§ 483. General functions, powers and duties. The state office of rural affairs by and through the director or his duly authorized officers and employees, shall have the following functions, powers and duties:

1. To serve as a clearinghouse and provide comprehensive information relating to rural development and revitalization upon request to any agency, individual or corporation.

2. To advise and assist agencies, individuals and corporations in answering particular rural revitalization and development needs; including cooperative efforts among such agencies, individuals, and corporations to solve common problems or provide services in rural areas.

3. To receive notification from all state and federal agencies, individuals or corporations engaged in rural development and revitalization of program descriptions, appropriation data, and application procedures. The office shall maintain a listing of existing programs and advise local agencies, individuals or corporations of their existence.

4. To assist, upon request, applicant local agencies, individuals or corporations located in rural areas in obtaining timely and efficient responses from state and federal agencies; to assist such applicants in consideration of alternative program grant strategies; to assist state and federal agencies in cooperative approaches to address the needs of such applicants; and to provide technical assistance to agencies in formulating and implementing rural development and revitalization programs.

5. To review application procedures formulated by state agencies and to recommend improvements designed to increase the cost-effectiveness of such procedures for rural revitalization and development efforts; and to enhance the probability such procedures will benefit rural areas.

6. To encourage the assistance of the private sector in effectuating rural development and revitalization.

7. To provide legal consultation concerning local government matters to officials of municipalities located in rural areas on a wide range of problems and programs, including the exercise of home rule powers, reapportionment of local legislative bodies, drafting and revising of local laws including charters, and drafting and implementing of municipal cooperation agreements. All such assistance shall be advisory in nature, and shall not include the actual drafting of final legal documents or the provision of actual legal representation.

8. To assist the governor and the legislature in the integration and formulation of state rural development and revitalization policy and long-range plans for rural areas and in answering needs related thereto.

9. To facilitate efforts of local agencies, individuals and corporations in developing cooperative responses to rural needs. Personnel of the office shall be available to participate in an advisory capacity at local meetings exploring such cooperative agreements; and shall assist in the identification of appropriate state agencies and personnel who may be instrumental in facilitating such efforts.

10. To provide legal advice and assistance concerning rural development and revitalization matters to officials of the executive department and the legislature; and to analyze and make recommendations concerning proposed new state legislation or programs that may affect rural areas.

11. To apply for and receive, consistent with appropriation, notification, and approval requirements of the state finance law, grants or financial assistance from the federal government or other approved agencies, individuals or corporations.

12. To adopt such rules and regulations, procedures, instructions, and forms as are required to carry out the functions, powers and duties imposed upon the office by this article.

13. To assist the governor in coordinating the activities and services

of those departments and agencies of the state having relationships with local rural agencies, individuals and corporations in order to provide more effective service to them and to simplify state procedures relating thereto.

14. To keep the governor informed about the problems and needs of agencies, individuals and corporations that are involved with rural development and revitalization; and to assist in formulating policies with respect thereto and utilizing the resources of the executive branch of the state government for the benefit of rural areas.

15. To refer local agencies, individuals and corporations to the appropriate departments and agencies of the state and federal governments for advice, assistance, and available services in connection with particular rural development and revitalization problems or needs.

16. To develop pilot programs or projects and make studies and analyses of the problems or needs of rural areas and to make the results thereof available for the benefit of such agencies as the director may deem appropriate.

17. To encourage the expansion and improvement of in-service training opportunities and to make information available to officials of local agencies in rural areas on matters pertaining to rural development and revitalization.

18. To consult with and cooperate with agencies and officers, organizations, groups, and individuals representing rural areas or doing rural development and revitalization in such manner as the director may determine will effectively carry out the functions, powers, and duties of the office.

19. To do all things necessary or convenient to carry out the functions, powers, and duties expressly set forth in this section.