Rural Energy for America Program

Technical Assistance Grant | FY 2024 Application Guide

Instructions and notice to applicants:

- This training and educational guide is intended to help you, but you don't have to use it in order to submit an application. It does not replace the information in the Notice of Funding Opportunity posted in the *Federal Register* on February 20, 2024 (available at this link: https://tinyurl.com/473eb46e - PDF).

- Using the application guide will not favorably impact your application.

- Regardless of whether or not you use the guide, you must complete and submit all required federal forms and registrations, and include documentation that supports applicant and project eligibility claims, priority points, and verifications of reserved and matching funds.

- You also must provide complete responses to all application questions.

- Incomplete applications **will not** be considered for funding.

- Certifications, statements, and other standard terms used in this guide (examples include "you," "I," "we," "it," "applicant," "entity," and "grantee," among others) refer to the **legal entity** applying for the REAP Technical Assistance Grant. By checking, signing, or otherwise acknowledging these elements, you confirm they are true and correct.

- Unless otherwise specified in a subsequent *Federal Register* notice, to be considered for funding, you must submit your application electronically at grants.gov/ or by email to the USDA Rural Development state office Energy Coordinator of the state in which your proposed project is located no later than **11:59 p.m. on March 21, 2024**. See the next bullet point for a list of state-based Energy Coordinators.

- If you have questions, your USDA RD state office Energy Coordinator can help. A list is available at this link: tinyurl.com/ydsvbmha – PDF.

- All links in this document were active as of March 2024.

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Section 1: General Information

1.1 Introduction

The Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) program helps eligible applicants provide technical assistance to agricultural producers and rural small businesses applying for funds from the REAP Rural Energy Systems (RES) and Energy Efficiency Improvements (EEI) program. Funding priority is given to TAG applicants proposing to help two or more of the following types of REAP RES or EEI applicants:

- Agricultural producers

- Those pursuing projects in disadvantaged or distressed communities

- Tribal entities

- Those pursuing projects using Underutilized Renewable Energy Technologies

- Those pursuing grant requests under $20,000

In this application guide, you will find information to help you understand the:

- Application process and deadlines

- Components of a completed application

1.2 Authorization

- REAP Technical Assistance Grants are authorized under the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (Public Law 117-169, Title 2, Subtitle C, Section 22002 – available at this link: tinyurl.com/3m4d4txc - PDF).

- The Fiscal Year 2024 Notice of Funding Opportunity posted in the *Federal Register* on February 20, 2024 is available at this link: tinyurl.com/473eb46e - PDF.

1.3 Funding Availability

The funding amount available for Fiscal Year 2024 is $16 million.

1.4 Contacts

- Contact the Rural Development Energy Coordinator in the state in which your proposed project is located: tinyurl.com/ydsvbmha – PDF.

- If you need help with alternative communication options, contact the USDA Target Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice).

1.5 Online Resources

- Additional information about the REAP Technical Assistance Grant program is available at this link: tinyurl.com/5he7f8ss.

- Additional application guidance is in the Fiscal Year 2024 Notice of Funding Opportunity posted in the *Federal Register* on February 20, 2024, available at this link: tinyurl.com/473eb46e - PDF.

Section 2: Requirements for a Complete Grant Application

2.1 Preparing your Application

To be considered for funding, you must be an eligible entity and must submit a complete application by the deadline date. You also must demonstrate compliance (or intent to comply) – through certification or other means – with a number of public policy requirements.

This guide provides a framework of divider pages you can use to organize your application. Each divider lists the documents meant to be filed behind it. Be sure to tab your divider pages as indicated in the guide.

2.2 Actions Required Prior to Submitting Your Application

You are required to obtain a Unique Entity ID (UEI) and maintain active registration in the U.S. Government's System for Award Management (SAM) database, available at this link: sam.gov/content/home. Your registration must be renewed and revalidated every 12 months for as long as you have an active loan, guaranteed loan, or grant with USDA Rural Development.

