



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington D.C. 20250

October 30, 2013

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Dear Eligible Community:

The purpose of this letter is to invite you to apply for a Promise Zone designation in 2013. We think this is an exciting opportunity to deepen the revitalization efforts in your community. The Promise Zone designation can be made for any area that meets the Qualifying Criteria in the *Rural/Tribal Promise Zone Application Guide*. This letter and the enclosed documents provide additional information on the Promise Zone selection process and instructions on how to submit an application.

Enclosed information includes:

- Final *Rural/Tribal Promise Zone Application Guide* and *Abstract Form* for rural and tribal applicants which specifies required and optional information to be submitted, selection criteria, and points assigned to each criterion.
- *Frequently Asked Questions* document, continuously updated in response to inquiries.
- *List of Communities Eligible* to apply in 2013.

Additional information on the Promise Zone initiative, as well as copies of the Application Guides for all applicant categories (rural, tribal, or urban), and other application materials including a mapping tool can be found at www.hud.gov/promisezones.

How Promise Zones will be designated in 2013

Applications for Promise Zone designations will be reviewed by representatives from several participating federal agencies, including the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Department of Education, the Department of Justice, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Department of Agriculture. Reviewers will first verify that the application is submitted for a community eligible for selection in the 2013 competition, and that the proposed Promise Zone and lead applicant meets the qualifying criteria for the 2013 selection process. After verifying the application is eligible and the proposed Promise Zone would qualify, the reviewers will score the proposals according to the points assigned to selection criteria shown in the *Application Guide* for the appropriate Promise Zone category (tribal, rural, or urban).

In addition to the application materials, to the extent permitted, reviewers may consider public information available from participating agency records, the name check review, public sources such as newspapers, Inspector General or Government Accountability Office reports or findings, or hotline or other complaints that have proven to have merit.

Applications will be scored according to the selection criteria and points set forth in the final *Application Guide* for the appropriate category of Promise Zone (tribal, rural, or urban). The final *Rural/Tribal Promise Zone Application Guide* is posted to the initiative web page at www.hud.gov/promisezones, along with answers to questions posed by applicants and other interested members of the public.

In order to be selected, an application must score a total of 75 points or more.

Once scored, applications will be ranked competitively within each of the three Promise Zone categories. In other words, tribal applications will be ranked against other tribal applications, rural applications will be ranked against other rural applications, and urban applications will be ranked against other urban applications. For the 2013 round it is the intention of the agencies to select one rural, one tribal, and three urban Promise Zones. If sufficient applications meeting the 75-point scoring threshold are not available in each category, more designations may be made in one or more categories than the intended allocation. In total, up to five applicants will be selected.

The Promise Zone initiative will provide communities and the federal government with the opportunity to accelerate and demonstrate the impact of coordinated federal investment in communities where stakeholders have come together with a focus on results. The agencies seek to establish a diverse sample of quality designations in the initiative's first round, in order to inform the development of the initiative's programmatic elements so that they are most useful for communities working on comprehensive revitalization strategies nationwide. Therefore the agencies may select a lower ranked application over a higher ranked application, from among those scoring 75 points or more overall, for purposes of establishing diversity among 2013 Promise Zones in terms of the Promise Zone category (tribal, rural, or urban) or geographic region.

Promise Zone Finalists

The participating agencies may also choose to name some number of applicants as "Promise Zone Finalists" as a result of this selection process. The purpose of selecting Promise Zone Finalists will be to recognize communities whose applications reflect high-quality strategies under the criteria set forth in the final *Application Guide* for the appropriate Promise Zone category, but which the agencies are not able to select among the up to five Promise Zone designations available in 2013. The agencies will seek to expand national knowledge about Promise Zone Finalist communities and their revitalization strategies by posting information submitted in the Finalists' application abstracts on agency websites, and the agencies will communicate regularly with Finalists about opportunities for relevant funding or technical assistance that may become available, although no preference points or other advantages will be awarded as a result of Finalist status. Promise Zone Finalists will not be precluded from applying for Promise Zone designation in future rounds of the Promise Zone initiative.

Application submission instructions and deadline

Electronic copies of application materials must be received by email at PZApplications@hud.gov by 11:59 pm Eastern Standard Time on Tuesday, November 26, 2013. Application materials must follow the formats, page limits, and other requirements set forth in either the rural/tribal or urban *Promise Zone Application Guide*, as appropriate. If necessary, applicants may send more than one email containing application materials as attachments, provided that the name of the lead applicant organization is clearly indicated in the subject line, and the emails are numbered (for example, #2 of 5 total).

Applicants who are unable to submit their applications by email must submit a request by email at PromiseZone@HUD.gov and make alternative arrangements by *11:59pm on Monday, November 18*. Such requests will be considered on a case by case basis, but the deadline for submission of application materials will not be changed.

To the extent that application components require resolutions, approvals or other actions by local governing boards, legislative bodies, tribal councils, regulatory bodies or other entities with fixed schedules for consideration of such actions, and such actions cannot be taken prior to the application deadline, applicants must submit the following information by the application deadline: description of the action to be taken, date on which the action is expected, and information necessary to demonstrate its relevance to the proposal. Depending upon the importance of such actions to a selected applicant's Promise Zone strategy, the agencies may make the Promise Zone designation contingent upon the receipt of evidence that the action has been taken.

Notifications of decisions

Notification of decisions will be made by letter, and a Notice of Promise Zone designations for 2013 and a description of the Promise Zone initiative will be published in the Federal Register.

The Promise Zone initiative ultimately aims to designate 20 Promise Zones located in urban, rural, and tribal communities by the end of calendar year 2016.

We hope that you will seriously consider participating in the Promise Zone initiative. Please feel free to direct questions to by email to Promise.Zones@osec.usda.gov.

Sincerely,

Promise Zone Team
United States Department of Agriculture

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 48 hours. This includes the time for collecting, reviewing, and reporting the data. The information is being collected for OMB #2577-0279. Response to this request for information is required in order to receive the benefits to be derived. This agency may not collect this information, and you are not required to complete this form unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. No confidentiality is assured.