

SOUTHERN
RURAL
DEVELOPMENT
CENTER



Rural E-Commerce Grants Program *Round Two*

Enhancing Educational Products for e-Commerce

Deadline Date: Postmarked by December 9, 2005
Or Emailed by 5 PM CST on December 9, 2005

KEY INFORMATION

PROGRAM TITLE:	<i>Enhancing Educational Products for E-Commerce Grants Program</i>
FUNDING AGENCY:	Southern Rural Development Center
GRANT AMOUNT AND TYPE OF PROJECTS:	Funding up to \$25,000 provided to develop new educational curricula related to e-commerce efforts in rural areas
WHO IS ELIGIBLE?	Land-Grant University Faculty/Educators (1862, 1890, or 1994)
DEADLINE:	Proposals must be postmarked no later than December 9, 2005 or received by email to the SRDC by 5:00 pm Central Standard Time on December 9 th .
AWARD NOTIFICATION:	February 1, 2006
PROJECT TIMELINE:	March 1, 2006 – June 1, 2007

Enhancing Educational Products for e-Commerce

The Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC) is pleased to announce a second round of funding for its e-commerce competitive grants program. The intent of this program is to support the development of innovative educational curricula focusing on e-commerce. This document is designed to provide specific guidelines for individuals wishing to submit a formal proposal to the SRDC.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC), located at Mississippi State University, is providing leadership to a national e-commerce demonstration project funded by the U.S. Congress through the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES). The central goal of this important national effort is to introduce, strengthen and expand the delivery of Extension-based e-commerce educational outreach programs relevant to the needs of small businesses and communities in rural America.

The SRDC's e-commerce demonstration project is intended to respond to the increasing importance that small businesses are playing in shaping the economic vitality of rural areas. While the expansion in the number of small and proprietor-owned businesses has accelerated in rural America, the average income generated by these firms has not increased significantly. As such, e-commerce represents one important strategy that rural businesses can consider as they seek to expand their reach to broader markets, and/or seek to improve the efficiency of their operations through the use of appropriate e-business activities.

This new cycle of e-commerce competitive grants is designed to support activities that delve into a series of topics that complement the e-commerce Extension products currently under development by previous grantees. Approximately \$100,000 is being set aside in this cycle of funding to support this important initiative.

COMPETITIVE GRANT PRIORITY TOPICS:

The SRDC will consider proposals of up to \$25,000 to fund the development of new e-commerce curricula that are designed to help fill important gaps in the e-commerce educational programs of Extension. Please note that all products developed by grantees will be copyrighted by the SRDC for use to support the educational mission of the National e-Commerce Demonstration Project.

The following represent the priority topics for this year's competitive grants program:

1. **Building an e-Strategic Plan:** Developing a business plan is a key part of the activities of any small businesses. With the advent of the Internet and other IT innovations, such businesses need to consider the development of an e-strategic plan that offers a blueprint of how e-commerce strategies will be incorporated into all relevant aspects of their enterprise. We seek proposals that design, develop, and pilot test educational products that specifically address relevant and achievable ways for small business owners/managers to develop e-strategic plans.

2. Strengthening Business to Business Activities: Recent data by the U.S. Census Bureau indicate that 94 percent of all e-commerce transactions are Business to Business (B2B). This highlights the increasing importance of businesses being able to conduct its activities via the Internet. For many small businesses, engagement in B2B activities is something they know very little about. As such, proposals that offer small businesses a primer on how to become involved in B2B activities are strongly encouraged.
3. Improving Business to Government/ Government to Business Activities (B2G/G2B): If small businesses want to become more active players in securing government contracts for products or services, they must strengthen their capacity to know about, and bid for such contracts through electronic means. Proposals that focus on the development of educational products that can help small enterprises better understand how to locate government bid opportunities, and then compete for such contracts through electronic means, are highly sought in this year's round of funding.

Proposals that examine the G2B aspect of the e-procurement process are encouraged as well. Educational programs that help rural communities/counties improve their awareness, understanding and use of modern procurement procedures through online systems, are encouraged.

4. Expanding Global Economic Activities Through e-Commerce: As small rural businesses seek to market their products/services to global markets, it is important that they have an understanding and appreciation of the cultural diversity that exists in these international settings. As such, proposals are sought that help small businesses engaged (or interested) in e-commerce with an understanding of the barriers associated with international e-commerce activities (such as cultural differences, language barriers, monetary exchanges) and that provide them with clear, practical, informative approaches/strategies for overcoming these barriers.
5. Inventory of e-Commerce Small Business Case Study Successes: As small businesses contemplate the use of e-commerce activities, or Extension educators expand their delivery of e-commerce-related programming to small businesses in rural America, having in place a series of well developed "e-commerce success stories" could prove worthwhile. Grant proposals are sought that will uncover, document, and prepare a series of well-written case stories of rural small businesses that have successfully adopted and benefited from their investment in e-commerce activities. These case studies should not be limited to a single state or region, but should capture the exciting and innovative works being carried out in various states or regions across the country.
6. Other Innovative e-Commerce Educational Programs/Products: The SRDC and its National e-Commerce Advisory Board are open to other innovative and much needed e-commerce curricula that help fill important information and educational needs of small businesses or communities in rural America.

