



CENTER *for* RURAL AFFAIRS



Heartland
Environmental
Justice Center

Federal Grant Resources for Rural Communities



CENTER FOR RURAL AFFAIRS

ABOUT

The Center for Rural Affairs stands up for small family farmers and ranchers, new business owners, and rural communities. For more than 45 years, we have been the leading force engaging people to build a better rural future.

OUR MISSION

Establish strong rural communities, social and economic justice, environmental stewardship, and genuine opportunity for all while engaging people in decisions that affect the quality of their lives and the future of their communities.





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Heartland Environmental Justice Center

ABOUT

The Heartland Environmental Justice Center supports individuals and organizations who serve in communities that are experiencing environmental injustice across Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, and adjoining Indigenous Nations.

THE EPA DEFINES EJ AS ...

The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.



RURAL RESOURCES



Grant Application Guide for Rural Communities

Prepared by
CENTER for RURAL AFFAIRS
2024

UNIQUE ENTITY ID (UEI) AND SAM.GOV REGISTRATION (PART 1)

This guide was created specifically for entities pursuing FEDERAL GRANTS & LOANS.

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Grant Writer Resource List

Applying for grants can be a time consuming process, especially for rural communities that have limited staff capacity. This resource provides a list of grant writers with expertise to assist communities with funding research and applications. The writers can be hired on a contract basis and fees will differ depending on the length and complexity of the project. All writers listed in this resource are accepting new clients at the time of publication (any known geographic limitations are noted).

Agency/Organization	Contact	Expertise
ABO Grant Consulting	ABO Grant Consulting Frank Shimerda Earling, IA 402.620.0209 frank@aggrants.com aggrants.com	Services: Grant development from proposal to submission, grant reports, technical writing, white papers, newsletters, press releases, website documentation Specialties: Economic and workforce development and education Accomplishments: 15 years of experience with more than \$40 million in funded grants
Acton Grant Consulting, LLC	Acton Grant Consulting, LLC Amanda Acton, GPC, Founder and Chief Dot Connector 515.360.7023 amanda@actonconsulting.net actonconsulting.net	Services: Grant writing, data management, and research Specialties: Rural, health, mental and behavioral health, and homelessness projects, U.S. Department of Agriculture programs Accomplishments: Grant professional certified and more than 20 years in grants and fundraising experience
Ag Visions Enterprises, LLC	Ag Visions Enterprises, LLC Jim Venner Breda, IA 712.830.8391 venner@win-4-u.net	Services: Grant writing Specialties: U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Energy for America Program, and solar and energy efficiency projects
Agriculture Grant Solutions	Agriculture Grant Solutions Alex Freeman, Owner & Grant Manager 650 S. Prairie View Dr. #125 West Des Moines, IA 50266	Services: Grant writing, feasibility studies Specialties: Food and agriculture programs, U.S. Department of Agriculture grants, state programs, and local incentives.



Grant application timeline

Phase 1

Prepare for funding opportunities (1 to 18 months out)

- Gather ideas and community input for project ideas and priorities.
- Create a logic model for a project priority.
- Build relationships with potential partners and stakeholders in the project.
- Register with SAM.gov, login.gov, and grants.gov (allow eight weeks).
- Subscribe to relevant grant notifications and mailing lists.

Phase 2

Prepare the application

- Once released, thoroughly review the RFP.
- Schedule partner meetings and discuss strategy (allow two weeks).
- Draft the narrative and budget (allow three weeks).
- Gather partner letters or letters of support, if necessary (allow two weeks).
- Have a proofreader review the application (allow one week).
- Finalize content (allow one to two weeks).
- Submit the application (aim for three days before the deadline).

Phase 3

Award phase

- Await for the award announcement (two to six months).
- Negotiate final terms of the grant agreement (up to six weeks).



Preparing for Funding Opportunities

SAM.gov

RESOURCES: Sam.gov handouts, Environmental Protection Network Office Hours

- UEI - unique entity identifier
- Can take time.
- Take time/care to keep track of information related to the organization's UEI, recovering it is a headache.

You have an UEI and found a grant, now what?

