

§§ 1780.26–1780.30 [Reserved]

**Subpart B—Loan and Grant Application Processing**

**§ 1780.31 General.**

(a) Applicants are encouraged to contact the Agency processing office early in the planning stages of their project. Agency personnel are available to provide general advice and assistance regarding RUS programs, other funding sources, and types of systems or improvements appropriate for the applicants needs. The Agency can also provide access to technical assistance and other information resources for other project development issues such as public information, income surveys, developing rate schedules, system operation and maintenance, and environmental compliance requirements. Throughout the planning, application processing and construction of the project, Agency personnel will work closely and cooperatively with the applicant and their representatives, other State and Federal agencies and technical assistance providers.

(b) The processing office will handle initial inquiries and provide basic information about the program. They are to provide the application, SF 424.2, “Application for Federal Assistance (For Construction),” assist applicants as needed in completing SF 424.2, and in filing a request for intergovernmental review. Federally recognized Indian tribes are exempt from intergovernmental review. The processing office will explain eligibility requirements and meet with the applicant whenever necessary to discuss application processing.

(c) Applicants can make a written request for an eligibility determination in lieu of filing an SF 424.2 along with the information required by §1780.33. Applicants seeking only an eligibility determination, should contact the processing office to obtain a list of the items needed to make this determination. An eligibility determination for loan or grant assistance will not give an applicant priority for funding as set forth in §1780.17.

(d) Applications that are not developed in a reasonable period of time taking into account the size and com-

plexity of the proposed project may be removed from the State’s active file. Applicants will be consulted prior to taking such action.

(e) Starting with the earliest discussion with prospective applicants, the State Environmental Coordinator shall discuss with prospective applicants and be available for consultation during the application process the environmental review requirements for evaluating the potential environmental consequences of the project. Pursuant to 7 CFR part 1794 and guidance in RUS Bulletin 1794A–602, the environmental review requirements shall be performed by the applicant simultaneously and concurrently with the project’s engineering planning and design. This should provide flexibility to consider reasonable alternatives to the project and development methods to mitigate identified adverse environmental effects. Mitigation measures necessary to avoid or minimize any adverse environmental effects must be integrated into project design.

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

**§ 1780.32 Timeframes for application processing.**

(a) The processing office will determine if the application is properly assembled. If not, the applicant will be notified within fifteen federal working days as to what additional submittal items are needed.

(b) The processing and approval offices will coordinate their reviews to ensure that the applicant is advised about eligibility and anticipated fund availability within 45 days of the receipt of a completed application.

**§ 1780.33 Application requirements.**

An initial application consists of the following:

- (a) One copy of a completed SF 424.2;
- (b) A copy of the State intergovernmental comments or one copy of the filed application for State intergovernmental review; and
- (c) Two copies of the preliminary engineering report (PER) for the project.
  - (1) The PER may be submitted to the processing office prior to the rest of the application material if the applicant desires a preliminary review.