



United States Department of Agriculture

June 30, 2021

TO: Austin Mudd
Senior Desk Officer
Office of Management and Budget (OMB)

THROUGH: Ruth Brown
USDA Information Collection Officer

FROM: MaryPat Daskal
Chief, Branch 1, Regulations Management Division
Innovation Center, Rural Development, USDA

SUBJECT: Request for Emergency Approval of a New Information Collection Request
for Notice of Funds Availability for the American Rescue Plan Act
Emergency Rural Health Care Grant Program

The Rural Housing Service (RHS), an agency of the Rural Development (RD) Mission Area (Agencies) within the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), is seeking emergency review and approval of a new information collection for the Notice of Funds Availability (NOFA) for the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Emergency Rural Health Care (ERHC) Grant Program. The NOFA is designated by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) as Economically Significant and Major because it will result in an annual effect on the economy of \$100,000,000 or more. RHS anticipates that the NOFA will be published in the Federal Register on or before August 6, 2021 in order to meet the statutory deadline of 150 days to establish the emergency program.

On March 11, 2021, the President signed the American Rescue Plan Act, 2021 (ARPA) which appropriated \$500 million in grant funding for the establishment of an emergency pilot program to assist eligible Communities Facilities (CF) applicants to broaden access to COVID-19 vaccines, health care services, and food assistance through food banks and food distribution facilities, and engage in projects supporting the long-term sustainability of health care in eligible rural communities. This program is named the Emergency Rural Health Care (ERHC) Grant Program.

The Congress, Administration, and USDA have indicated that the implementation of this program is a top priority. Approval of the emergency request for this new information collection is important because ERHC Grant Program will not be able to be implemented, as the use of normal clearance procedures is likely to prevent the collection of information from applicants which, in turn, will have negative consequences on the intended recipients, as well as be in statutory violation of Section 1002 of the ARPA. Therefore, USDA is requesting that OMB complete their review and approval of this new collection package on or before July 16, 2021.

The 60-day notice for comments is included in the NOFA, and comments on the ERCH Grant program information collection package is requested in order to submit the regular request to obtain a 3-year approval from OMB after receiving the 6-month OMB emergency approval. Due to the need to consider comments received and then issue another notice for the Federal Register for an additional thirty days of comment, The RHS would not be able to complete the information collection process. Please note that after the 60-day comment period closes, RHS will submit the regular collection package for a 3-year approval addressing any comments received.

In compliance with OMB regulations (5 CFR Part 1320), which implements the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13), the information collection and recordkeeping requirements that may be imposed by this section are submitted to OMB for emergency review and approval. Attached are the supporting statement and spreadsheet for the ERCH Grant Program.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Michele Brooks, Director, Regulations Management Division, Innovation Center, Rural Development by telephone at (202) 690-1078 or by email at Michele.Brooks@usda.gov. or MaryPat Daskal, Chief, Branch 1, Regulations Management Division, Innovation Center, Rural Development by telephone at (202) 720-7853.

Thank you in advance for your quick review and response.

Attachment