To ensure your information is current, accurate, and complete, and to prevent SAM account expiration, reviews and updates must be performed within a year of the initial account activation date. The registration process can take up to 10 business days to complete. Additional information about the SAM is available in 2 CFR Part 25, Universal Identifier and System for Award Management, available at this link: go.usa.gov/xJbS4. You can also check the "Help" section at SAM.gov.

IMPORTANT: Be sure to give yourself ample time to complete this requirement, as SAMS system delays – over which USDA has no control – can result in missed application deadlines.

2.3 Required Forms

You must complete and submit the following forms.

- Standard Form 424, "Application for Federal Assistance." The SF-424 forms repository is available at this link: tinyurl.com/3x2nk5z6

- Standard Form 424A, "Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs" (available at this link: tinyurl.com/y4hjsyek)

- Applicant eligibility and project eligibility certification forms as noted in this guide

2.4 Applicant Information (fillable)

Date application submitted to USDA RD [mm/dd/yyyy]: _____

Project Title: _____

NOTE: The maximum grant award to a single applicant cannot exceed $500,000 (or $250,000, depending on state allocations identified in the Notice of Funding Opportunity). No grants less than $100,000 will be awarded. Incomplete applications and those received after the deadline will not be reviewed or considered for funding. Only one application will be accepted per applicant. You cannot apply in multiple states or territories.

Amount of grant request: _____

Submitted by:

Applicant Name: _____

Postal Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip code: _____

Phone number with area code: (___) _____

Fax number: (___) _____

Email address: _____

Email address: _____

Grant Writer's Contact Information:

Full Name: _____

Phone number with area code: (___) _____

Email address: _____

2.5 Table of Contents

Applicant Name: _____

NOTE: You must submit an original, complete application to the USDA Rural Development state office in which your proposed project is located. Your application must include the following elements:

No.	REAP Technical Assistance Grant Application Components	TAB
1.	**Title Page**	None
2.	**Table of Contents**	None
3.	**Civil Rights Information** (this is optional)	A
4.	**Project-specific forms**	B
4a.	SF-424: Application for Federal Assistance	B
4b.	SF-424A: Budget Information (Non-construction programs)	B
4c.	Applicant and project eligibility certification forms	B
5.	**Proposed Scope of Work cover page**	C
5a.	Executive Summary	1
5b.	Project Goals	2
5c.	Geographic Scope and Service Area	3
5d.	Needs of Service Area and Target Audience	4
5e.	Timeline and Resources	5
5f.	Marketing Strategies	6
5g.	Applicant Experience	7
5h.	Financial Information	8
5i.	Itemized Budget	9
5j.	Applicant's Capacity	10
6	Supporting Documentation for scoring criteria in NOFO Section E.1.	D

2.6 TAB A: Civil Rights Information | Optional

The purpose of the following questions is to gather race, ethnicity, and gender information about those who apply for – and participate in – USDA Rural Development programs. **This information will not be used when reviewing applications or determining program eligibility.** Responses are voluntary and will not impact your application. The information provided will be used to help improve the operation of this program, to help USDA design additional opportunities for program participation, and to monitor enforcement of laws that require equal program access. Information will be kept private to the extent permitted by law.

Race (Check all that apply)	(Check all that apply)
American Indian or Alaska Native	
Asian	
Black or African American	
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	
White	

Gender	
Male	
Female	

Ethnicity	
Hispanic or Latino	
Not Hispanic or Latino	

2.7 TAB B: Project-Specific Forms

Be sure to attach all required forms using the guidance in the program NOFO.

- To register in SAM, you must first obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). SAM instructions are available at this link: tinyurl.com/5erxdstv.

- You also must complete the Financial Assistance General Certifications and Representations section in SAM.

- After you obtain a valid UEI, and complete the registration process with SAM, you must include your UEI on form SF-424.

- You must maintain an active SAM registration – with current, accurate, and complete information – at all times during which you have an active federal award, or an application under consideration for a federal award.

- If you have not complied with SAM requirements by the time USDA Rural Development is ready to award REAP Technical Assistance grants, we will consider your application incomplete and ineligible for consideration.

