



Civic and Community Center Financing Fund Program

Annually, the Department of Economic Development accepts applications from Nebraska municipalities for grants to support the development of civic, community, and recreation centers under the Civic and Community Center Financing Fund (CCCCF) program.

The fund may be used for new construction of or the renovation and/or expansion to existing civic, community, and recreation centers, which may include the conversion, rehabilitation, or reuse of historic buildings. The fund may also be used for preliminary planning related to the development or rehabilitation of eligible projects. The definitions of eligible projects are:

- Civic Center- a facility that is primarily used to host conventions, meetings, and cultural events and/or a library. A civic center therefore includes space for conventions, meetings, and cultural events and/or a library.
- Community Center- the traditional center of a community, typically comprised of a cohesive core of residential, civic, religious, and commercial buildings, arranged around a main street and intersecting streets. A community center is therefore an area of multiple buildings with both internal and external elements. A civic center may or may not be in a community center.
- Recreation Center- a facility used for athletics, fitness, sport activities, or recreation that is owned by a municipality and is available for use by the general public with or without charge. A recreation center does not include any facility that requires a person to purchase a membership to utilize such facility.
- Planning- engineering and technical studies directly related to eligible projects.

The program operates on a two-part application process on an annual cycle. A municipality seeking a grant will submit a letter of intent to apply signed by the applicant municipality's chief elected official and received by DED on or before January 15 of the current program year. To be considered for CCCFF assistance, applicants must meet eligibility requirements, provide a signed letter of intent to apply, and submit a completed application online using <https://neded.fluidreview.com>. Applicants may submit their application at any time from January 15 to February 15.

To see if your project is eligible to apply, please review all of the program fund guidelines, <https://opportunity.nebraska.gov/program/civic-and-community-center-financing-fund-cccff/> or contact the program coordinator, Jenny Mason, with DED for more information: 402-471-6280 or jenny.mason@nebraska.gov



USDA Offers Grants to Help Agricultural Producers and Small Rural Businesses

LINCOLN, Nebraska, October 02, 2017 — Assistant to the Secretary for Rural Development Anne Hazlett has announced that USDA is accepting applications for grants to help farmers, ranchers and producer-based businesses nationwide develop new product lines.

The funding is being provided through the Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) program. VAPG grants can be used to develop new products from raw agricultural products or promote new markets for established products. Veterans,

socially-disadvantaged groups, beginning farmers and ranchers, operators of small- and medium-sized family farms and ranches, and farmer and rancher cooperatives are given special priority.

The VAPG program contributes to business creation in rural areas, while also enhancing food choices for consumers. Independent agricultural producers, farmer or rancher cooperatives, and producer controlled entities are eligible.

VAPG grants may be used for planning activities or working capital expenses related to producing or marketing a value-added product.

Since the inception of the program, Nebraska's USDA Rural Development has awarded 121 Value-Added Producer Grants totaling \$13.2 million.

For more information on the VAPG program in Nebraska, please contact Business Program Specialist Brant Richardson, brant.richardson@ne.usda.gov or (402) 437-5568.

For additional information on how to apply for these grants, see page 40987 of the August 29 Federal Register. The deadline to submit paper applications is January 31, 2018. Electronic applications submitted through grants.gov are due January 24, 2018. For additional information and assistance, contact the USDA Rural Development Office serving your county.

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/value-added-producer-grants>

Developing a Local Online Search Presence

With foot traffic being a crucial aspect to the success of local businesses, small businesses need to have a strong online presence to attract potential clients to their store. When visitors or locals are searching for things to do in a new place, they rely on search engines like Google and customer reviews.

Without putting additional funding into paid advertising, it is important to adhere your website towards the focal points of search engines. To stand out this requires a crisp mobile version of your website along with simple navigation and accuracy of information made available. All of these things combine to make your business more attractive to search engines, which leads to an increase in search results across the board. Once you have increased your online presence, customer reviews become a huge factor in the likelihood of a new customer walking through your door. Developing a strategy to respond to online reviews can provide the necessary assistance to curb negative reviews as well as retain customer satisfaction.

At the end of the day, the main goal is to increase your companies online presence in order to increase your customer circulation and sales volume. For more information,

<https://www.score.org/blog/3-reasons-you-may-not-show-up-local-searches-online>



#whatshappeningWCNDD

What are you doing this year? Send us your pictures to mburke@west-central-nebraska.com with the hashtag #whatshappeningWCNDD and we might feature them in our newsletter. Meanwhile, see if you can guess where this is ...

RFI Accepting Applications for Student Serviship Program

LINCOLN, NEB – September 20, 2017 – Calling all Nebraska communities! The Rural Futures Institute (RFI) at the University of Nebraska (NU) is accepting community applications for 2018 RFI Student Serviship, a program that places high-capacity NU students throughout the state to work, live and serve. The application deadline is Nov. 20, 2017.

A hybrid between service learning and traditional internships, “serviceships” provide communities with tangible results on important self-defined projects while giving students resume-building work and insight into the career and life opportunities in rural places.

“This program is designed to help motivated communities move critical strategies and projects forward,” said RFI Founding Executive Director Chuck Schroeder. “We select and train some of the University’s most ambitious student leaders—the biggest thinkers, highest achievers and most enthusiastic doers—so rural communities can reach their goals. And, with stellar students and partners, we have accomplished meaningful results.”

Since 2013, 38 NU students have worked and served in 19 Nebraska communities for a total estimated economic impact of \$331,590. They have also logged 581 volunteer hours at an estimated impact of \$13,688.

The students, who are recruited by RFI from a variety of disciplines at all four NU campuses, complete a rigorous one-week training course with NU faculty and community leaders, preparing them to serve in many roles with entities throughout a community.

Through the application process, rural community host teams articulate their community’s vision and purpose while scoping and defining projects for intern pairs to work on and lead during the 10-week summer internship. Host teams, which include subject-matter experts and leadership mentors, must also identify funding for the students’ stipends, housing, office space and materials. Communities are supported throughout the process by RFI and Nebraska Community Foundation.

“All communities should take advantage of the opportunity,” said 2017 community host team member Madonna Mogul, Executive Director of the York Chamber of Commerce. “I think it’s important as communities and business leaders that we work with these young men and women who will eventually be our leaders and our bosses. This program is a way we can work toward retaining young leaders in our state.”

Details and application are available at <http://ruralfutures.nebraska.edu/serviceship/>

Important Deadlines:

Rural Futures Community Application	November 15, 2017
2018 Nebraska Passport Application	December 2017
Civic and Community Center Financing Letter of Intent	January 15, 2018
USDA VAPG Grant Application	January 24, 2018
Waste Reduction and Recycling Application	February 1, 2018
Civic and Community Center Financing Application	February 15, 2018
CDBG Water & Waste Water	Open Cycle