

Notices

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This section of the FEDERAL REGISTER contains documents other than rules or proposed rules that are applicable to the public. Notices of hearings and investigations, committee meetings, agency decisions and rulings, delegations of authority, filing of petitions and applications and agency statements of organization and functions are examples of documents appearing in this section.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Housing Service

Notice of Intent To Review Online Homeownership Education Courses for Nationwide Use in the Single Family Housing Section 502 Direct Loan Program

AGENCY: Rural Housing Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: First-time homebuyers seeking financing under the Rural Housing Service (RHS or Agency) Single Family Housing Section 502 Direct loan program are required to successfully complete an approved homeownership education course prior to loan closing. While homeownership education providers are generally approved by the Agency at the state level, there are currently two nationally approved online education providers. Through this notice the Agency will consider approving other online education providers on a national level in order to expand the Agency applicants' options and access to approved education providers.

DATES: Online homeownership education providers interested in having their courses reviewed should submit a complete package to the Single Family Housing Direct Loan Division by August 25, 2017.

ADDRESSES: Submissions must be sent electronically to SFHDIRECTPROGRAM@wdc.usda.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Brooke Baumann, Branch Chief, at brooke.baumann@wdc.usda.gov or (202) 690-4250.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Approval will be subject to meeting course criteria, a recommendation by the Agency-selected panel of housing partners, and signoff by the Administrator. Approval will be given as a third preference format unless the

education provider is able to demonstrate and document how their online course along with a required supplemented service provides the same level of training and individualized attention as a first or second preference. 7 CFR 3550.11 outlines the order of preference given to homeownership education courses. First preference is given to classroom, one-on-one counseling, or interactive video conference. These formats are generally extensive and require a significant time and participation commitment from the Agency applicants. Second preference is given to interactive home-study or interactive telephone counseling of at least four hours duration. These formats may only be used if the formats under the first preference are not reasonably available. Third preference, which can only be used if all other formats are not reasonably available, is given to online counseling. 7 CFR 3550.11 also outlines the requirements an education provider and its course must meet in order to be approved for use by Agency applicants.

At a minimum, courses submitted for consideration must contain the following topics/content:

- Preparing for homeownership (evaluate readiness to go from rental to homeownership)
- Budgeting (pre- and post-purchase)
- Credit counseling
- Shopping for a home
- Lender differences (predatory lending)
- Obtaining a mortgage (mortgage process, different types of mortgages)
- Loan closing (closing process, documentation, closing costs)
- Post-occupancy counseling (delinquency and foreclosure prevention)
- Life as a homeowner (homeowner warranties, maintenance, and repairs)

Online homeownership education providers interested in having their courses reviewed must provide a complete package consisting of the course background, online login access to the course for the Agency-selected panel, a copy of the completion certification, price sheet, and contact information (name, phone number, and email address).

The Agency-selected panel will base their recommendation on the following considerations:

- The format of the course (*i.e.* classroom, one-on-one counseling, or

interactive video conference features that supplement and complement the online course; or, strictly online counseling)

- Certificate of completion
- Fee (should be nominal—approximately \$100 or less)
- Duration
- Topics covered
- System features (chat functionality, bookmarks, start/pause/play options, audio playback option, etc.)
- Readability/Comprehension (level of complexity in language used)
- User-friendliness
- Browser-friendliness
- Ability to use mobile devices (phone, tablet, etc.)
- Alternative languages offered (Spanish, etc.)
- Pre/Post assessment of knowledge
- Web site aesthetics
- Section 508 compliancy and reasonable accommodations procedures

A notice of education providers approved through this process will be issued via a memorandum to the Rural Development State Offices. The memorandum will list the format preference assigned to each provider. A copy of the memorandum will be simultaneously emailed to all education providers who applied through this notice.

Approvals are not subject to expiration. However, an approval may be revoked for justifiable cause.

Non-Discrimination Statement

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (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 responsible 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. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (1) *By mail:* U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC 20250-9410;
 - (2) *Fax:* (202) 690-7442; or
 - (3) *Email:* program.intake@usda.gov.
- USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Dated: July 18, 2017.

Richard A. Davis,

Acting Administrator, Rural Housing Service.

