

RBS and RUS, USDA

§ 4279.29

FSA—Farm Service Agency
FMI—Forms Manual Insert
NAD—National Appeals Division
OGC—Office of the General Counsel
RBS—Rural Business-Cooperative Service
RHS—Rural Housing Service
RUS—Rural Utilities Service
SBA—Small Business Administration
USDA—United States Department of Agriculture

§§ 4279.3–4279.14 [Reserved]

§ 4279.15 Exception authority.

The Administrator may, in individual cases, grant an exception to any requirement or provision of this subpart which is not inconsistent with any applicable law provided, the Administrator determines that application of the requirement or provision would adversely affect USDA's interest.

§ 4279.16 Appeals.

Only the borrower, lender, or holder can appeal an Agency decision made under this subpart. In cases where the Agency has denied or reduced the amount of final loss payment to the lender, the adverse decision may be appealed by the lender only. An adverse decision that only impacts the holder may be appealed by the holder only. A decision by a lender adverse to the interest of the borrower is not a decision by the Agency, whether or not concurred in by the Agency. Appeals will be handled in accordance with 7 CFR, part 11. Any party adversely affected by an Agency decision under this subpart may request a determination of appealability from the Director, National Appeals Division, USDA, within 30 days of the adverse decision.

§§ 4279.17–4279.28 [Reserved]

§ 4279.29 Eligible lenders.

(a) *Traditional lenders.* An eligible lender is any Federal or State chartered bank, Farm Credit Bank, other Farm Credit System institution with direct lending authority, Bank for Cooperatives, Savings and Loan Association, or mortgage company that is part of a bank-holding company. These entities must be subject to credit examination and supervision by either an agency of the United States or a State. Eligible lenders may also include credit unions provided, they are subject to

credit examination and supervision by either the National Credit Union Administration or a State agency, and insurance companies provided they are regulated by a State or National insurance regulatory agency. Eligible lenders include the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation.

(b) *Other lenders.* Rural Utilities Service borrowers and other lenders not meeting the criteria of paragraph (a) of this section may be considered by the Agency for eligibility to become a guaranteed lender provided, the Agency determines that they have the legal authority to operate a lending program and sufficient lending expertise and financial strength to operate a successful lending program.

(1) Such a lender must:

(i) Have a record of successfully making at least three commercial loans annually for at least the most recent 3 years, with delinquent loans not exceeding 10 percent of loans outstanding and historic losses not exceeding 10 percent of dollars loaned, or when the proposed lender can demonstrate that it has personnel with equivalent previous experience and where the commercial loan portfolio was of a similar quantity and quality; and

(ii) Have tangible balance sheet equity of at least seven percent of tangible assets and sufficient funds available to disburse the guaranteed loans it proposes to approve within the first 6 months of being approved as a guaranteed lender.

(2) A lender not eligible under paragraph (a) of this section that wishes consideration to become a guaranteed lender must submit a request in writing to the State Office for the State where the lender's lending and servicing activity takes place. The National Office will notify the prospective lender, through the State Director, whether the lender's request for eligibility is approved or rejected. If rejected, the reasons for the rejection will be indicated to the prospective lender in writing. The lender's written request must include:

(i) Evidence showing that the lender has the necessary capital and resources to successfully meet its responsibilities.

(ii) Copy of any license, charter, or other evidence of authority to engage in the proposed loanmaking and servicing activities. If licensing by the State is not required, an attorney's opinion to this effect must be submitted.

(iii) Information on lending experience, including length of time in the lending business; range and volume of lending and servicing activity; status of loan portfolio including delinquency rate, loss rate as a percentage of loan amounts, and other measures of success; experience of management and loan officers; audited financial statements not more than 1 year old; sources of funds for the proposed loans; office location and proposed lending area; and proposed rates and fees, including loan origination, loan preparation, and servicing fees. Such fees must not be greater than those charged by similarly located commercial lenders in the ordinary course of business.

(iv) An estimate of the number and size of guaranteed loan applications the lender will develop.

(c) *Expertise.* Loan guarantees will only be approved for lenders with adequate experience and expertise to make, secure, service, and collect B&I loans.

§ 4279.30 Lenders' functions and responsibilities.

(a) *General.* (1) Lenders have the primary responsibility for the successful delivery of the B&I loan program. All lenders obtaining or requesting a B&I loan guarantee are responsible for:

(i) Processing applications for guaranteed loans,

(ii) Developing and maintaining adequately documented loan files,

(iii) Recommending only loan proposals that are eligible and financially feasible,

(iv) Obtaining valid evidence of debt and collateral in accordance with sound lending practices,

(v) Supervising construction

(vi) Distribution of loan funds,

(vii) Servicing guaranteed loans in a prudent manner, including liquidation if necessary,

(viii) Following Agency regulations, and

(ix) Obtaining Agency approvals or concurrence as required.

(2) This subpart, along with subpart B of this part and subpart B of part 4287 of this chapter, contain the regulations for this program, including the lenders' responsibilities.

(b) *Credit evaluation.* This is a key function of all lenders during the loan processing phase. The lender must analyze all credit factors associated with each proposed loan and apply its professional judgment to determine that the credit factors, considered in combination, ensure loan repayment. The lender must have an adequate underwriting process to ensure that loans are reviewed by other than the originating officer. There must be good credit documentation procedures.

(c) *Environmental responsibilities.* Lenders have a responsibility to become familiar with Federal environmental requirements; to consider, in consultation with the prospective borrower, the potential environmental impacts of their proposals at the earliest planning stages; and to develop proposals that minimize the potential to adversely impact the environment. Lenders must alert the Agency to any controversial environmental issues related to a proposed project or items that may require extensive environmental review. Lenders must help the borrower prepare Form FmHA 1940-20, "Request for Environmental Information" (when required by subpart G of part 1940 of this title); assist in the collection of additional data when the Agency needs such data to complete its environmental review of the proposal; and assist in the resolution of environmental problems.

(d) *Loan closing.* The lender will conduct loan closings.

§§ 4279.31-4279.42 [Reserved]

§ 4279.43 Certified Lender Program.

(a) *General.* This section provides policies and procedures for the Certified Lender Program (CLP) for loans guaranteed under this part. The objectives are to expedite loan approval, making, and servicing.

(b) *CLP eligibility criteria.* The lender must meet established eligibility criteria as follows: