

DRAFT ANNOUNCEMENT TO BE USED FOR
DISTRIBUTION THROUGH THE LIST SERVE AND POSTING ON WEBSITE

As many of you know, President Bush established the Faith-Based and Community Initiative to transform the relationship between Government and faith-based and community organizations. One of the key objectives of the Initiative is to ensure that these groups are allowed to compete on a level playing field for Federal dollars. As we continue to educate faith-based and community organizations on the equal treatment principles that should be inherent in the application review process, we would like to measure our progress to date and learn how we can improve and expand upon our current efforts.

To this end, USDA's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives and Rural Development (RD) are collaborating on a pilot project in an effort to determine how well the Equal Treatment Rule is being understood and implemented during the awards process. In the coming days, RD will mail a survey to those nonprofit organizations (faith-based and secular) that applied for assistance during FY 2004 - FY 2006 under any of the 14 RD programs identified to be especially relevant to the social service work of faith-based and community organizations.

The purpose of the survey is to measure the organizations' understanding of equal treatment principles as they relate to the application process. Please know that this survey is voluntary and we would greatly appreciate each organization's input as we continue to work to make the application process more open, transparent, and accessible by all organizations.

We encourage those non-profit organizations that applied to Rural Development for funding during FY 2004 - FY 2006 to watch for this survey to arrive in the mail during the week of (____). Please take a few minutes to complete and return the survey. Your responses will remain anonymous.

In the meantime, if you have any questions regarding the survey, please contact Rhonda Brown, Rural Development Faith-Based and Community Initiatives Coordinator, by phone (202) 692-0298 or by e-mail at <rhonda.brown@wdc.usda.gov>.