



NEWS RELEASE

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USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT TO SEEK INPUT ON MICROENTREPRENEUR ASSISTANCE AND EXPANDED JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

January meeting to address provisions of the 2008 Farm Bill

WASHINGTON, Jan. 13, 2009 – Acting Agriculture Under Secretary for Rural Development Douglas L. Faulkner today announced that the Agency plans to hold a public meeting later this month on ways to expand rural business opportunities.

“This meeting will enable members of the public, rural business owners and stakeholders to share their ideas about the best ways to meet the job needs of rural Americans,” Faulkner said.

The meeting will focus on a newly created microentrepreneur assistance program and an initiative to increase business and employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Both initiatives are included in the provisions of the 2008 Farm Bill. The Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program will provide loans and grants to microenterprises that are unable to obtain other financial assistance. Separately, technical assistance and educational resource grants will be provided to help rural small businesses recruit and employ individuals with disabilities and expand entrepreneurship opportunities for them in rural areas.

The public meeting will be held January 26th from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. in room 107-A of the Whitten Building, U. S. Department of Agriculture, 12th and Jefferson Drive S.W., Washington, D.C. Registration will start at 12:30 p.m. Pre-registration is strongly encouraged.

Written comments on the referenced Sections of Title VI will be accepted up to 15 days following the date of the public meeting. Individuals who wish to speak or make a presentation at the meeting should contact Lori Washington at: USDA Rural Development, Room 6866 South Building, Mail STOP 3225, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20250-3225: (202) 720-9815; e-mail to: lori.washington@wdc.usda.gov Further information on the meeting is available in the Federal Register: <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2009/E9-1014.htm>.

Committed to the future of rural communities.

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USDA Rural Development's mission is to increase economic opportunity and improve the quality of life for rural residents. Rural Development has invested more than \$111 billion since 2001 for equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure. More than 2 million jobs have been created or saved through these investments. Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA Rural Development's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>.

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