

3. FSH 2409.12, Timber Cruising Handbook, Chapters 30, Cruising Systems; 40, Cruise Planning, Data Recording, and Cruise Reporting; 60, Quality Control; and 70, Designating Timber for Cutting; FSH 2409.15, Timber Sale Administration Handbook, Chapters 20, Measuring and Accounting for Included Timber; 40, Rates and Payments; and 60, Operations and Other Provisions.

4. FSH 5509.11, Title Claims, Sales, and Grants Handbook, Chapter 10, Title Claims and Encroachments.

5. FSM 2000, National Forest Resource Management, Chapter 40, National Forest System Monitoring.

6. FSM 2300, Recreation, Wilderness, and Related Resource Management, Chapter 50, section 55, Climbing Management.

Final Directives That Have Been Issued Since October 1, 2023

No final directives have been issued since October 1, 2023.

Dated: February 7, 2024.

JoLynn Anderson,

Branch Lead, Directives, Information Collections and Government Clearance, Policy Office, National Forest System.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Business-Cooperative Service

Rural Housing Service

Rural Utilities Service

[Docket No. RBS-23-BUSINESS-0025]

Notice of Solicitation of Applications for the Strategic Economic and Community Development Program for FY 2024

AGENCY: Rural Business-Cooperative Service, Rural Housing Service, and Rural Utilities Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Under Secretary for Rural Development (RD or Agency) is seeking applications for the Strategic Economic and Community Development (SECD) priority, as reauthorized by section 6401 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (2018 Farm Bill) for projects that support multi-jurisdictional and multi-sectoral strategic community investment plans. In fiscal year (FY) 2024, the covered RD programs will implement SECD by reserving loan and/or grant funds from the appropriations of the programs covered by this funding priority. This notice describes the requirements by which the RD programs will consider projects eligible for the covered programs' reserved appropriated funds and the information

needed to submit an application. This NOSA is being issued prior to passage of a final appropriations act for FY 2024 to allow potential applicants time to submit applications for financial assistance under the covered programs and to give the RD programs time to process applications. Information on estimated FY 24 funding amounts can be found under **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**, section B. Federal Award Information of this notice.

DATES: Each of the participating covered programs has a different established deadline for receipt of applications. Please refer to the RD website or the appropriate covered program's **Federal Register** Notice for application deadline information.

ADDRESSES: SECD applications, except for the covered Water and Waste Loans and Grant Programs, must be submitted electronically to the USDA RD Office servicing the area where the project is located. Applications for Water and Waste Loans and Grants Programs must be submitted electronically at <https://rdapply.sc.egov.usda.gov/>. For lenders assigned a CRM, SECD applications must be submitted to their assigned CRM.

All applicants are responsible for any expenses incurred in preparing and submitting applications.

To apply for SECD funding in FY 2024, applicants must follow the instructions as published in this notice:

- All applicants must submit the Form RD 1980-88, "Strategic Economic and Community Development (Section 6401, Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (Pub. L. 115-334))," located at <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-programs/strategic-economic-and-community-development>, with their program application to the appropriate covered program.

- SECD applications, except for the Water and Waste Loans and Grant Program SECD applications, must be submitted electronically to the USDA RD Office servicing the area where the project is located. A list of the USDA RD State Offices can be found at: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/about-rd/state-offices>.

- Water and Waste Loans and Grant Program must submit SECD applications electronically at <https://rdapply.sc.egov.usda.gov/>.

- For lenders assigned a OneRD Loan Guarantee Initiative Customer Relationship Manager (CRM), SECD applications must be submitted to their assigned CRM.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For more information, please contact your respective RD State Office listed here:

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/about-rd/state-offices>.

For all other inquiries, you may contact Dr. Gregory Batson, Rural Development Innovation Center, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Room 6138, Stop 0793, Washington, DC 20250, Telephone: (573) 239-2945, Email: gregory.batson@usda.gov.

A checklist of all required application information for regional planning priority can be found at: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/strategic-economic-and-community-development>.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Overview

Federal Awarding Agency Name: Rural Business-Cooperative Service, Rural Housing Service, Rural Utilities Service.

Funding Opportunity Title: Strategic Economic and Community Development.

Announcement Type: Notice of Solicitation of Applications.

Funding Opportunity Number: The following covered programs with their Assistance Listing (AL) numbers are listed as follows:

- Community Facilities Loans; see 7 CFR part 1942, subpart A.
- Community Facilities Grants; see 7 CFR part 3570, subpart B.
- Community Facilities Guaranteed Loans; see 7 CFR part 5001.
- Water and Waste Disposal Programs Guaranteed Loans; see 7 CFR part 5001.
- Water and Waste Loans and Grants; see 7 CFR part 1780.
- Rural Business Development Grants; see 7 CFR part 4280, subpart E.

