

## GENERAL OVERVIEW

### **Description of the Promise Zones Initiative**

The Promise Zones Initiative seeks to revitalize high-poverty communities across the country by creating jobs, increasing economic activity, improving educational opportunities, reducing serious and violent crime, leveraging private capital, and assisting local leaders in navigating federal programs. This is the application guide for rural and tribal Promise Zones. The urban application guide is located at <http://www.hud.gov/promisezones/>. Promise Zones will not receive grant funding. The Promise Zone designation partners the Federal government with local leaders who are addressing multiple community revitalization challenges in a collaborative way and have demonstrated a commitment to results. Promise Zone Designees will receive:

- Opportunity to engage Five AmeriCorps VISTA members in the Promise Zone
- A federal liaison assigned to assist with navigating federal programs.
- Priority for certain competitive federal programs and technical assistance from participating agencies.
- Promise Zone tax incentives, if enacted by Congress.

Altogether, this package of assistance will help local leaders accelerate efforts to revitalize their communities. The Promise Zone designation will be for a term of 10 years, and may be extended as necessary to capture the full term of availability of the Promise Zones tax incentives, pending the enactment of tax incentives by Congress. During this term, the specific benefits made available to Promise Zones will vary from year to year, and sometimes more often than annually, due to changes in the agency policies and changes in appropriations and authorizations for relevant programs. All assistance provided to Promise Zones is subject to applicable regulations, statutes, and changes in Federal agency policies, appropriations, and authorizations for relevant programs. Subject to these limitations, the Promise Zone designation commits the Federal government to partner with local leaders who are addressing multiple community revitalization challenges in a collaborative way and have demonstrated a commitment to results.

### **Third Round Promise Zone Designation Process**

The third round of Promise Zone designations will be made pursuant to this document. A total of 20 Promise Zone designations will be made by the end of calendar year 2016. To date, nine urban, two rural and two tribal communities have been designated. As a result of this competition, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) intends to designate five urban communities and the Department of Agriculture (USDA) intends to designate one rural and one tribal community. Applications for Promise Zone designations will be reviewed and evaluated by representatives from across the federal government including: USDA, HUD, Department of Education, Department of Justice, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Labor, Department of Transportation, Department of Treasury, Department of Commerce, Corporation for National and Community Service, National Endowment for the Arts, and the Small Business Administration. Reviewers will first verify that the application is submitted by a community eligible for selection, by

verifying that the application includes all required components, that the proposed Promise Zone meets the qualifying criteria, and that the Lead Applicant meets the eligibility criteria for the third round selection process (see page 6 and 7 for eligibility and qualifying criteria and page 23 for a complete list of the threshold requirements).<sup>1</sup>

After verifying for each application that all the required components were submitted, that the Lead Applicant is eligible and the proposed Promise Zone would qualify, the reviewers will score all of the applications according to the points assigned to selection criteria shown in the *Application Guide* for the appropriate Promise Zones category (urban, rural or tribal).

After scoring each application according to the Application Guide criteria, USDA may consider, in addition to the application materials, information available from participating agency records, the name check review, public sources such as newspapers, Inspector General or Government Accountability Office reports or findings. Any evidence cited in the Goals and Activities Template may also be reviewed.

### **Categories and Sub-Categories**

Rural applications will be ranked against other rural applications, tribal applications will be ranked against other tribal applications, and urban applications will be ranked against other urban applications within their Metro CBSA subcategory, as applicable. An application must score a total of 75 points or more out of 100 points, to be considered for a designation (scoring 75 points or more means that applications fall within the “competitive range”). Once scored, applications will be ranked competitively within each of the three Promise Zones categories and within the urban subcategories, as applicable.

### **Geographic Diversity (Replicability & Transferability)**

The Promise Zones initiative will provide communities and the federal government with the opportunity to demonstrate and accelerate the impact of coordinated federal investment in communities in which stakeholders have come together with a focus on results. The participating federal agencies seek to establish a diverse cohort of quality designees in order to demonstrate strategies that may be useful for communities working on comprehensive revitalization in many contexts nationwide. Therefore, the agencies may select a lower-ranked application over a higher-ranked application, within a category or subcategory, from among those scoring 75 points or more overall, for purposes of establishing geographic diversity, so that lessons learned can be applied in other similar places around the country in the future.

### **Promise Zone Finalists**

The participating federal agencies may also choose to name some applicants as “Promise Zone Finalists” as a result of this selection process.

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<sup>1</sup>Lead Applicants are not required to be a recipient of a previous federal grant.

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 *Application Guide*, but are not selected as Promise Zone designees. The participating federal agencies will seek to expand national knowledge about Promise Zone Finalist communities and their revitalization strategies by posting information submitted in the Finalists' applications on agency websites, and the participating federal agencies will communicate regularly with Finalists about opportunities for relevant funding or technical assistance that may become available, although no preference points, or other Promise Zone designation advantages in federal funding competitions will be awarded as a result of Finalist status.

#### **Notifications of Decisions**

Notification of decisions will be made by phone and letter. Additional notification may be sent by email to the designated applicant point of contact listed in the application.