1. Prepare timelines, identify the problem
 - a. What are you writing for? What am I going to use it for? Why is it important to my community or organization?
2. Have on hand useful data such as: LMI data, census data, historical overview of community
 - a. What are the distinguishing features of your community?
3. Identify possible partners.
 - a. If it shows there will be a bigger impact it can score higher
 - b. If it requires partnerships, look to other communities
 - c. Pick a good partner - someone you can rely on and do their part
4. When to engage a grant writer - benefits of engaging early.
 - a. Can help with understanding eligibility
 - b. Building out the project
 - c. Identifying the grants
 - d. Makes a difference if the grant writer is familiar with the grant - knows about how to structure, reviews, etc.

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Identifying Grants

Notice of Funding Opportunity

A formal announcement of a funding opportunity inviting grant award applications.

- Notice of Funding Opportunity/Funding Opportunity Announcement (NOFA/FOA)
- Request for Proposals/Request for Applications (RFP/RFA)

Finding Grants

- grants.gov
- sign-up for funding newsletters
 - Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Energy, Department of Transportation, US. Department of Agriculture Rural Development
- Afford tool: <https://cityrenewables.org/ffold>
- <https://www.cfra.org/rural-resources>

Attend funding webinars if offered, that review the application process and required documents. Questions might be possible during the webinar.



govinfo.gov: Federal Registry of Grants

6. Schedule the next meeting

The agenda will include time for individuals to make oral statements of three minutes or less. To be scheduled on the agenda, individuals wishing to make an oral statement should make a request in writing at least three days prior to the meeting date. Written comments may be submitted to the Forest Service up to 14 days after the meeting date listed under **DATES**.

Please contact the person listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**, by or before the deadline, for all questions related to the meeting. All comments, including names and addresses when provided, are placed in the record and are available for public inspection and copying. The public may inspect comments received upon request.

Meeting Accommodations: The meeting location is compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the USDA provides reasonable accommodation to individuals with disabilities where appropriate. If you are a person requiring reasonable accommodation, please make requests in advance for sign language interpretation, assistive listening devices, or other reasonable accommodation to the person listed under the **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** section or contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice

communications). USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Dated: June 5, 2024.

Cikena Reid,

USDA Committee Management Officer.

[FR Doc. 2024-12663 Filed 6-7-24; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Housing Service

[Docket No. RHS-24-CF-0012]

Notice of Funding Availability for the Rural Community Development Initiative (RCDI) for Fiscal Year 2024

AGENCY: Rural Housing Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Rural Housing Service (RHS or the Agency), a Rural Development (RD) agency of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), announces the acceptance of applications under the Rural Community Development Initiative (RCDI) program for fiscal year (FY) 2024. Up to \$5 million in funding is available for fiscal year (FY) 2024. These grants will be made to qualified intermediary organizations that will provide financial and technical

initiative-grants. Application information for electronic submissions may be found at *Grants.gov*. Applicants may also request paper application packages from the Rural Development office in their State. A list of Rural Development State office contacts can be found via rd.usda.gov/files/CF_State_Office_Contacts.pdf.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Shirley J. Stevenson, Community Programs Specialist, Rural Development, United States Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20250, Phone: (202) 205-9685, Email: Shirley.Stevenson@usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Overview

Federal Awarding Agency Name: Rural Housing Service (RHS).

Funding Opportunity Title: Rural Community Development Initiative (RCDI).

Announcement Type: Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA).

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-RD-HCFP-RCDI-2024.

Assistance Listing: 10.446.

