

Rural Utilities Service, USDA

§ 1780.44

notices and appropriate proof of publication, if applicable; and

(9) Grant determination, if applicable.

(b) Approval and applicant notification will be accomplished by mailing to the applicant on the obligation date a copy of Form RD 1940-1. The date the applicant is notified is also the date the interest rate at loan approval is established.

[62 FR 33478, June 19, 1997, as amended at 63 FR 68655, Dec. 11, 1998]

§ 1780.42 Transfer of obligations.

An obligation of funds established for an applicant may be transferred to a different (substituted) applicant provided:

(a) The substituted applicant is eligible and has the authority to receive the assistance approved for the original applicant; and

(b) The need, purpose(s) and scope of the project for which RUS funds will be used remain substantially unchanged.

§ 1780.43 [Reserved]

§ 1780.44 Actions prior to loan or grant closing or start of construction, whichever occurs first.

(a) Applicants must provide evidence of adequate insurance and fidelity or employee dishonesty bond coverage.

(b) *Verification of users and other funds.* In connection with a project that involves new users and will be secured by a pledge of user fees or revenues, the processing office will authenticate the number of users. Ordinarily each signed user agreement will be reviewed and checked for evidence of cash contributions. If during the review any indication is received that all signed users may not connect to the system, there will be such additional investigation made as deemed necessary to determine the number of users who will connect to the system.

(c) *Initial compliance review.* An initial compliance review should be completed under subpart E of part 1901 of this title.

(d) *Applicant contribution.* An applicant contributing funds toward the project cost shall deposit these funds in its project account before start of construction. Project costs paid with ap-

plicant funds prior to the required deposit time shall be appropriately accounted for.

(e) *Excess RUS loan and grant funds.* If there is a significant reduction in project cost, the applicant's funding needs will be reassessed. Decreases in RUS funds will be based on revised project costs and current number of users, however, other factors including RUS regulations used at the time of loan or grant approval will remain the same. Obligated loan or grant funds not needed to complete the proposed project will be deobligated. Any reduction will be applied to grant funds first. In such cases, applicable forms, the letter of conditions, and other items will be revised.

(f) *Evidence of and disbursement of other funds.* Applicants expecting funds from other sources for use in completing projects being partially financed with RUS funds will present evidence of the commitment of these funds from such other sources. An agreement should be reached with all funding sources on how funds are to be disbursed before the start of construction. RUS funds will not be used to pre-finance funds committed to the project from other sources.

(g) *Acquisition of land, easements, water rights, and existing facilities.* Applicants are responsible for acquisition of all property rights necessary for the project and will determine that prices paid are reasonable and fair. RUS may require an appraisal by an independent appraiser or Agency employee.

(1) *Rights-of-way and easements.* Applicants will obtain valid, continuous and adequate rights-of-way and easements needed for the construction, operation, and maintenance of the facility.

(i) The applicant must provide a legal opinion relative to the title to rights-of-way and easements. Form RD 442-22, "Opinion of Counsel Relative to Rights-of-Way," may be used. When a site is for major structures such as a reservoir or pumping station and the applicant is able to obtain only a right-of-way or easement on such a site rather than a fee simple title, the applicant will furnish a title report thereon by the applicant's attorney showing ownership of the land and all mortgages or

§ 1780.45

7 CFR Ch. XVII (1-1-05 Edition)

other lien defects, restrictions, or encumbrances, if any.

(ii) For user connections funded by RUS, applicants will obtain adequate rights to construct and maintain the connection line or other facilities located on the user's property. This right may be obtained through formal easement or user agreements.

(2) *Title for land or existing facilities.* Title to land essential to the successful operation of facilities or title to facilities being purchased, must not contain any restrictions that will adversely affect the suitability, successful operation, security value, or transferability of the facility. Preliminary and final title opinions must be provided by the applicant's attorney. The opinions must be in sufficient detail to assess marketability of the property. Form RD 1927-9, "Preliminary Title Opinion," and Form RD 1927-10, "Final Title Opinion," may be used to provide the required title opinions.

(i) In lieu of receiving title opinions from the applicant's attorney, the applicant may use a title insurance company. If a title insurance company is used, the applicant must provide the Agency a title insurance binder, disclosing all title defects or restrictions, and include a commitment to issue a title insurance policy. The policy should be in an amount at least equal to the market value of the property as improved. The title insurance binder and commitment should be provided to the Agency prior to requesting closing instructions. The Agency will be provided a title insurance policy which will insure RUS's interest in the property without any title defects or restrictions which have not been waived by the Agency.

(ii) The approval official may waive title defects or restrictions, such as utility easements, that do not adversely affect the suitability, successful operation, security value, or transferability of the facility.

(3) *Water rights.* The following will be furnished as applicable:

(i) A statement by the applicant's attorney regarding the nature of the water rights owned or to be acquired by the applicant (such as conveyance of title, appropriation and decree, appli-

cation and permit, public notice and appropriation and use).

(ii) A copy of a contract with another company or municipality to supply water; or stock certificates in another company which represents the right to receive water.

(4) *Lease agreements.* Where the right of use or control of real property not owned by the applicant is essential to the successful operation of the facility during the life of the loan, such right will be evidenced by written agreements or contracts between the owner of the property and the applicant. Lease agreements shall not contain provisions for restricted use of the site of facility, forfeiture or summary cancellation clauses. Lease agreements shall provide for the right to transfer, encumber, assign and sub-lease without restriction. Lease agreements will ordinarily be written for a term at least equal to the term of the loan. Such lease contracts or agreements will be approved by the approval official with the advice and counsel of OGC, as necessary.

(h) *Obtaining loan closing instructions.* The information required by OGC will be transmitted to OGC with request for closing instructions. Upon receipt of closing instructions, the processing office will discuss with the applicant and its engineer, attorney, and other appropriate representatives, the requirements contained therein and any actions necessary to proceed with closing. State program officials have the option to work with OGC to obtain waivers for closing instructions in certain cases. Closing instructions are not required for grants.

§ 1780.45 Loan and grant closing and delivery of funds.

(a) *Loan closing.* Notes and bonds will be completed on the date of loan closing except for the entry of subsequent RUS multiple advances where applicable. The amount of each note will be in multiples of not less than \$100. The amount of each bond will ordinarily be in multiples of not less than \$1,000.

(1) Form RD 440-22, "Promissory Note (Association or Organization)," will ordinarily be used for loans to non-public bodies.