Dates: See information provided in the **DATES** section of this notice.

Rural Development Key Priorities: The Agency encourages applicants to consider projects that will advance the following key priorities:

- Addressing Climate Change and Environmental Justice. Reducing climate pollution and increasing resilience to the impacts of climate change through economic support to rural communities.
- Advancing Racial Justice, Place-Based Equity, and Opportunity. Ensuring all rural residents have equitable access to RD programs and benefits from RD funded projects.
- Creating More and Better Market Opportunities. Assisting rural communities recover economically through more and better market opportunities and through improved infrastructure.

For further information on FY 24 Rural Development Priorities, please visit the following website: Rural

Development Priorities: FY 2024 | Rural Development (*usda.gov*).

A. Program Description

1. Purpose of the Program

SECD supports projects that promote and partially or completely implement strategic community investment plans. These plans use the unique strengths of rural communities to advance prosperity. USDA RD helps finance and/or fund these projects to build community prosperity by using community assets, identifying resources, convening partners, and leveraging Federal, state, local or private funding.

In FY 2024, the Agency plans to implement SECD through reserving funds from the covered programs' appropriations as provided in 7 CFR part 1980, subpart K. This notice provides requirements to applicants submitting applications for the covered programs' reserved funds and establishes the above-mentioned priority effective upon the publication of this notice.

2. Statutory and Regulatory Authority

These funds are made available under Section 379H of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act, as amended (7 U.S.C. 2008v).

3. The Covered Programs

Section 379H of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act, as amended (7 U.S.C. 2008v.), authorizes any program under the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act (Pub. L. 87-128), as determined by the Secretary, to give priority to applications that support the implementation of multi-jurisdictional and multi-sectoral strategic community investment plans.

Accordingly, the Agency is giving priority to projects implementing strategic community investment plans in FY 24 through the following RD programs:

- Community Facilities Loans; see 7 CFR part 1942, subpart A.
- Community Facilities Grants; see 7 CFR part 3570, subpart B.
- Community Facilities Guaranteed Loans; see 7 CFR part 5001.
- Water and Waste Disposal Programs Guaranteed Loans; see 7 CFR part 5001.
- Water and Waste Loans and Grants; see 7 CFR part 1780.
- Rural Business Development Grants; see 7 CFR part 4280, subpart E.

4. Application of Awards

The Agency will review, evaluate, and score each application based on the criteria specified in 7 CFR 1980.1020, to

award points for each program's competition for the SECD reserved funds.

B. Federal Award Information

Type of Awards: Guaranteed loans, direct loans and grants.

Fiscal Year Funds: FY 2024 appropriated funds.

Available Funds: The amount of reserved funds available for SECD projects is dependent on the amount of available appropriated funding provided to each of the covered programs during the fiscal year. The NOSA is being issued prior to passage of a final appropriations act for FY 2024. Funding for the SECD covered programs in FY 2023 was \$409,892,029, however, funding for FY 2024 will not be known until Congress passes an appropriations act for FY 2024. Successful applications will be selected by the Agency for funding and subsequently awarded to the extent that funding may ultimately be made available through appropriations. The Agency advises that all interested parties bear the financial burden of preparing and submitting an application in response to this Notice whether or not funding is appropriated for this program in FY 2024.

For FY 2024 applications, the following table specifies the percentage of funds being reserved for the covered SECD programs:

Program	Percentage of funds reserved for SECD (percent)
Community Facilities Loans	10
Community Facilities Grant Program	5
Community Facilities Guaranteed Loans	5
Water and Waste Disposal Programs Guaranteed Loans	10
Water and Waste Disposal Direct Loans	5
Water and Waste Disposal Grants	3
Rural Business Development Grants	5

Award Amounts: Guaranteed loans, direct loans and grants will be awarded in amounts consistent with each applicable covered program.

Anticipated Award Dates: Awards for SECD applications submitted to the covered programs in FY 24 will be obligated on or before June 30, 2024. The Agency will return any reserved funds that are not obligated by the obligation deadline to each covered program's regular funding account for

obligation of eligible projects in that program.

Performance Period: Performance period will vary by covered program.

Renewal or Supplemental Awards: N/A.

Type of Assistance Instrument: Grants, direct loans, and loan guarantees.

C. Eligibility Information

1. Eligible Applicants

To be considered for SECD reserved funds, both the applicant and project must meet the eligibility requirements of the covered program. These requirements vary among the covered programs and applicants should refer to the regulations for those programs, which are referenced in Section A.2. of this notice.

