TOPIC OF DISCUSSION: USDA-RD Intermediary Relending Program – LINC Reporting System

1. Introductions
   Janice Copeland served as facilitator for the group and introduced the following USDA/RD guests:
   
   Lyle Coney-Kalispell
   Lea McGiboney-Great Falls
   Heather Handeland-Missoula
   Gloria Hawkins-Billings
   Janelle Gustafson and Craig Hildreth – Bozeman
   
   With no additions to the agenda, the update on the LINC System began.

2. USDA-RD IRP LINC Reporting System
   a. New USDA-RD IRP LINC Reporting Requirements (USDA-RD Staff)
      Janelle Gustafson is serving as the acting Business/Cooperative Director for USDA/RD. The USDA has claimed this “The Year of the RLF” to encourage better use of Montana USDA/RLF funds. $25m funds have been loaned since 1994. It is a very strong program and USDA/MT wants to keep it that way. Reporting through the LINC System helps USDA analyze what is happening across the state. LINC is required for use; all reports must go through this software.

   b. Overview of LINC System (USDA-RD Staff)
      Lyle Coney provided an overview of the LINC System. Lyle noted some fields auto-populate and there are errors in the system; this is being corrected. Lyle said that when the Fund Report prints, be sure to compare it with previous reports to check if the new report makes sense. New boxes: check a box for eligibility with small business definition; check a box regarding eligible project in a rural area.

      Regarding the software glitch: loans owed to intermediary reflect an incorrect balance sheet. Lyle said to go to Browse Project, find the Summary Screen on the right. The Outstanding Balance should be correct with your record as to what is owed by your Ultimate Recipient. It appears the software glitch is that it reports one quarter behind.

      Janelle and Craig will write up directions to work around the software glitch and send to Christin. Another solution would be to go around the auto-populating fields and enter them on your own. The User Manual provides instructions.
USDA/RD encouraged everyone to continue to submit problems and issues to them.

Common Issues USDA/RD Staff sees:
- When compiling the Ultimate Recipient data, the common error is to not fill out all of the information. This information is essential to complete multiple reports. Keeping these numbers up-to-date and correct will eliminate 90% of problems.
- Fund Reports are coming back with negative equity indicating a negative fund balance available for relending. This should not be; the user’s manual could be of help, plus going around the software glitch.

Note: Janice shared that she keeps careful records to back up her numbers when control is lost within the loan system software.

c. Any upcoming training on the system? (USDA-RD Staff)

USDA/RD is happy to provide training whether one-on-one or in a group setting. The national office is creating a reporting manual. Everyone was encouraged to work with their regional specialist on any questions as well.

It was requested that our January call be set up webinar style with everyone prepared to bring specific questions.

3. Determine next meeting date
   a. January 16th, 10:00am. This will provide time for everyone to enter a report in the LINC System and bring questions to the webinar.

4. Determine next meeting topic:
   a. Additional topics to discuss?
   b. LINC System specifics
   c. Reporting to Credit Bureaus: corporate vs. individual reporting (follow-up to November discussion)
   d. Identify Resources and others to be Part of the Group
   e. Appetite for Risk: How far do you go and how is it determined? What lessons have you learned?
   f. Improving financial literacy – i.e., microbusiness owners often do not have even personal finance skills which impacts the business. How to deal with this? How to get people to classes?
   g. Economic impact and its Effects on the RLF
   h. Housing Area: changing program requirements