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For Immediate Release

USDA APPROVAL NEARS FOR TWO GRANTS FOR MANISTEE COUNTY

Manistee, Michigan – Even as more than four dozen Manistee County leaders prepare for a workshop on how to seek grants and loans through the U. S. Department of Agriculture, approval for two USDA programs is expected soon that will benefit Manistee County as well as Benzie and Masons Counties.

The Manistee-based Alliance for Economic Success (AES), the Manistee Area Chamber of Commerce and the Manistee County Community Foundation joined in announcing that approval documents have been submitted to the U. S. Department of Agriculture to support two efforts that will support the economic future of the County and region.

One of the pending grants, expected to amount to \$80,000, is entitled “Regional Solutions for Entrepreneurs and Small Business Success.” The purpose of the program will be for economic development leaders in Manistee, Mason and Benzie Counties to join in developing a regional system to help small businesses develop and succeed. The project will build upon the success of a pilot project that has led to the creation of 20 micro-businesses in the last year in Manistee and Benzie Counties, administered through the Alliance for Economic Success in partnership with Manistee-Benzie Community Mental Health. The grant will be managed by the AES. Funding will be used to identify national best practices for supporting entrepreneurs and small businesses. A multi-county team will design a system that will unify programs and services to respond to the needs of start-up businesses. The grant will also cover testing and evaluation of the system to ensure that it is helping small business succeed.

The second pending grant, entitled “Branding – Building Competitive Positions for Manistee County,” will involve all County interests in developing brand identities for Manistee County to market the county to expand and attract businesses and create jobs. The primary goal of the grant, expected to be supported by \$50,000 from the USDA, is to create a cohesive foundation for marketing the county and its unique and special attributes to industry, businesses, tourists and families. The grant will be managed by the Alliance for Economic Success in coordination with the Manistee County Chamber of Commerce.

Both of the expected USDA grants respond to priorities identified through Envision Manistee County as well as the new strategic plans for the Alliance for Economic Success and the Manistee County Chamber of Commerce. An economic development plan currently being prepared for the area surrounding Manistee Lake has also recognized the need for the County to establish a brand identity to more effectively market itself to companies.