



Rural Development Initiative Funding Announcement

The South Carolina Department of Commerce is pleased to announce the opening of the Rural Development Initiative (RDI) annual competitive grant program. Eligible county and municipal governments are invited to submit implementation-ready projects through a competitive application process designed to strengthen South Carolina's rural communities through strategic public investment.

Program Objectives and Overview

The Rural Development Initiative will be an annual competitive program that supports implementation-ready projects designed to strengthen South Carolina's rural communities. The initiative promotes strategic investments that enhance economic competitiveness, improve infrastructure, expand housing opportunities, revitalize downtowns and public spaces, and improve quality of life, while positioning communities for long-term prosperity.

Eligibility and Grant Details

Eligibility Requirements:

- Any county and/or municipal government in Tiers III and IV
- County and/or municipal governments with projects located in an eligible Opportunity Zone Census Tract in Tiers I and II counties
- Any county and/or municipal government in a county without an eligible Opportunity Zone Census Tract if it has a population less than 20,000 residents

Project Readiness: Applicants should demonstrate that all major pre-construction or implementation activities can reasonably be completed within ninety (90) days of award.

Project activities include but are not limited to:

- Project design
- Environmental review
- Acquisitions or building improvements
- Permitting

Grant Award Amount : Max award up to \$250,000 for Tier IV Counties and up to \$200,000 for Tiers I-III. *Subject to change on Sept 1.*

Match Requirements: A 10% match is required for all grants. This match can come from federal, local government, other state funds, nonprofit organizations or private support.

Grant Utilization Period: Grant Funds must be expended within 24 months from the date of the grant award.

Evaluation: Applications will be evaluated using our program specific Evaluation Framework, which measures community need, investment readiness, project readiness, community impact, economic impact, financial commitment and long-term sustainability. Funding recommendations will be based upon the highest overall evaluation scores.

Eligible Project Categories include but are not limited to

- Economic Development
- Site & Product Development
- Infrastructure
- Downtown Revitalization
- Parks & Recreation
- Transportation
- Workforce Development
- Strategic Planning Implementation

Program Timeline

Funding Announcement: July 22, 2026

Application Opens: September 1, 2026

Application Deadline: October 30, 2026

Award Announcements: January 8, 2027

Contact:

Detailed program guidelines, application requirements, evaluation criteria and workshop information will be released with the official Application Guide. Questions regarding the Rural Development Initiative should be directed to:

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The South Carolina Department of Commerce looks forward to partnering with local governments to advance innovative implementation-ready projects that strengthen rural communities and create lasting economic opportunity across the state.