General Forms	Response (Check when complete)
Federal Tax ID Number:	
Active, current System for Award Management (SAM) registration	
Active Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)	

Project-Specific Forms	Response (Check when complete)
SF 424: Application for Federal Assistance	
SF-424A: Budget Information (Non-construction programs)	
Applicant and project eligibility certifications and determinations (see following pages)	

2.7.1: Applicant Eligibility Certification Forms

(A) Type of Applicant

The eligible applicant must be one of the following:

Unit of a state, Tribal, or local government	Certification (Check one)
Land grant college, university, or other institution of higher education	
Rural electric cooperative	
Public power entity*	
A unit of state, Tribal, or local government (including their instrumentalities)**	
A council***	
A nonprofit entity	
Another business entity organized under federal, state, or Tribal law	

*Currently, a "public power entity" is defined as a state or any political subdivision of a state, or any agency, authority, or instrumentality of any one or more of these, or a corporation wholly owned - directly or indirectly – by any one or more of these, competent in developing, transmitting, utilizing, or distributing power. (Additional information is available in Section 217(A)(4), Federal Power Act – 16 U.S. Code 824q, at this link: tinyurl.com/ms9mc87y - PDF.)

**An instrumentality is defined as an organization established, recognized, and controlled by a state, Tribal, or local government for a public purpose, or to carry out special purposes.

***For the purposes of this program, a "council" is defined in 16 U.S. Code 3451 (available at this link: tinyurl.com/yc52nj9v). Examples include Resource Conservation and Development Districts.

(B) Capacity to perform

You must have sufficient capacity to successfully perform or contract the activities proposed in your application. We will assess this based on the information you provide.

Write a summary of information showing sufficient capacity to ensure success:

(C) Legal entity in good standing

You must certify that – as the applicant – you are a legal entity in good standing, and you are operating in accordance with the state or Tribal laws in which you have a place of business.

Are you a legal entity in good standing as described above?	YES	NO

Respond as applicable:

List the state in which you have a place of business	
Name the Tribe with which you operate a place of business	

(D) Legal authority and responsibility

You must show that you have – or agree to obtain – the legal authority necessary to carry out the purposes of the grant.

Provide evidence of your legal authority to carry out the purposes of the grant:

E) Place of business

You must confirm your place of business is located in a U.S. state.

My place of business is located in:

(F) Known relationship with USDA Rural Development employees

If you have a known relationship or association with a USDA RD employee, identify them by name in the space provided below.

Do you have a known relationship with a USDA RD employee?	YES	NO
If yes, list first and last name of the employee or employees below:		

NOTE: If you have previously received a REAP TAG award, your project must be performing at a satisfactory level as determined by USDA Rural Development as of the TAG application date. This includes things such as meeting budget, timelines, reporting, goals, and objectives as defined in your previous REAP TAG award work plan.

2.7.2 Project Eligibility Certifications

REAP Technical Assistance Grants must be used to help awardees provide technical assistance to agricultural producers or rural small businesses applying for REAP Renewable Energy Systems (RES) and Energy Efficient Improvements (EEI) funds.

Funding priority is given to TAG applicants proposing to help two or more of the following types of REAP RES or EEI applicants:

- Agricultural producers
- Those pursuing projects in disadvantaged or distressed communities
- Tribal entities
- Those pursuing projects using Underutilized Renewable Energy Technologies
- Those pursuing grant requests under $20,000

Grant activities must directly relate to providing technical assistance to agricultural producers or rural small businesses who want to apply for REAP RES or EEI funds.

