

Subpart D—Designation Process

§ 25.300 USDA action and review of nominations for designation.

(a) *Establishment of submission procedures.* USDA will establish a time period and procedure for the submission of application as Empowerment Zones or Enterprise Communities, including submission deadlines and addresses, in a Notice Inviting Applications, to be published in the FEDERAL REGISTER.

(b) *Acceptance for processing.* USDA will accept for processing those applications as Empowerment Zones or Enterprise Communities which USDA determines have met the criteria required under this part. USDA will notify the State(s) and local government(s) whether or not the nomination has been accepted for processing. The criteria for acceptance for processing is that the application as an Empowerment Zone or Enterprise Community must be received by USDA on or before the close of business on the date established by the Notice Inviting Applications published in the FEDERAL REGISTER. The applications must be complete and must be accompanied by a strategic plan, as required by § 25.200(c) of this part and the certifications required by § 25.202(b) of this part.

(c) *Evaluation of applications.* In the process of reviewing each application accepted for processing, USDA may undertake a site visit(s) to any nominated area to aid in the process of evaluation.

(d) *Modification of the strategic plan, boundaries of nominated rural areas, and/or period during which designation is in effect.* Subject to the limitations imposed by § 25.100 of this part, USDA may request additional information pertaining to the plan and proposed area and may, as a part of that request, suggest modifications to the plan that would enhance its effectiveness.

(e) *Publication of designations.* Final determination of the boundaries of areas and the term for which the designations will remain in effect will be made by the Secretary. Announcements of those nominated areas designated as Empowerment Zones of Enterprise Communities will be made by publication of a Notice in the FEDERAL REGISTER.

§ 25.301 Selection factors for designation of nominated rural areas.

In choosing among nominated rural areas eligible for designation, the Secretary shall consider:

(a) The effectiveness of the Strategic plan, in accordance with the key principles set out in § 25.201 of this part.

(b) The effectiveness of the assurances made pursuant to § 25.200(a)(2) of this part that the strategic plan will be implemented.

(c) The extent to which an application proposes activities that are creative and innovative.

(d) Such other factors as established by the Secretary, which include the degree of need demonstrated by the nominated area for assistance under this part and the diversity within and among the nominated areas. If other factors are established by USDA, a FEDERAL REGISTER Notice will be published identifying such factors, along with an extension of the application due date if necessary.

§ 25.302 Number of Rural Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities.

The Secretary may designate up to three rural Empowerment Zones and up to thirty rural Enterprise Communities.

Subpart E—Post-Designation Requirements

§ 25.400 Reporting.

USDA will require periodic reports for the Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities and other applicants designated pursuant to this part. These reports will identify the community, local government and State actions which have been taken in accordance with the strategic plan. In addition to these reports, such other information relating to designated Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities as USDA shall request from time to time shall be submitted promptly. On the basis of this information and of on-site reviews, USDA will prepare and issue periodic reports on the effectiveness of the Empowerment Zones/Enterprise Communities Program.