APPLICATION GUIDELINES:

All proposals must be organized in the following manner. Please use a 12-point font to ensure easy readability and use a single spaced format for the text.

I. *Title of the proposal*

II. *The priority area that the proposal addresses from the six listed noted above*

III. *Project Leader(s) and Collaborators.* List the name and institutional affiliation of each team member/collaborator. Provide the telephone number, fax number, mailing address, and e-mail address of the Project Leader(s).

IV. *Relevant Experiences of Applicant(s) and Curriculum Vita:* Briefly highlight the type of past activities that the applicant(s) has been engaged in that are relevant to the proposed project. This could include information about curriculum products, relevant publications, reports, and contributed papers that the applicant(s) has helped author. An abbreviated curriculum vita (of approximately 3 pages or less) of the Project Leader(s) should be included as an attachment to the project proposal packet.

V. *Project Summary.* Provide a summary of your proposal (approximately 250 words).

VI. *Project Description:* This represents the most critical part of your proposal. Please use a 12-point font to ensure easy readability and use a single spaced format for the text. All proposals must include the following sections:

1. ***Introduction and Statement of Need:*** Provide an overview of what you see as the key needs that exist for the type of educational resources you propose to develop offer documentation from research publications, trade reports, and/or other sources to support your argument. The key is to offer solid evidence that the focus of your e-commerce work is of high priority.
2. ***Your Proposed Project:*** Provide a detailed description of the proposed content of your new curriculum product, including the specific information or education need that your curriculum is designed to address.
3. The specific set of educational products that will be developed as a result of your grant activities (i.e., modules, PowerPoint documents, worksheets, instructor's guide, etc.).
4. If more than one person is working on the curriculum, provide information on the specific contributions that each individual will be providing to the successful completion of this project.
5. The target audience(s) for this educational effort; and the delivery methods that your propose be used to reach this audience(s).
6. The approach(es) you propose be used to train Extension educators in the use of your educational products/curriculum.

7. Evaluation instruments that Extension educators can use to measure the impact of your e-commerce educational program on the audiences being targeted.
8. Timeline for completion of various components of your project (NOTE: project must be completed by June 1, 2007).
9. Budget request, including a budget justification statement. No indirect costs are allowed.

NOTE: The total length of this proposal should not exceed 8 single-spaced (including budget information) using a 12 pt. font. However, the length limitation does not include the abbreviated CV of the Project Leader(s) that should be provided as an attachment.

PROJECT DURATION:

All awardees will have 15 months to complete the proposed project. Projects will begin no later than March 1, 2006, and will terminate on June 1, 2007. "No Cost Extension" on funded projects will not be provided by the SRDC. Thus, it is critical that projects be completed on time.

REVIEW PROCESS:

The SRDC's *E-Commerce Advisory Committee* will be involved in reviewing all grant proposals. All proposals will be judged using the following criteria:

1. The overall merit of the proposed project (25 percent);
2. Its relevance to e-commerce issues (20 percent);
3. The quality of the curriculum/educational products being proposed (25 percent);
4. The potential contribution of the project in strengthening the adoption of e-commerce strategies by small businesses, rural communities or governments (20 percent); and,
5. The qualifications of the individual or team who will provide leadership to this Extension effort (10 percent).

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Contact Bo Beaulieu at the SRDC, 662-325-3207, or by e-mail: ljb@srcd.msstate.edu if you have any questions about specific aspects of the grant application process. For information on how to send the proposal by email, contact Mari Shurden at the SRDC (maris@srcd.msstate.edu).

MAILING OF COMPLETED PROPOSALS BY REGULAR OR OVERNIGHT MAIL:

If you plan to mail your proposal by regular mail, please use the following address:	If you plan to send your proposal by overnight delivery, please use the following mailing address:
Southern Rural Development Center Box 9656 Mississippi State University Mississippi State, MS 39762-9656	Southern Rural Development Center 410 Bost Extension Building Mississippi State University Mississippi State, MS 39762 Telephone: 662-325-3207

E-MAILING OF COMPLETED PROPOSALS:

If you wish to mail your completed proposal by email, please note the following:
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Your proposal must be sent no later than 5:00 pm Central Standard Time on December 9th2. Send a PDF version of your document that includes the necessary cover sheets from your university's sponsored programs office or other appropriate entity to whom official award letters should be sent or with whom any official communication should be undertaken.3. Email the completed proposal to Mari Shurden at the SRDC – maris@srcd.msstate.edu4. Please request verification that your proposal has been received. SRDC will make every effort to notify you within 1 business day of your proposal being received. If you have not received such notification, please contact the SRDC immediately.

**PLEASE NOTE THAT YOUR DOCUMENT MUST BE POSTMARKED NO
LATER THAN
December 9, 2005**

**OR
SENT BY EMAIL BY 5:00 PM CST, DECEMBER 9, 2005**