Eligible project activities include:

- Helping agricultural producers or rural small businesses apply for assistance under REAP for Energy Efficiency Improvements, or Renewable Energy Systems

- Providing information on how to improve the energy efficiency of the operations and to use renewable energy technologies and resources in their operations

- Conducting and promoting energy assessments and energy audits defined in 7 CFR 4280.103 (available at this link: tinyurl.com/bd7w4n9h) or other electrical engineering services necessary to complete a REAP application

- Preparing a technical report in accordance with 7 CFR 4280.110(g) – available at this link: tinyurl.com/2nn8whdj

- Helping with System Award Management (SAM) and Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) registrations

- Helping complete a REAP grant application following directives in 7 CFR 4280.116 – available at this link: tinyurl.com/3hb4vbyj

- Helping with construction and performance development following directives in 7 CFR 4280.125 – available at this link: tinyurl.com/mvbycna3

- Helping complete environmental reports and necessary application documentation

- Helping Tribal entities determine applicant and project eligibility

NOTE: Contracted services are allowed.

Examples of ineligible project activities include projects in which funding is not targeted directly toward helping agricultural producers or rural small businesses, or projects which propose to provide Energy Audits or Renewable Energy Development Assistance for residential purposes.

Project Eligibility Questions	Yes	No
Is your grant proposal for providing assistance directly to eligible agricultural producers or rural small businesses?		
Are your proposed project activities occurring in more than one state?		
Do your proposed project activities include conducting and promoting energy assessments or audits as defined in 7 CFR 4280.103 (available at this link: tinyurl.com/bd7w4n9h)?		
Do your proposed project activities include helping REAP applicants complete necessary environmental reports and documentation?		

2.7.3 Applicant and Project Eligibility Certifications | Signatures

Applicant Name:	
Authorized Representative's Name:	
Authorized Representative's Title:	
Authorized Representative's Signature:	
Date signed: (MM/DD/YYYY)	

2.8 Tab C: Scope of Work

In your application, include:

- A description of your proposed project

- Details about the proposed activities to be accomplished, including timeframes for each task, the number of months anticipated for the duration of the project, and the estimated amount of time required from grant approval to when you actually begin your project.

- The proposed scope of work must be typed, single- spaced, in 11-point font. It must not exceed twelve (12) 8.5 x 11" pages.

Your written scope of work narrative also must include the following:

No.	Element	☑
1	An Executive Summary (including a descriptive project title)	
2	A description of your proposed project's goals	
3	The geographic scope or service area of your proposed project, and the rationale used to select the service area	
4*	Identification of the specific needs of the service area and the target audience served, including:	
4a	List or describe the types of technical assistance and proposed services to be provided	
4b	The number of agricultural producers or rural small businesses to be served	
4c	Names and contact information for ag producers or rural small businesses	

4d	The method and rationale used to select ag producers or rural small businesses	
5	A timeline and implementation schedule describing proposed tasks to be accomplished. Indicate whether staff, consultants or contractors will be used.	
6	Detail of your proposed marketing strategies, illustrating how you will market and conduct outreach activities to ag producers or rural small businesses in your proposed service area.	
7*	A description of the applicant's (including contractors) experience in completing similar activities	
8*	Latest financial information showing the applicant's financial viability	
9*	An itemized budget (see next page for details)	
10*	A summary of your capacity to perform proposed technical assistance activities, including outlines of all other programs and activities you will undertake during the proposed project performance period.	

*Additional, corresponding information for items with asterisks follows below.

Definitions of "agricultural producer" and "small business entity":

- An agricultural producer is an individual or entity directly engaged in the production of agricultural products through labor management and operations. Examples include cultivating, growing, and harvesting plants and crops, breeding, raising, feeding livestock, forestry products, hydroponics, nursery stock, or aquaculture in which 50 percent or more of the gross ag business income is derived from operations.

- An entity is considered a small business using the U.S. Department of Commerce Small Business Administration's (SBA) Small Business size standards by the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) in 13 CFR Part 121 – 121.131 (available at this link: tinyurl.com/4ahtuxwk) -or-

- A private, for-profit entity, including a sole proprietorship, partnership, corporation, cooperative, or electric utility (including Tribal or government electric utilities) that provides service to rural consumers. With the exception of Tribal business entities chartered under Section 17 of the Indian Reorganization Act (available at this link: tinyurl.com/n7yraf9n - PDF) or other Tribal business entities with similar structures and relationships with their Tribal governments as determined by USDA Rural Development, these entities must operate independent of direct government control.

