



United States Department of Agriculture

January 19, 2022

**TO:** Danielle Jones  
Senior Desk Officer  
Office of Management and Budget (OMB)

**THROUGH:** Levi Harrell  
USDA Information Collection Officer

**FROM:** Michele Brooks  
Director, Regulations Management Division  
Innovation Center, Rural Development, USDA

**SUBJECT:** Request for Emergency Approval of a New Information Collection Request  
for Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Rural Energy Pilot Program (REPP)

The Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBCS), 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 Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for the Rural Energy Pilot Program. The Agency is expecting to publish the NOFO, which includes the 60-day notice, in the *Federal Register* on January 19, 2022.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (Pub. L. 116–260) appropriated \$10 million to remain available until expended for the Secretary of Agriculture to carry out a pilot program to provide financial assistance for rural communities to further develop renewable energy. In compliance with the requirements of 5 CFR § 1320.13, this request for emergency approval is essential for RBCS to fulfill its responsibility to administer the Rural Energy Pilot Program. It will support one of Rural Development’s key priorities to reduce climate pollution and increase resilience to the impact of climate change through economic support to rural communities

The Rural Business-Cooperative Service (Agency) will announce via a Notice of Funding Opportunity the availability of up to \$10 million in competitive grants awarded to Rural Energy Community Partnerships to further develop renewable energy to help meet our nation’s energy needs and combat climate change while prioritizing environmental justice, racial equity, and economic opportunity.

Cost-share grants of up to 80 percent of total eligible project costs but not more than \$2 million will be made available to assist eligible entities with planning, installing, equipping, and maintaining community scale distributed/renewable energy technologies/systems/resources.

Targeted Assistance Priority will be afforded to the following applicant entities as defined in the REPP NOFA:

- Distressed Rural Communities;
- Distressed Energy Communities;
- Communities with High Energy Burdens;
- Centers for Disease Control - Socially Vulnerable Communities;
- Qualified Opportunity Zone Communities; and
- (If not already included above) Rural Communities enduring Racial Inequity and/or Environmental Injustice, e.g. “EJ 40 Communities.”

Consideration for Alternative Renewable Energy Technologies is also afforded to communities that plan/execute/deploy renewable energy generation technologies other than solar photovoltaic of at least 40 percent of total generation capacity; as measured by megawatts of alternative generation capacity / megawatts of total generation capacity.

USDA is requesting approval of this new collection package on January 19, 2022. Failure to collect proper information from borrowers will hinder the implementation of the program as well as the selection of recipients, and result in improper determinations of assistance as well as encumber customer service.

The 60-day notice for comments is included in the NOFO, and comments on the Rural Energy Pilot 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, RBCS would not be able to complete the information collection process without the emergency clearance. Please note that after the 60-day comment period closes, RBCS 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 regulation.

In summary, the expeditious implementation of this program is a priority for the Administration. 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](mailto:Michele.Brooks@usda.gov) or Lauren Cusick, Chief, Branch 2, Regulations Management Division, Innovation Center, Rural Development by telephone at (202) 720-1414 or email at [Lauren.Cusick@usda.gov](mailto:Lauren.Cusick@usda.gov).

Thank you in advance for your quick review and response to us.