

§ 25.204 Evaluation of the strategic plan.

The strategic plan will be evaluated for effectiveness as part of the designation process for nominated rural areas described in subpart D of this part. On the basis of this evaluation, USDA may request additional information pertaining to the plan and the proposed area and may, as part of that request, suggest modifications to the plan, proposed area, or term that would enhance its effectiveness. The effectiveness of the strategic plan will be determined in accordance with the four key principles contained in § 25.202(a). USDA will review each plan submitted in terms of the four equally weighted principal objectives, and of such other elements of these principal objectives as are appropriate to address the opportunities and problems of each nominated area, which may include:

(a) *Strategic vision for change—(1) Goals and coordinated strategy.* The extent to which the strategic plan reflects a projection for the community's revitalization which links economic, human, physical, community development and other activities in a mutually reinforcing, synergistic way to achieve ultimate goals;

(2) *Creativity and innovation.* The extent to which the activities proposed in the plan are creative, innovative and promising and will promote the civic spirit necessary to revitalize the nominated area;

(3) *Building on assets.* The extent to which the vision for revitalization realistically addresses the needs of the nominated area in a way that takes advantage of its assets; and

(4) *Benchmarks and learning.* The extent to which the plan includes performance benchmarks for measuring progress in its implementation, including an on-going process for adjustments, corrections and building on what works.

(b) *Community-based partnerships—(1) Community partners.* The extent to which residents of the community participated in developing the strategic plan and their commitment to implementing it, the extent to which community-based organizations in the nominated area have participated in the development of the nominated

area, and their record of success measured by their achievements and support for undertakings within the nominated area;

(2) *Private and nonprofit organizations as partners.* The extent to which partnership arrangements include commitments from private and nonprofit organizations, including corporations, utilities, banks and other financial institutions, human services organizations, health care providers, and educational institutions supporting implementation of the strategic plan;

(3) *State and local government partners.* The extent to which States and local governments are committed to providing support to the strategic plan, including their commitment to "re-inventing" their roles and coordinating programs to implement the strategic plan; and

(4) *Permanent implementation and evaluation structure.* The extent to which a responsible and accountable implementation structure or process has been created to ensure that the plan is successfully carried out and that improvements are made throughout the period of the zone or community's designation.

(c) *Economic opportunity.* (1) The extent to which businesses, jobs, and entrepreneurship will increase within the zone or community;

(2) The extent to which residents will achieve a real economic stake in the zone or community;

(3) The extent to which residents will be employed in the process of implementing the plan and in all phases of economic, community and human development;

(4) The extent to which residents will be linked with employers and jobs throughout the entire area and the way in which residents will receive training, assistance, and family support to become economically self-sufficient;

(5) The extent to which economic revitalization in the zone or community interrelates with the broader regional economies; and

(6) The extent to which lending and investment opportunities will increase within the zone or community through the establishment of mechanisms to encourage community investment and to create new economic growth.

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(d) *Sustainable community development*—(1) *Consolidated planning*. The extent to which the plan is part of a larger strategic community development plan for the nominating localities and is consistent with broader regional development strategies;

(2) *Public safety*. The extent to which strategies such as community policing will be used to guarantee the basic safety and security of persons and property within the zone or community;

(3) *Amenities and design*. The extent to which the plan considers issues of design and amenities that will foster a sustainable community, such as open spaces, recreational areas, cultural institutions, transportation, energy, land and water uses, waste management, environmental protection and the vitality of life of the community;

(4) *Sustainable development*. The extent to which economic development will be achieved in a manner consistent that protects public health and the environment;

(5) *Supporting families*. The extent to which the strengths of families will be supported so that parents can succeed at work, provide nurture in the home, and contribute to the life of the community;

(6) *Youth development*. The extent to which the development of children, youth, and young adults into economically productive and socially responsible adults will be promoted and the extent to which young people will be:

(i) Provided with the opportunity to take responsibility for learning the skills, discipline, attitude, and initiative to make work rewarding;

(ii) Invited to take part as resources in the rebuilding of their community; and

(iii) Provided the opportunity to develop a sense of industry and competency and a belief they might exercise some control over the course of their lives.

(7) *Education goals*. The extent to which schools, religious organizations, non-profit organizations, for-profit enterprises, local governments and families will work cooperatively to provide all individuals with the fundamental skills and knowledge they need to become active participants and contribu-

tors to their community, and to succeed in an increasingly competitive global economy;

(8) *Affordable housing*. The extent to which a housing component, providing for adequate safe housing and ensuring that all residents will have equal access to that housing is contained in the strategic plan;

(9) *Drug abuse*. The extent to which the plan addresses levels of drug abuse and drug-related activity through the expansion of drug treatment services, drug law enforcement initiatives, and community-based drug abuse education programs;

(10) *Health care*. The extent to which the plan promotes a community-based system of health care that facilitates access to comprehensive, high quality care, particularly for the residents of EZ/EC neighborhoods;

(11) *Equal opportunity*. The extent to which the plan offers an opportunity for diverse residents to participate in the rewards and responsibilities of work and service. The extent to which the plan ensures that no business within a nominated zone or community will directly or through contractual or other arrangements subject a person to discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, national origin, gender, handicap or age in its employment practices, including recruitment, recruitment advertising, employment, layoff, termination, upgrading, demotion, transfer, rates of pay or the forms of compensation, or use of facilities. Applicants must comply with the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975.

§§ 25.205–25.299 [Reserved]

Subpart D—Designation Process

§ 25.300 USDA action and review of nominations for designation.

(a) *Establishment of submission procedures*. USDA will establish a time period and procedure for the submission of applications for designation as empowerment zones or enterprise communities, including submission deadlines and addresses, in a notice inviting applications or other applicable notice,