The agency supports community and regional planning through the SECD regulation without making any changes to the applicant eligibility requirements of the covered programs. The SECD regulation includes three criteria that a project must meet to be considered for the SECD reserve funding (see 7 CFR 1980.1010):

The first criterion, as noted above, is that the project meets the applicable eligibility requirements of the covered program for which the applicant is applying.

The second criterion is that the project is "carried out in a rural area" as defined in 7 CFR 1980.1005. As defined, this means either the entire project is physically located in a rural area, or all the beneficiaries of the service(s) provided through the project must either reside in or be located in a rural area. Note that the definition of "rural" varies among the covered programs and the SECD regulation (7 CFR part 1980, subpart K) does not change those definitions. Therefore, the applicable program regulations as outlined in Section A.2 of this notice should be reviewed as necessary.

The third criterion is that the project supports partial or complete implementation of a strategic community investment plan on a multi-jurisdictional and multi-sectoral basis as defined in 7 CFR 1980.1005.

To be considered for the reserved funds from covered programs in FY 2024, applicants must: (1) meet all requirements of the covered program; (2) meet all requirements in accordance with 7 CFR part 1980, subpart K (see 7 CFR 1980.1010); and (3) submit Form RD 1980-88 and the supporting documentation required in 7 CFR 1080.1015 with their program application which includes:

- Sufficient information to show that the project will be carried out in a rural area, as defined by the appropriate covered program; and

- Identification of any current or previous applications the applicant has submitted for funds from the covered programs.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching

All cost sharing, matching, and cost participation requirements of the applicable covered program apply to projects seeking SECD reserved funds.

3. Other

All other eligibility requirements (beyond those identified in Section C.1 of this notice) found in the covered programs' regulations applying to applicants, their projects, and the beneficiaries of those projects are unchanged by either this notice or the regulations for the SECD program (7 CFR part 1980, subpart K).

D. Application and Submission Information

1. Address To Request Application Package

Information on how to submit applications is provided in the **ADDRESSES** section of this notice.

2. Content and Form of Application Submission

Applicants must submit the Form RD 1980-88, "Strategic Economic and Community Development (Section 6401) Priority," located at <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-programs/strategic-economic-and-community-development#to-apply>, with their program application to the appropriate covered program.

3. System for Award Management (SAM) and Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)

(a) At the time of application, each applicant must have an active registration in the System for Award Management (SAM) before submitting its application in accordance with 2 CFR part 25 <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-1/part-25>. To register in SAM, entities will be required to obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). Instructions for obtaining the UEI are available at <https://sam.gov/content/entity-registration>.

(b) Applicant must maintain an active SAM registration, with current, accurate and complete information, at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application under consideration by a federal awarding agency.

(c) Applicant must ensure they complete the Financial Assistance General Certifications and Representations in SAM.

(d) Applicant must provide a valid UEI in its application, unless determined exempt under 2 CFR 25.110 (<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-1/part-25/subpart-A/section-25.110>).

(e) The Agency will not make an award until the applicant has complied with all SAM requirements including providing the UEI. If an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time the Agency is ready to make an award, the Agency may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a federal award to another applicant.

4. Application Submission Deadlines

Each of the participating covered programs has different established deadlines for receipt of applications. Please refer to the Agency website or the appropriate covered program's **Federal Register** Notice for application deadline information. The Agency will not solicit or consider new scoring or eligibility information that is submitted after the application deadline. The covered RD programs also reserve the right to ask applicants for clarifying information and additional verification of assertions in the application.

5. Intergovernmental Review

This Notice is not subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs."

6. Funding Restrictions

All applicants are responsible for any expenses incurred in preparing and submitting applications.

7. Other Submission Requirements

(a) SECD applications must be submitted electronically to the USDA RD Office servicing the area where the project is located. RD State Offices can be found here: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/about-rd/state-offices>.

(b) Water and Waste Loans and Grant Program must submit SECD applications electronically at <https://rdapply.sc.egov.usda.gov/>.

(c) For lenders assigned a OneRD Loan Guarantee Initiative Customer Relationship Manager (CRM), SECD applications must be submitted to their assigned CRM.

E. Application Review Information

1. Criteria

All FY 2024 applications for covered programs will be reviewed, evaluated, and scored based on the covered program's scoring criteria. This notice does not affect that process. This notice only affects the scoring of SECD applications competing for a covered program's SECD reserve funds.

For applicants wishing to be considered for reserved SECD funds in FY 24, the Agency will review, evaluate, and score each application based on the criteria specified in 7 CFR 1980.1020, to award points for each covered program's SECD reserved funds.

