



NEWS RELEASE

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Deputy Secretary Merrigan Announces USDA to Collaborate With North Carolina Central University in Training and Matchmaking Event in Support of White House Initiative on Small Business

WASHINGTON, April 30, 2012 - Today, the Agriculture Deputy Secretary, Kathleen Merrigan, announced in support of the White House Initiative on Small Business Contracting that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) will collaborate with North Carolina Central University in hosting an event to provide small businesses with a series of educational workshops and networking sessions. Both workshops and networking sessions will educate contractors on how to successfully conduct business with the USDA and other Federal agencies.

"The Obama administration's commitment to foster regional innovation, create sustainable jobs and help ensure long-term prosperity will speed new business start-ups and expansions by building regional economic systems in rural areas. Education plays a key role in this endeavor," Merrigan said. Conference attendees will have an opportunity to participate in a full day of workshops and panel discussions led by program and small business procurement officials from USDA, and other Federal agencies. Topics include acquisition needs and opportunities, procurement methods, subcontracting opportunities, business development resources, and more.

In continuing efforts to increase small business contracting participation by enhancing the competitive posture of small businesses and small farmer-owned cooperatives, there will be a workshop dedicated to contracting opportunities in rural America.

There will also be an opportunity to meet one-on-one with USDA and other Federal agencies small business contracting specialists during a half-day matchmaking event.

The event will be held Wednesday, June 6, 2012, from 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. on the campus of North Carolina Central University, 1801 Fayetteville Street, Durham, NC 27707.

There is no conference fee. Pre-registration is preferred with onsite registration available. To register: please email osdbu.smallbizconf@dm.usda.gov by May 25, 2012. For further information please call 202-720-7117 or visit www.usda.gov/osdbu.

Merrigan noted [USDA's work to strengthen the rural economy](#) over the past three years, including:

- USDA is maintaining a strong safety net to help keep American agriculture profitable

and keep farmers on the farm. Over the past three years, USDA's crop insurance program has paid out almost \$16.2 billion to more than 325,000 farmers who lost crops to natural disasters. Other programs have provided nearly \$3.5 billion in aid to help more than 250,000 farmers and ranchers recover from natural disasters.

- USDA has provided 103,000 loans to family farmers and has worked with over a half a million farmers to pursue conservation agreements and easements - enrolling a record number of acres in conservation programs and contributing hundreds of millions of dollars to the rural economy that supports many jobs.
- USDA has made historic investments in America's rural communities, financing 50,000 rural small and mid-sized businesses - helping to create or save 266,000 jobs.
- USDA has invested in broadband service for nearly seven million rural residents and helped to build or renovate over 6,200 community facilities including hospitals, schools, fire and police stations and libraries.
- USDA has helped 456,000 rural families in more than 21,000 communities buy or refinance a home.

Merrigan also touted the work of the first-ever [White House Rural Council](#), that was established by President Obama in June 2011. Chaired by Secretary Vilsack, the Council gives the Administration the ability to cut across large federal agencies to deliver results for rural families and businesses and provides a unique opportunity to hear directly from people across the country on how to grow the economy and create jobs in rural America.

Since its launch, the White House Rural Council has supported a broad spectrum of [rural initiatives](#) including a \$350 million commitment in SBA funding to rural small businesses over the next 5 years, launching a series of conferences to connect investors with rural start-ups, creating capital marketing teams to pitch federal funding opportunities to private investors interested in making rural investments, making job search information available at 2,800 local USDA offices nationwide, making HHS loans available to help more than 1,300 Critical Access Hospitals recruit additional staff, and helping rural hospitals purchase software and hardware to implement health IT. USDA and Navy have also announced a partnership to advance the use of next generation biofuels in Navy operations.

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Here is the link:

DEPUTY SECRETARY MERRIGAN ANNOUNCES USDA TO COLLABORATE WITH NORTH CAROLINA CENTRAL UNIVERSITY IN TRAINING AND MATCHMAKING EVENT IN SUPPORT OF WHITE HOUSE INITIATIVE ON SMALL BUSINESS

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