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Updates on Federal Action and Funding Opportunities Supporting Development in Rural Communities

Trump Announces $8 Billion in Farm Aid, but Funding and Timing Remain Uncertain

The Trump administration has announced $8 billion in direct assistance for farmers facing high fuel costs and continued economic pressures, with the rollout coming just two weeks before Election Day as Republicans seek to shore up support in rural America. The proposed payments follow ongoing concerns about tariffs, rising input costs, foreign beef imports, and disruptions to agricultural supply chains tied to the Iran war. But the aid faces significant hurdles: the USDA account intended to fund the payments lacks sufficient resources, meaning Congress will likely need to approve additional funding. Farmers may not know their payment amounts for several weeks, with disbursements potentially delayed until late November or early December.

The announcement also adds pressure to the year-end congressional agenda. Agriculture stakeholders have argued that at least $50 billion in direct assistance is necessary to offset the combined effects of tariffs, disasters and elevated input costs, while farm-state Republicans are pushing for at least $12 billion in additional aid through a separate year-end legislative package.

Forest Service Reorganization Continues Despite Court-Ordered Pause

The Forest Service appears to be pressing ahead with key elements of its reorganization despite an Oct. 13 federal court order temporarily blocking much of the USDA reorganization effort. The agency plans to clear out and renovate its Washington, D.C., headquarters, with the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service moving into the space and a reduced Forest Service presence expected to remain. While moves within the National Capital Region are permitted, the broader restructuring effort would move headquarters to Salt Lake City, reduce regional offices and replace them with state-level operations. The continued preparations raise questions about how the administration is interpreting the court order as federal employee unions challenge the plan, with significant implications for Forest Service staffing, coordination, and service delivery to rural communities and forest-dependent businesses nationwide.

Funding Opportunities

Affordable Rural Cooperative (ARC) Program

U.S. Department of Agriculture

USDA Rural Development provides loans and grants to electric cooperatives for nuclear energy and transmission efficiency projects serving rural areas. The program strengthens the resiliency, reliability, and affordability of rural electric systems. ***Application Deadline: Letters of Interest must be submitted by 11/20/2026***

Agriculture Innovation Center Program

U.S. Department of Agriculture

USDA Rural Development makes grants to Centers that provide Producer Services to Agricultural Producers seeking to develop and market Value-Added Agricultural Products. ***Application Deadline: 1/31/2027***

Electric Infrastructure Loan & Loan Guarantee Program

U.S. Department of Agriculture

USDA Rural Development provides insured loans and loan guarantees to nonprofit and cooperative associations, public bodies, and other utilities. Insured loans primarily finance the construction of electric distribution facilities in rural areas. ***Application deadline: Open***

Water & Waste Disposal Loan & Grant Program

U.S. Department of Agriculture

USDA Rural Development provides funding for clean and reliable drinking water systems, sanitary sewage and solid waste disposal, and storm water drainage to households and businesses in eligible rural areas. ***Application deadline: Open***

Community Facilities Direct Loan Program

U.S. Department of Agriculture

USDA Rural Development provides affordable funding to develop essential community facilities in rural areas. Projects include fire and rescue stations, town halls, health care clinics, and hospitals. ***Application deadline: Open***

Community Facilities Guaranteed Loan Program

U.S. Department of Agriculture

USDA Rural Development provides loan guarantees to eligible lenders to develop essential community facilities (CF) in rural areas. Examples of community facilities include health care facilities, buildings like town halls, and public safety facilities such as fire departments. ***Application deadline: Open***

Timber Production and Expansion Guaranteed Loan Program (TPEP)

U.S. Department of Agriculture

USDA Rural Development provides financial support to qualified lenders whose loan applicants want to establish, reopen, expand, or improve a sawmill or other wood processing facility that processes ecosystem restoration byproducts from USDA Forest Service National Forest System lands. ***Application deadline: Accepted until funds are expended.***

Rural Business Investment Program

U.S. Department of Agriculture

USDA Rural Development provides a Rural Business Investment Company (RBIC) license to newly formed developmental capital organizations to help meet the equity capital investment needs in rural communities. ***Application deadline: Rolling Basis***