda.gov) or calling (866) 632-9992 to request the form.

A letter may also be written containing all of the information requested in the form. Send the completed complaint form or letter by mail to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410, or email at [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov). Additional information can be found online at <https://www.ascr.usda.gov/filing-programdiscrimination-complaint-usdacustomer>.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

**Chad Rupe,**

*Administrator, Rural Utilities Service.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### Request for Comments for the Advisory Committee on Data for Evidence Building

**AGENCY:** Office of the Under Secretary for Economic Affairs, Department of Commerce.

**ACTION:** Request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** The Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 (Evidence Act) requires federal agencies to modernize their data management practices to develop and support evidence-based policymaking. The Act requires the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), or the head of an agency designated by the Director, to establish the Advisory Committee on Data for Evidence Building (Advisory Committee). In a letter dated September 3, 2019, OMB delegated managerial and administrative responsibility for this Federal advisory committee to the Department of Commerce Office of Under Secretary for Economic Affairs (OUSEA).

**DATES:** Comments must be received by Tuesday, February 9, 2021.

**ADDRESSES:** You may submit comments by any of the following methods:

- *Federal eRulemaking Portal:* [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov).
- By email directly to [Evidence@bea.gov](mailto:Evidence@bea.gov). Include the Docket ID; begin with the phrase "Comments for the Advisory Committee on Data for Evidence Building;" and indicate which numbered questions described in the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** of this notice your comments address.

Comments by fax or paper delivery will not be accepted.

**Privacy Note:** Comments submitted in response to this notice may be made available to the public through relevant websites. Therefore, commenters should only include information they wish to make publicly available on the internet. Do not submit confidential business information or otherwise sensitive or protected information.

Please note the confidentiality of routine communication and responses to this public comment request are treated as public comments and may therefore be made publicly available, notwithstanding the inclusion of the routine notice.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Lucas Hitt, Designated Federal Official, Advisory Committee on Data for Evidence Building, 4600 Silver Hill Road, Washington, DC 20233 by email [Lucas.Hitt@bea.gov](mailto:Lucas.Hitt@bea.gov) or by phone (301) 278-9223.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

#### Request for Comments

The Advisory Committee will review, analyze, and make recommendations on how to promote the use of data for evidence building. The Advisory Committee will evaluate and provide recommendations to the Director of the Office of Management and Budget on how to facilitate data sharing, data linkage, and privacy enhancing techniques in support of evidence building. As part of its evaluation, the Advisory Committee may consider best practices to improve the safe and appropriate access to data. The Advisory Committee will consider the coordination of data sharing and availability of data for evidence building across all agencies and levels of government. The FRN commenters may respond to any question and do not need to respond to all questions.

This request for comments offers researchers, evaluators, contractors, government entities, and other interested parties the opportunity to inform the Committee's work. This is a general solicitation of comments from the public. The Advisory Committee will consider all feedback and recommendations on core topics and central issues such as:

- Capacity needs for secure data access and record linkage
- Areas for research and development on state-of-the-art data access and data protection methods
- How to protect privacy when using personally identifiable information or confidential business information in support of evidence building

- How to promote transparency and facilitate public engagement with the evidence building process
- Agency needs for data management and data stewardship services
- How to best facilitate the needs of researchers, evaluators, and other evidence builders through a national data service or similar approach

Please clearly indicate which question(s) you address in your response and any evidence to support assertions, where practicable.

#### Round 1

##### Central Questions—

1. What are the main challenges faced by national, state/provincial, or local governments that are trying to build a basis for evidence-based policy? Briefly describe the bottlenecks and pain-points they face in the evidence-based decision-making process.

2. What are examples of high-impact data uses for evidence-based policy making that successfully effected change, reduced costs, or improved the welfare of citizens?

3. Which frameworks, policies, practices, or methods show promise in overcoming challenges experienced by governments in their evidence building?

4. The Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking (See: [www.cep.gov](http://www.cep.gov)) recommended the creation of a National Secure Data Service (See Commission Report at [www.cep.gov](http://www.cep.gov)). Do you agree with this recommendation, and if so, what should be the essential features of a National Secure Data Service?

5. How can federal agencies protect individual and organizational privacy when using data for evidence building? Recommend specific actions the Office of Management and Budget and/or other federal agencies can take when using data for evidence building, as well as suggested changes to federal laws, policies, and procedures.

##### Secure Data Access—

6. If created, how should a data service be structured to best facilitate (1) research and development of secure data access and confidentiality technologies and methods, (2) and agency adoption of those technologies and techniques?

7. Government agencies have argued that secure data access has value because it (1) improves service delivery, (2) improves efficiency (lowers costs), (3) produces metrics for performance measurement, and (4) produces new learnings/insights from the data. Which of these propositions do you agree holds value and why? Do you have examples that demonstrate these benefits? Do you