IMPORTANT: With the exception of the entities described above, all other nonprofit entities are excluded.

Applicant and contractor experience must be detailed as follows:

- Your experience in completing similar activities, such as renewable energy site assessments, energy assessments or audits, and renewable energy technical assistance provided directly to agricultural producers and rural small businesses or Tribal entities, including the number of similar projects you have performed and the number of years you have been performing a similar service. Be sure to include personnel on staff or to be contracted to provide the service, and describe their experience with similar projects.

- Describe the experience you have in administering activities similar to the purpose of your proposed project. Include any existing programs that demonstrate energy savings or generation with agricultural producers or rural small businesses. Be sure to describe any achievements or accolades in recognition of renewable energy, energy savings, or energy-based technical assistance you have received in the last five years.

- Detail your experience working with agricultural producers, Tribal entities, or disadvantaged or distressed communities.

Provide financial information to show your ability to carry out the proposed work:

A current audit report is preferred. However, if you are not required to follow 2 CFR 200, Subpart F (available at tinyurl.com/347tauf3), you can submit a balance sheet, income statement, and statement of cash flows instead of an audit report.

Here is some additional information regarding your itemized budget:

REAP Technical Assistance Grants can only be used to pay for eligible project costs. Examples include:

- Itemized staff salaries and benefits

- Contracted services

- Travel expenses

- Office supplies

- Direct or indirect grant administration expenses **(up to 5 percent)**

Examples of ineligible project costs include:

- Paying for construction-related activities

- Buying or leasing equipment

- Paying judgements or debts owed to the United States

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- Paying for goods or services provided by a person or entity with a conflict of interest as described in 7 CFR 4280.106 (available at this link: tinyurl.com/42982bcz)

- Covering costs associated with preparing your REAP TAG application

- Funding political or lobbying activities

- Training people to become qualified to perform energy audit or renewable energy development assistance

- Paying or waiving student tuition

Your itemized budget must include contracted services and staff salaries and benefits, along with an estimated breakdown of costs, including those to be funded by the applicant as well as other sources. Sufficient detail is necessary to allow the approval official to determine the reasonableness, applicability, and allowability of your proposal.

IMPORTANT: There are no cost sharing or matching requirements associated with the REAP Technical Assistance Grant.

Section 3: Application Scoring

3.1 Supporting Documentation for Scoring Criteria

Your scoring criteria documentation must be single-spaced, typed in 11-point font and cannot exceed twelve (12), 8.5 x 11 pages. Acceptable file types include:

- Adobe Acrobat Portable Document Format (.pdf)

- Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx), Excel (.xls or .xlsx), PowerPoint (.ppt, or .pptx), or Notepad Text Document File (.txt)

- Joint Photographic Experts Group Image (.jpg) – a data format for photos

- Portable Network Graphic (.png) – a type of raster image file

- Graphics Interchange format (.gif) – another type of raster image file)

If you would like to use a file type not listed above, you must first contact the USDA Rural Development state office in which your proposed project is located to request approval.

3.2 Scoring Elements

All eligible, complete applications will be evaluated and scored using the weighted criteria outlined below. Failure to address any one of these criteria by the application deadline will result in your application being ineligible, and no further action will be taken on it. To be considered for funding, applications must score at least 40 points out of a possible 100.

3.2.1 Experience

Up to 20 points.

Provide a narrative description of your organizational and aggregate staff experience in implementing successful technical assistance programs. You can include internal and contracted experience.

Points are awarded as follows:

1. More than 10 years of successful implementation: 15 points
2. More than 5 years, but fewer than 10 years: 10 points
3. More than 3 years, but fewer than 5 years: 05 points
4. More than 1 year, but fewer than 3 years: 03 points
5. Less than 1 year: 0 points

Note any prior projects or experience you have in working with the types of REAP applicants you plan to support (such as agricultural producers, Tribal entities, or disadvantaged or distressed communities, among others). **Up to 5 points.**

3.2.2 Soundness of Approach

Up to 30 points. A maximum of 15 points can be awarded for each criterion listed below. Address each component with a brief narrative description.