[FR Doc. 2017-15625 Filed 7-25-17; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Housing Service

Notice of Solicitation of Applications for Section 514 Farm Labor Housing Loans and Section 516 Farm Labor Housing Grants for Off-Farm Housing for Fiscal Year 2017

AGENCY: Rural Housing Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Rural Housing Service (RHS) announces the timeframe to submit pre-applications for Section 514 Farm Labor Housing (FLH) loans and Section 516 FLH grants for the construction of new off-farm FLH units and related facilities for domestic farm laborers and for the purchase and substantial rehabilitation of an existing non-FLH property. The intended purpose of these loans and grants is to increase the number of available housing units for domestic farm laborers. This Notice describes the method used to distribute funds, the application process, and submission requirements.

RHS will publish on its Web site, <http://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/farm-labor-housing-direct-loans-grants>, the amount of funding available in Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 based on current appropriations.

The Agency will assign additional points to pre-applications for projects based in or serving census tracts with poverty rates greater than or equal to 20 percent over the last 30 years. This emphasis will support Rural Development's mission of improving the quality of life for rural Americans and commitment to directing resources to those who most need them.

DATES: The deadline for receipt of all applications in response to this Notice is 5:00 p.m., local time to the appropriate Rural Development State Office on September 11, 2017. Rural Development will not consider any application that is received after the deadline unless the date and time is extended by another notice published in the **Federal Register**. Applicants intending to mail applications must provide sufficient time to permit delivery on or before the deadline. Acceptance by a post office or private mailer does not constitute delivery. Facsimile (FAX) and postage due applications will not be accepted.

ADDRESSES: Applicants wishing to submit an application in response to this Notice must contact the Rural Development State Office serving the State of the proposed off-FLH project in order to receive further information and copies of the application package. You may find the addresses and contact information for each State Office following this web link, <http://www.rd.usda.gov/contact-us/state-offices>. Rural Development will date and time stamp incoming applications to evidence timely receipt and, upon request, will provide the applicant with a written acknowledgment of receipt.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Mirna Reyes-Bible, Finance and Loan Analyst, Multi-Family Housing Preservation and Direct Loan Division, STOP 0781 (Room 1263-S), USDA Rural Development, 1400 Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC 20250-0781, telephone: (202) 720-1753 (this is not a toll free number.), or via email: mirna.reyesbible@wdc.usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Overview

Federal Agency: Rural Housing Service.

Funding Opportunity Title: NOSA for Section 514 Farm Labor Housing Loans and Section 516 Farm Labor Housing

Grants for Off-Farm Housing for Fiscal Year 2017.

Announcement Type: Solicitation of pre-applications from qualified applicants for FY 2017.

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Numbers (CFDA): 10.405 and 10.427.

Due Date for Applications: September 11, 2017.

A. Federal Award Description

Pre-applications will only be accepted through the date and time listed in this Notice. All awards are subject to availability of funding. Individual requests may not exceed \$3 million (total loan and grant). No State may receive more than 30 percent of available FLH funding available in FY 2017.

If there are insufficient applications from around the country to exhaust Sections 514 and 516 funds available, the Agency may then exceed the 30 percent cap per State. Section 516 off-farm FLH grants may not exceed 90 percent of the total development cost (TDC) of the housing as defined in 7 CFR 3560.11.

If leveraged funds are going to be used and are in the form of tax credits, the applicant must include in its pre-application written evidence that a tax credit application has been submitted and accepted by the Housing Finance Agency (HFA). All applications that will receive any leveraged funds must have firm commitments in place within 12 months of the issuance of a "Notice of Pre-application Review Action," Handbook Letter 106 (3560). Applicants without written evidence that a tax credit application has been submitted and accepted by the HFA must certify in writing they will apply for tax credits to the HFA and obtain a firm commitment within 12 months of the issuance of a "Notice of Pre-application Review Action."

Rental Assistance (RA) and operating assistance will be available for new construction in FY 2017. Operating assistance is explained at 7 CFR 3560.574 and may be used in lieu of tenant-specific RA in off-FLH projects that serve migrant farm workers as defined in 7 CFR 3560.11, that are financed under Section 514 or Section 516 (h) of the Housing Act of 1949, as amended (42 U.S.C. 1484 and 1486(h) respectively), and otherwise meet the requirements of 7 CFR 3560.574.

In order to maximize the use of our limited supply of FLH funds, if it is financially feasible we may contact eligible NOSA responses selected for an award in point score order starting with the higher scores, with proposals to