

SOUTHERN  
RURAL  
DEVELOPMENT  
CENTER



## 2007 National Rural E-Commerce Grants Program

*Building Quality E-Commerce Educational Resources  
to Support Extension Programming*

**Deadline Date: Postmarked by June 1, 2007**  
*Or E-mailed by 5 PM CDT on June 1, 2007*

### KEY INFORMATION

<b>PROGRAM TITLE:</b>	<i>Building Quality E-Commerce Educational Resources to Support Extension Programming</i>
<b>FUNDING AGENCY:</b>	Southern Rural Development Center, in partnership with its sister Regional Rural Development Centers (RRDCs)
<b>GRANT AMOUNT AND TYPE OF PROJECTS:</b>	Funding up to \$25,000 provided to develop new educational products, or to significantly expand/improve existing resources, related to e-commerce efforts in rural areas
<b>WHO IS ELIGIBLE:</b>	Land-Grant University Faculty/Educators (1862, 1890 or 1994) located anywhere in the U.S.  <u>Note:</u> Non-land grant entities can be invited to partner with a state land-grant university in applying for these e-commerce grant funds. However, grants must be awarded to a land-grant institution that can, in turn, subcontract a portion of the grant to a non-land-grant entity.
<b>DEADLINE:</b>	Proposals must be postmarked no later than June 1, 2007 or received by e-mail to the SRDC by 5 p.m. Central Daylight Time on June 1.
<b>AWARD NOTIFICATION:</b>	July 2, 2007
<b>PROJECT TIMELINE:</b>	August 1, 2007 – August 31, 2008

## **Building Quality E-Commerce Educational Resources to Support Extension Programming**

The Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC), in partnership with its sister Regional Rural Development Centers, is pleased to announce another round of funding for its e-commerce competitive grants program. The intent of this program is to support the development or expansion of innovative educational resources focusing on key e-commerce topics. This document is designed to provide specific guidelines for individuals wishing to submit a formal. **PLEASE NOTE:** This is a national competitive grants program that is open **ONLY** to those who submitted pre-proposals and have been invited to submit a full 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, governments or 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. 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. The demonstration project is also intended to expand the capacity of rural local governments and communities to improve the quality of their activities targeted to individuals and groups located within and outside their local cities or towns.

This latest round of e-commerce competitive grants is designed to support activities that delve into a series of topics that complement the e-commerce Extension products completed or currently being developed by past 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. Proposals that are intended to significantly revamp, strengthen and expand current e-commerce educational resources will be considered as well.

**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. Moreover, they must be in a format that can be downloaded or shared electronically.**

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

1. Building a Business 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 (B2B) Activities: Recent data by the U.S. Census Bureau indicates that the majority of e-commerce transactions are Business-to-Business (B2B) in nature. This highlights the increasing importance of helping businesses be positioned to conduct their 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 of high priority in this year's e-commerce grants program.
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. e-Commerce Programs for Targeted Populations: There are unique needs and approaches for populations such as Native American or Hispanic/Latino communities. E-commerce curricula and training materials that address the unique cultural needs of these audiences are strongly encouraged.

Efforts to employ e-commerce strategies that support value-added agricultural activities (such as agri-tourism or other niche marketing endeavors) are encouraged as well.

6. Security and Back Office Concerns: Small businesses often overlook basic topics dealing with security and control. Best practices dealing with data security, firewalls, proper back up, etc. should be built into e-commerce strategies and implementation. Educational resources that help small businesses understand these various key issues are very much needed.

7. Other Innovative e-Commerce Educational Programs/Products: The SRDC and its National e-Commerce Advisory Board are open to other innovative e-commerce curricula that help fill important information and educational needs of small businesses or communities in rural America.
8. Technology Innovations: Delivering e-Commerce Training/Educational Resources in New Ways: We welcome proposals that are designed to deliver existing high quality e-commerce educational products through the use of innovative delivery methods, such as Podcasts, blogs, Web-based conferencing training systems, etc.

## **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 (from the seven listed above) that the proposal addresses*
- 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 resources, relevant publications, reports and contributed papers that the applicant(s) has helped author. An abbreviated curriculum vita (of approximately three 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 (double space between paragraphs). All proposals must include the following sections:
  1. Introduction and Statement of Need: Provide an overview of what you believe are 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. Proposed Content: Provide a detailed description of the proposed content of your new curriculum product, including the specific information or education need that your curriculum/educational resource is designed to address. For example, this could include a listing and description of educational modules, PowerPoint documents, worksheets, instructor's guide, Web site, etc. that you plan to develop.

3. Contributions by Collaborators: If more than one person is working on the project, provide information on the specific *contributions that each individual will be providing* to the successful completion of this project (for example, what aspects of the proposed content noted in number two above will they be assisting in?).
4. Target Audience(s)/Delivery Methods: Identify your target audience(s) for your e-commerce program and indicate the approaches you are proposing for the delivery of your educational program to this audience(s).
5. Training of Extension Educators: What *approach(es)* do you propose be used to train Extension educators in the use of your educational products/resources?
6. Program Evaluation Instrument(s): Specify your plans with regard to the evaluation instrument(s) you will develop for use by Extension educators in measuring the impact of your e-commerce educational program/resources on the audience(s) being targeted.
7. Timeline for completion of the various components being proposed in your project (NOTE: project must be completed by August 31, 2008).
8. Budget Request: List your proposed budget expenditures (using the form provided) and prepare a good budget justification statement for all budget categories included in the request. Please note that no indirect costs are allowed.

**NOTE:** The total length of this proposal should not exceed eight single-spaced, 12-point font pages (including budget information). However, the length limitation does not include the abbreviated CV of the Project Leader(s) that are required as an attachment to your proposal.

### **PROJECT DURATION:**

All awardees will have 13 months to complete the proposed project. Projects will begin on August 1, 2007, and will terminate on August 31, 2008. "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:

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

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

For questions about the content of your proposal, please contact either Bo Beaulieu ([ljb@srcd.msstate.edu](mailto:ljb@srcd.msstate.edu)) or Emily Shaw ([emilye@srcd.msstate.edu](mailto:emilye@srcd.msstate.edu)). To discuss specific budget issues regarding your proposal, please contact Kathy Ibendahl at [kibendahl@srcd.msstate.edu](mailto:kibendahl@srcd.msstate.edu). You are welcome to contact any of these individuals by phone at 662-325-3207.

**MAILING OF COMPLETED PROPOSALS:**

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

**E-MAILING OF COMPLETED PROPOSALS:**

<b>If you wish to mail your completed proposal by e-mail, please note the following:</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Your proposal must be sent no later than 5 p.m. Central Daylight Time on June 1, 2007.</li><li>2. 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.</li><li>3. Email the completed proposal to Emily Shaw at <a href="mailto:emilye@srcd.msstate.edu">emilye@srcd.msstate.edu</a>. Please request verification that your proposal has been received. SRDC will make every effort to notify you within one business day of your proposal being received. If you have not received such notification, please contact the SRDC immediately.</li></ol>

**PLEASE NOTE THAT YOUR DOCUMENT MUST BE POSTMARKED NO LATER THAN JUNE 1, 2007**

**OR**

**BY EMAIL NO LATER THAN 5 P.M. CDT, JUNE 1, 2007**