

**§ 25.503 Rural areas.**

(a) *What constitutes "rural"*. A rural area may consist of any area that lies outside the boundaries of a Metropolitan Area, as designated by the Office of Management and Budget, or, is an area that has a population density less than or equal to 1,000 persons per square mile, the land use of which is primarily agricultural.

(b) *Exceptions to the definition*. On a case by case basis, the Secretary may grant requests for waiver from the definition of "rural" stated in paragraph (a) of this section upon a showing of good cause. Applicants seeking to apply for a rural designation who do not satisfy the definition in paragraph (a) of this section must submit a request for waiver in writing to the Deputy Administrator, USDA Office of Community Development, Reporters Building, Room 701, STOP 3203, 300 7th Street, SW., Washington, DC 20024-3202. Requests must include:

(1) The name, address and daytime phone number of the contact person for the applicant seeking the waiver; and

(2) Sufficient information regarding the area that would support the infrequent exception from the definition.

(c) *Waiver process*. The Secretary, in consultation with the Department of Commerce, will have discretion to permit rural applications for communities that do not meet the above rural criteria.

**§§ 25.504–25.999 [Reserved]****Subpart G—Round II and Round IIS Grants**

SOURCE: 67 FR 13558, Mar. 25, 2002, unless otherwise noted.

**§ 25.600 Purpose.**

This subpart outlines USDA policies and authorizations and contains procedures for the USDA EZ/EC grant program.

**§ 25.601 Delegation of authority.**

(a) *Program administration*. The Deputy Administrator, Office of Community Development, shall be responsible for the overall development of policy

and administration of the USDA EZ/EC grant program.

(b) *Funding official*. Unless otherwise provided, the state director is responsible for implementing the authorities in this subpart, consistent with the guidance issued by the Office of Community Development. Except for grant approval and environmental determination authorities, state directors may re-delegate their duties to qualified staff members.

(c) *Environmental review determinations*. The funding official is responsible for making environmental review determinations.

(d) *Authority to issue regulations*. The Under Secretary, Rural Development, may promulgate regulations under this part.

**§ 25.602 Eligible recipients.**

(a) *General*. The grants made under this subpart shall be made to the lead managing entities on behalf of the Round II rural empowerment zones and Round IIS rural enterprise communities, respectively, in accordance with an approved strategic plan. Such grants shall be available to successor entities approved in writing by USDA.

(b) *Exception*. The funding official, with the approval of the Office of Community Development, may elect to award all or part of the available grant funds to an alternate grantee.

(c) *Subrecipients*. The grantee shall relay funds to subrecipients, as provided in the approved strategic plan, as soon as practicable.

**§ 25.603 Grant approval and obligation of funds.**

Grants may be made at such time as the nominated area has been designated and such other prerequisites as USDA shall determine have been met, including but not limited to:

(a) The empowerment zone or enterprise community has entered into a memorandum of agreement satisfactory to USDA;

(b) The empowerment zone or enterprise community has conformed its strategic plan to be consistent with the level of federal grant aid available and such conforming amendments (if any)

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have met with the approval of the Office of Community Development and the funding official;

(c) Completion of the environmental review process, including all appropriate public notices;

(d) The proposed grantee has agreed, in form and substance satisfactory to the Office of Community Development, to any funding conditions imposed by USDA;

(e) The grantee has submitted a request for obligation of funds, in form and substance satisfactory to the Office of Community Development, inclusive of the following certification:

“The grantee certifies that it and all direct or substantial subrecipients are in compliance and will continue to comply with all applicable laws, regulations, executive orders and other generally applicable requirements, including those contained in 7 CFR parts 25, 3015, 3016, 3017, 3018, 3019 and 3052 and any agreement to meet funding conditions, in effect at the time of the grant or as subsequently amended.”

## § 25.604 Disbursement of grant funds.

(a) The funding official will determine, based on 7 CFR parts 3015, 3016 and 3019, as applicable, whether disbursement of a grant will be by advance or reimbursement.

(b) A “request for advance or reimbursement,” in form and substance satisfactory to USDA, must be completed by the grantee on behalf of itself and all applicable subrecipients and submitted to the funding official.

(c) Requests for advance or reimbursement must identify:

(1) The amount requested for each benchmark activity;

(2) The cumulative amount advanced to date (not inclusive of the current amount requested) for each benchmark activity;

(3) The total USDA EZ/EC grant obligated for each benchmark activity;

(4) The total approved budget for the applicable project or program (inclusive of non USDA EZ/EC grant program sources);

(5) An estimated percentage of completion or progress made in accomplishing the benchmark goal associated with each benchmark activity;

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(6) Certification that the lead managing entity and the subrecipients (where applicable) are in compliance with all applicable laws and regulatory requirements; and

(7) Such other information as the funding official may require.

(d) Requests for advance or reimbursement may include only activities or projects which are identified in an approved strategic plan.

## § 25.605 Grant program reporting requirements.

Grantees may incorporate grant reporting requirements in the reports submitted pursuant to § 25.400, or submit them separately. In complying with the requirements of 7 CFR parts 3015, 3016, or 3019, as applicable, grantees must submit, in lieu of the forms prescribed therein, the equivalent of such forms prescribed by the Office of Community Development pursuant to this subpart as such may be adapted to the USDA EZ/EC grant program and which may be submitted and retained in electronic form.

## § 25.606 Financial management and records.

(a) In complying with the requirements of 7 CFR parts 3015, 3016, or 3019, as applicable, grantees must submit, in lieu of the forms prescribed therein, the equivalent of such forms prescribed by the Office of Community Development pursuant to this subpart as such may be adapted to the USDA EZ/EC grant program and which may be submitted and retained in electronic form.

(b) Grantees must retain financial records, supporting documents, statistical records and all other records pertinent to the grant for a period of at least 3 years after the end of the designation period, except that the records shall be retained beyond the 3 year period if audit findings have not been resolved or if directed by the United States. Records may be retained and submitted in electronic form if allowed by Generally Accepted Government Accounting Principles.