2. Review and Selection Process

The Agency will prioritize applications competing for a covered program's reserved funds based on the covered program's awarded points plus the SECD earned points to determine which projects receive reserved funds. SECD points awarded are added to the covered program's application score to elevate and prioritize projects for accessing reserved funds. The RD covered programs reserve the right to offer the applicant less than the funding requested.

F. Federal Award Administration Information

1. Federal Award Notices

The Agency will notify SECD applicants who receive funding in a manner consistent with award notifications for the covered program.

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Any and all additional requirements of the applicable covered programs apply to projects receiving funding in response to this notice. Please see the regulations for the applicable covered program.

3. Reporting Requirements

Any and all post-award covered program reporting requirements apply to all projects receiving reserved funds in response to this notice.

G. Federal Awarding Agency Contact(s)

For general questions about this notice, please contact your respective Rural Development State Office listed at: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/about-rd/state-offices> and other points of contact provided in the **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** section of this notice.

H. Build America, Buy America

Funding to Non-Federal Entities. Awardees that are Non-Federal Entities, defined pursuant to 2 CFR 200.1 as any State, local government, Indian tribe, Institution of Higher Education, or nonprofit organization, shall be governed by the requirements of Section 70914 of the Build America, Buy America Act (BABAA) within the IJJA. Any requests for waiver of these requirements must be submitted pursuant to USDA's guidance available online at <https://www.usda.gov/ocfo/federal-financial-assistance-policy/USDABuyAmericaWaiver>.

I. Other Information

Paperwork Reduction Act

In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, the information collection requirements contained in 7 CFR part 1980, subpart K, have been approved by Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under OMB Control Number 070-0068.

National Environmental Policy Act

All projects to be financed under this notice are subject to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), and RD's environmental regulation at 7 CFR part 1970 (Environmental Policies and Procedures).

Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act

All applicants, in accordance with 2 CFR part 25, must have an UEI number and must be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) prior to submitting an application. Applicants may register for the SAM and locate or register for a UEI number at <http://www.sam.gov/SAM>. All recipients of Federal financial grant assistance are required to report information about first-tier sub-awards and executive total compensation in accordance with 2 CFR part 170. Applicants must ensure they complete the Financial Assistance General Certifications and Representations in SAM.

Civil Rights

Programs referenced in this Notice are subject to applicable Civil Rights Laws.

These laws include the Equal Credit Opportunity Act, title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, and section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Nondiscrimination Statement

In accordance with Federal civil rights laws and USDA civil rights

regulations and policies, the USDA, its Mission Areas, agencies, staff offices, 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.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (*e.g.*, Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language) should contact the responsible Mission Area, agency, staff office, or the 711 Relay Service.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, which can be obtained online at <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation.

The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

- (1) *Mail*: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410; or
- (2) *Fax*: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) *Email*: program.intake@usda.gov.

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Roger Glendenning,

Acting Under Secretary, Rural Development.

[FR Doc. 2024-02782 Filed 2-12-24; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-XY-P

COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

Notice of Public Meeting of the Nebraska Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

AGENCY: U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

ACTION: Announcement of meeting.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given, pursuant to the provisions of the rules and regulations of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (Commission) and the Federal Advisory Committee Act that the Nebraska Advisory Committee (Committee) to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights will hold a business meeting via web conference. The purpose of the meeting will be to discuss their project on to the Effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic on K-12 Education in the state.

DATES: Tuesday, March 19, 2024 at 12:00 p.m. Central Time.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held via Zoom.

March 19th Business Meeting: Registration Link (Audio/Visual):
<https://www.zoomgov.com/s/1608362566?pwd=bmlwQVBYOTNLMStldDkvRms4MjRRUT09I>.

Join by Phone (Audio Only): 1-833-435-1820 USA Toll Free; Meeting ID: 160 836 2566.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Victoria Moreno, DFO, at vmoreno@usccr.gov or by phone at 434-515-0204.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Members of the public may listen to the discussions through the above call-in numbers (audio only) or online registration links (audio/visual). An open comment period at each meeting will be provided to allow members of the public to make a statement as time allows. Callers can expect to incur regular charges for calls they initiate over wireless lines, according to their wireless plan. The Commission will not refund any incurred charges. Callers will incur no charge for calls they initiate over land-line connections to the toll-free telephone number. Individuals who are deaf, deafblind, and/or hard of hearing may also follow the proceedings by first calling the Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339 and providing the Service with the conference call number and meeting ID number.

Members of the public are entitled to submit written comments; the comments must be received in the regional office within 30 days following the meetings. Written comments may be emailed to Victoria at vmoreno@usccr.gov.