

SUPPORTING STATEMENT
USDA Agriculture Innovation Center Grant Program
0570-0045

A. Justification

1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary.

The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (Pub. L. 107-171, signed May 13, 2002) authorized the Secretary of the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to award grant funds for agriculture innovation centers, a demonstration program under which agricultural producers are to be provided with technical and business development assistance enabling them to establish businesses producing and marketing value-added products. This program is administered by Cooperative Programs within USDA's Rural Development. Grants were awarded, on a competitive basis, in fiscal year 2003 only. The authorization for this program expired on September 30, 2004; however, centers are required to provide progress reports for the duration of the grant agreement to monitor compliance and measure the success of the program. The 2008 Farm Bill has reauthorized the program through 2012. The nature of the program (developing statewide centers) precludes the agency from expecting a significant increase in the number of new or returning applicants.

2. Indicate how, by whom, and for what purposes the information is to be used. Except for a new collection, indicate the actual use the Agency has made of the information received from the current collection.

Information is collected from the ten agriculture innovation centers funded during the 2003 grant cycle. Centers may be non-profit corporations, for-profit corporations, institutions of higher learning and consortia of the aforementioned entities.

FORMS USED IN THIS COLLECTION ARE APPROVED UNDER OTHER OMB NUMBERS:

Form SF-269, "Financial Status Report" (0348-0039), to be completed on a quarterly basis. This form is used to confirm that funds are being spent in conformity with the budget and work plan.

Form SF-270, "Request for Advance or Reimbursement" (0348-0004). This form is used to request advances of funds obligated under the grant agreement.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:

Performance Reports (10 grantees previous awarded, 2 reports per year per respondent, 4 hours per report, 80 total man-hours)

USDA uses performance reports to confirm that progress is being made toward achieving the stated goals of the project.

Final Report (10 grantees previously awarded, 1 report per respondent at the completion of the grant agreement, 3 hours per response, 30 total man-hours)

RECORDKEEPING REQUIREMENTS:

USDA regulations required that financial records, supporting documents, statistical records and all other records pertinent to the award will be retained for a period of at least three years after the agreement closing. Record must be retained beyond 3 years if audit findings have not been resolved.

3. Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology; e.g., permitting electronic submission of responses, and the basis for the decision for adopting this means of collection.

Grantees are encouraged, but not required, to submit semi-annual progress reports electronically as some applicants may not have the technological expertise for electronic submissions. The agency anticipates 60 percent of responses to be submitted electronically.

4. Describe efforts to avoid duplication. Show specifically why any similar information already available cannot be used or modified for use for the purposes described in Item 2 above.

Rural Development makes every effort to administer programs using standard forms where possible; however, progress reports are unique to the projects administered under each grant. Rural Development has several grant programs that are similarly administered. If there is simultaneous participation in more than one program, Rural Development would make every effort to accommodate the requests within the same set of applications and processing forms.

5. If the collection of information impacts small businesses or other small entities (item 5 of OMB Form 83-I), describe any methods used to minimize burden.

The information collected is in a format that minimizes the paperwork requirements of small businesses. The information collected is the minimum necessary to monitor grantee performance.

6. Describe the consequences to Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or conducted less frequently, as well as any technical or legal obstacles to reducing burden.

The reporting burden is consistent with the minimum information necessary to monitor recipient performance. Without collecting the listed information, USDA cannot be assured that the applicants meet the statutory requirements for eligibility and that the Centers will have the capacity to provide the intended services.

7. Explain any special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted in a manner:

- a. Requiring respondents to report information more than quarterly. There are no information requirements that require specific reporting on more than a quarterly basis.

- b. Requiring written responses in less than 30 days. There are no information requirements that require specific reporting in less than 30 days.
- c. Requiring more than an original and two copies. There are no information requirements that require more than an original and two copies.
- d. Requiring respondents to retain records for more than 3 years. There are no such requirements, with the exception that records will be retained beyond 3 years if audit findings have not been resolved.
- e. Not utilizing statistical sampling. There are no such requirements.
- f. Requiring use of statistical sampling which has not been reviewed and approved by OMB. There are no such requirements.
- g. Requiring a pledge of confidentiality. There are no such requirements.
- h. Requiring submission of proprietary trade secrets. There are no such requirements.

8. Describe efforts to consult with persons outside the Agency to obtain their views on the availability of data, frequency of collection, the clarity of instructions, and recordkeeping, disclosure, reporting format (if any), and on data elements to be recorded, disclosed, or reported.

As required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, a notice was published on January 7, 2009, [74 FR 671]. No comments were received.

Rural Development consulted with the National Cooperative Business Association in Washington, D.C. and the individual grantees.

9. Explain any decision to provide any payment or gift to respondents, other than remuneration of contractors or grantees.

There are no payments or gifts to respondents.

10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for the assurance in statute, regulation, or Agency policy.

It is not Rural Development's policy to provide copies of submitted applications to others. Specific information that would be deemed confidential, such as business financial information, is not provided outside of the Agency. Certain portions of the application and nature of the project may be requested under the Freedom of Information Act, but the released material would be edited to maintain confidentiality.

11. Provide additional justification for any question of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior or attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private.

There will be no collection of any information that would be considered sensitive in nature or commonly considered private.

12. Provide estimates of the hour burden of the collection of information:

We estimate the burden to comply with the ongoing reporting requirements for each grantee to be 8 hours per year at a cost of \$2,800.

13. Provide an estimate of the total annual cost to respondents or recordkeepers resulting from the collection of information:

There are no capital or startup costs.

14. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal Government:

The estimated annualized cost to the Federal Government is \$21,800 (please see attached spreadsheet). A total of 600 hours is estimated, across different wage classes, for the post award monitoring.

15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments reported in items 13 or 14 of the OMB Form 83-I.

With the re-authorization of the program, respondent estimates continue to reflect only the ongoing reporting requirements for the existing 10 grantees. Wage rates were adjusted to reflect current pay scales. In the previous submission, the hours for the standard forms were inadvertently omitted thereby increasing the burden hours from 110 to 140.

Estimates for the Federal government also reflect the expiration of the program authorization for application submission and reflect only the ongoing monitoring of the existing 10 grantees. Wage rates were calculated based upon a GS 13-5 employee at \$45.00 per hour for monitoring and a GS 7-1 employee at \$19.00 per hour for administrative functions.

16. For collection of information whose results will be published, outline plans for tabulation and publication.

USDA has not plans for publication.

17. If seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons that display would be inappropriate.

Not applicable.

18. Explain each exception to the certification statement identified in item 19 on OMB 83-I.

There are no exceptions requested.

19. How is this information collection related to the Service Center Initiative (SCI)? Will the information collection be part of the one stop shopping center.

This information collection is not related to the Service Center Initiative as it is administered through the nation headquarters office.