

# **MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

**Between the  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
and the  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Administration for Children and Families  
Office of Refugee Resettlement  
and  
Office of Community Services**

## **I. Purpose**

The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is to establish a general working agreement between the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)-more specifically, two offices within the Administration on Children and Families (ACF), namely, the initiating agency, Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) and the collaborating agency, Office of Community Services (OCS)-to coordinate policies and activities aimed at improving the economic conditions of refugees and other low-income individuals engaged in farming and rural entrepreneurship throughout the United States.

## **II. Background**

USDA serves rural areas throughout the United States. ORR has become increasingly aware of the large number of refugees resettled in this country who are engaged in farming and rural enterprise. These groups often come from rural settings and often want to settle in rural and agricultural communities in the U.S.

Preliminary research has identified over 1 1,000 refugees involved in farming and rural enterprise. If these refugees are to maximize their production and their contributions to rural America and support themselves with farming and rural endeavors, they need training and technical assistance. They need to learn about technology and practices in farming, marketing, crop insurance, good business practices, and the many other facets of agricultural life.

OCS supports a network of over 3,000 community action agencies (CAAs) and community development corporations (CDCs) that address the economic and social needs of low-income individuals in both urban and rural areas. OCS is committed to efforts to increase the economic well-being of low-income individuals in rural areas. It is aware of the increasing activity in the area of small farms growing specialty crops and of the ethnic diversity of the agricultural producers. It is also aware of the importance of helping to assure the survival of rural businesses that are crucial to maintaining healthy, viable rural communities.

### **III. Agreement**

USDA and DHHS (*ACF-ORR/OCS*) agree to work together to improve the coordination of programs and services to refugee and low-income individuals throughout the U.S. who are engaged in farming and rural enterprise and to explore private-public partnerships to achieve these goals. This may include, to the extent permitted by law:

- A. Identification and Needs Assessment: Working jointly to identify the extent of refugee and other low-income individual involvement in farming and rural entrepreneurship, as well as the specific kinds of activities in which they are involved and what training and technical assistance would contribute the most to promoting their self-sufficiency.
- B. Working together to develop and implement pilot projects intended to evaluate whether the enhanced coordination of programs and services between USDA and DHHS (*ACF ORR/OCS*) can materially improve the economic well-being of refugees and other low-income individuals engaged in farming and rural entrepreneurship as well as increase the availability of produce to the American consumer. These pilot projects may include components that will be supported by the private sector, so that they become creative public-private partnerships executed pursuant to separate agreements.
- C. Developing recommendations for coordinating the delivery of USDA and DHHS (*ACFORR/OCS*) programs and services to refugees and other low-income individuals engaged in farming and rural entrepreneurship. This coordination could include recommendations for the marketing of USDA and DHHS (*ACF-ORR/OCS*) programs and services, the training of USDA and DHHS (*ACF-ORR/OCS*) staff, and other strategies to make it easier for communities to access USDA and DHHS (*ACF-ORR/OCS*) programs and services and make those programs and services more effective.
- D. Implementing those recommendations for coordinating the delivery of programs and services to refugees and other low-income individuals engaged in farming and rural entrepreneurship that each agency determines to be practicable and desirable, in light of budgetary and other limitations.
- E. Exchanging general information on economic conditions of refugees and low-income individuals living in rural America, the availability and effectiveness of programs to assist them, and other information relevant to the subject matter of this MOU.
- F. Working together on research projects involving refugees and low-income individuals engaged in farming and rural entrepreneurship, as well as on conferences, meetings, and other activities related to this subject area.

G. Such other activities as the Parties determine are appropriate to advance the purposes of this MOU.

#### **IV. Definition**

The term Refugee as used in this agreement includes refugees, asylees, Cuban and Haitian entrants, certain Americans from Vietnam (including some citizens), and victims of a severe form of trafficking. Although some of these individuals become eligible for legal permanent residence one year after their arrival in the U.S., they continue to meet the definition of "refugee" for purpose of social service benefits until they become U.S. citizens. Low-income individuals refer to persons whose family incomes are at or below 200 percent of the poverty guidelines established by DHHS.

#### **V. Authority**

This Memorandum of Understanding is authorized by Section **411** (b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) (8 USC Section I 52 I (b)) and sections 681(a) and 675(c)(1) of the Community Services Block Grant Act (CSBG) (42 USC Sections 991O(a) and 9904(c)(I)).

#### **VI. Limitations**

This MOU represents a non-binding expression of intent for USDA and DHHS/ACF/ORR and OCS to work together to help refugees and other low-income individuals engaged in farming and rural entrepreneurship. Nothing in this MOU shall be construed as a legally binding commitment of the Parties hereto either individually or collectively. This MOU does not create any rights, either on the part of any Party hereto or any third party. Any provision of this MOU that conflicts with federal law will be null and void.

USDA and DHHS (ACF-ORR/OCS) and their respective agencies and offices will handle their own activities and utilize their own resources, including the expenditure of their own funds, in pursuing these objectives. Each Party will carry out its separate activities in a coordinated and mutually beneficial manner

#### **VII. Effective Date**

This Memorandum will become effective upon signatures of the Secretary of USDA and the Secretary of DHHS and shall remain in effect for five years from the date of execution. Either of the parties may terminate this MOU upon 90 days written notice to the other Party. This MOU may be extended or modified at any time upon mutual written consent of the Parties.

Within 30 days of the execution of this MOU, each Party shall designate a contact person to coordinate that Party's activities under this MOU.

EXECUTED this 16 day of November 2004 by:

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Ann M. Veneman  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture

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Tommy G. Thompson  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health  
and Human Services