1. Your work plan clearly articulates a well-thought-out approach to accomplishing objectives, clearly identifies who your project will serve, and demonstrates knowledge of – and experience working with – ag producers and rural small businesses.

2. Your goals and objectives are clearly defined, tied to needs defined in your work plan, and are measurable in terms of new REAP applications generated.

3.2.3 Recruiting Priority REAP Projects

Twenty (20) points. Provide a narrative describing which of the following types of priority REAP projects you are targeting:

- Projects requesting $20,000 or less in REAP RES or EEI funds

- Projects in disadvantaged or distressed communities as defined in the REAP Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFA) published in the Federal Register on February 20, 2024 (available at this link: tinyurl.com/473eb46e - PDF)

- A map detailing addresses within a Distressed Community Index (DCI) zip code – or in Climate and Environmental Justice 40 Disadvantaged Communities – is available at this link: tinyurl.com/5n7a46zd

- Projects seeking funding for Underutilized Renewable Energy Technologies (defined as "Technologies comprising fewer than 20 percent of the total grant dollars obligated at the end of the fiscal year **two years prior** to the current fiscal year"). Eligible underutilized technologies will be determined at the time of award and will apply for the duration of the grant performance period.

- Projects submitted by Tribes or prosing to serve primarily Tribal entities

- Projects submitted by agricultural producers

3.2.3 Performance Measures

Up to 10 points. Base your proposed performance measures using the proposed scope of work you provided in **2.8 | Tab C** of this guide. Using effectiveness benchmarks, include a description of how your technical assistance results will be measured. The indicators you use must be specific and quantifiable.

3.2.4 State Director Discretionary Points

Up to 20 points. The USDA Rural Development state director in the state in which your proposed project is located can award up to 20 discretionary points to:

- Address the geographic distribution of funds

- Ensure the selection of priority REAP projects

- Meet the needs of their respective state or region

- Help further a Presidential initiative or Secretary of Agriculture priority.

Section 4: Application Submission Process

To be considered for funding, unless otherwise specified in a subsequent *Federal Register* notice, you must submit your complete, signed application and all required documents to the state office in which your proposed project is located no later than **11:59 p.m. eastern on March 21, 2024.**

A list of offices is available at this link: tinyurl.com/5yuf24mx.

Section 5: The Application Review Process

5.1 Evaluating your Application

A review team will evaluate all applications and proposals. This team will make overall recommendations based on factors such as eligibility, clarity, detailed information, application completeness, and conformity to application requirements.

5.2 Application Selection

Only those applicants that meet the minimum score of 40 points will be considered for funding. All applicants will be notified of their selection status.

All complete, eligible applications will be scored and ranked competitively. USDA Rural Development reserves the right to offer an applicant less than the grant funding requested.

5.3 Appeals Process

Following 7 CFR Part 1900, Subpart B (available at this link: go.usa.gov/xJDaW), applicants generally have the right to appeal adverse decisions. However, some adverse decisions, such as a denial due to lack of available program funds, cannot be appealed.

You can request review by the National Appeals Division (NAD). The appeal must be received within the proper timeframe, in writing, and filed with the appropriate NAD regional office. A list of regional offices is available at this link: go.usa.gov/xJDaN. You can call NAD toll-free at (877) 487-3262.

Civil Rights Information

In keeping with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family or parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary.

If you need an alternative way to receive and understand the information included in this document (for example, Braille, large print, audiotape, or American Sign Language, among others) you can contact the responsible agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY), or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Program information also can be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form (AD-3027, available at this link: https://go.usa.gov/xzzfW) and at any USDA office. Or, write a letter addressed to USDA and provide all of the information requested in the form. You can call (866) 632-9992 to request a copy of the complaint form.

Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

1. **Email**: program.intake@usda.gov
2. **Postal mail**:
   U.S. Department of Agriculture
   Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
   1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410
3. **Fax**: (202) 690-7442

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