Dates: Applications must be submitted using one of the following methods:

- *Paper submissions:* The deadline for receipt of a paper application is 4



Examples of Current Grants

REAP Rural Energy for America Program

- 2 application windows left in 2024, June 30 & September 30
- Loans and grants to agricultural producers and rural small businesses
- Purchase and installation of renewable energy systems, and energy efficiency improvements

USDA RD Community Facilities

- Open Year Round
- Public bodies, non-profit corporations, and tribes
- Rural Areas with no more than 20,000 residents
- Purchase, construct or improve community facilities
- Loans, grants or a combination of the 2

Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant

- Deadline of October 31, 2024 for local government and May 31, 2025 for Tribes
- State/Local Government/Tribes
- Develop and implement energy efficiency and conservation strategy, establish financial incentives for energy efficiency improvements, energy audits, energy efficiency retrofits

Community Change Grants

- Deadline of November 21, 2024
- Partnerships between two community-based non-profit organizations (CBO) or partnerships between a CBO and one of the following: a Federally-Recognized Tribe, a local government, an institution of higher education.
- Reduce pollution, increase climate resilience, and build community capacity

What to Look for in the NOFO

1. READ the NOFO, RFP, RFA thoroughly.
2. Make a working copy of NOFO.
 - a. LOI (letter of intent)
3. NOFO (there should be a table of contents)
 - a. Funding range
 - b. Identify any specific requirements for obtaining the grant
 - c. Budget requirements limits/non-allowables
 - d. Number of awards that will be given out
 - e. How is the money given out?
 - i. Reimbursed?
 1. Gap funding - ex. SRLF for water and sewer infrastructure
 2. Cash flow concern
 3. Include in budget
 - ii. Draw down?
4. Application deadlines
5. Contact the federal agency - staff will help
6. Checklist



NOFO, RFA, RFP common Table of Contents

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Writing the Application

1. Make a working copy of the grant application to use while preparing.
 - a. Know the format, portal, pdf, jpeg, etc.

2. Application sections
 - a. Who you are (historical data, demographics, etc.)
 - i. Mission statement
 - ii. Nondiscrimination policy
 - b. Goals
 - i. What you plan to do?
 - ii. Three sentences that describe your project
 1. What is the problem?
 2. Why your plan to address it?
 3. How will things be different (better) when you are done?
 - c. Objectives
 - i. How you plan to do it and why? (steps to achieve goals)
 - d. Outcomes (each activity should have an outcome or result)
 - e. How your project fits into the funding agencies goals?
 - f. Uniqueness
 - g. Previous experience, time and expertise



Writing the Application Cont.

1. Project justification
 - a. Studies, data, documentation to support your plan, need analysis, etc.

2. Budget development
 - a. Narrative and line item budget
 - i. Davis-Bacon

3. Clarity is best
 - a. Explain all costs associated with the grant
 - b. Rounded numbers
 - c. Requirements- matching funds monetary and other private, federal
 - d. Other sources of revenue for project



You've Got the Grant - What's Next?

1. Implementation within the timeline.
2. Awarded less than you were planning on; how to adjust.
 - a. Workplan and budget can and should change; should not be held to the same activities and outcomes with less money; downsize and rearrange as needed
3. Preserve all related documents.
 - a. Documenting throughout
4. Reporting
 - a. Quarterly, annual, determined by agency
5. Invoicing
6. Closeout
 - a. May have monitoring period.
 - b. Final step in the grant process.
 - c. Notice from the funder that all obligations have been met.
 - d. Keep on good terms for future grants.



Tips & Tricks

1. Be creative - help it stand out, but don't be confusing, clarity is best.
2. Use correct language for situation.
 - a. USDA vs EPA objectives and outcomes
3. Look for supplemental documents. Grants.gov often has a 'package' of templates and required forms. (i.e. A9, A424) Grants.gov or the funding agency may also have FAQ documents, which sometimes have details not included in the NOFO.
 - a. Subscribe to the grants.gov grant page to get notified if the NOFO is amended, such as the deadline being extended or corrected errors in the instructions.
4. Be able to say (= write) the project in 3 simple sentences or less: what's the problem, what's your solution, what will be different (better) after the project.
5. Explain why your organization is qualified (ideally, the best choice) to do this project.
6. When responding to questions, it's ok to use the funder's own language to describe your approach or outcomes. Reviewers will be looking for answers specific to the question and those words bring them to your response.
7. It's better to be early than on time when submitting your application.

Questions & Answers

Other topics they might want to see

Center for Rural Affairs:

ruralleaders@cfra.org

Heartland Environmental Justice Center:

heartlandej.org

Here are some graphics you are welcome to use throughout your presentation. Copy/paste onto different slides.

