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| Socially-Disadvantaged Groups Grant  Program 2024 |
| APPLICATION TEMPLATE |
| **THIS IS A GUIDE ONLY** |
| **ALL APPLICATIONS MUST BE SUBMITTED ELECTRONICALLY at** [**http://www.grants.gov**](http://www.grants.gov) |

**NOTICE TO ALL SOCIALLY-DISADVANTAGED GROUPS GRANT APPLICANTS**

* This template is provided to assist you with developing a fiscal year (FY) 2024 application and is not intended to relieve you from your responsibility for reading the FY 2024 SDGG Notice of Funding Availability.
* Use of this application template is not required (optional). However, applicants must provide the required information.
* Use of the template does not imply or ensure a favorable eligibility determination.
* In addition to the information requested in the template, applicants must complete and submit all required Federal forms and registrations and append specified documentation to support claims for applicant eligibility, experience, and local support as specified by the program.
* Applications received that do not include ALL required materials will be considered incomplete and ineligible.
* The **[Instructions]** in the template provides guidance on the requirement and should be deleted prior to submitting your application.
* Applications will not be accepted if the text is less than an 11-point font.

A 2024 SOCIALLY-DISADVANTAGED GROUPS GRANT APPLICATION

Submitted by:

Applicant Type (CHOOSE ONE):

1. Cooperative
2. Group of Cooperatives
3. Cooperative Development Centre

Type of Organization:

1. cooperative
2. Institution of Higher Education
3. Non-Profit

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# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (1 page max)**

**[Instructions]** Provide a summary of the proposal, not to exceed one page, describing the Project, tasks to be completed, and other relevant information that provides a general overview of the Project.

# **ELIGIBILITY DISCUSSION** **(4 page max)**

## Applicant Eligibility

**[Instructions]** PLEASE STATE THE APPLICANT TYPE THAT IS APPLYING FOR THE FUNDING.Describe how you meet the definition of a Cooperative, Group of Cooperatives, or Cooperative Development Center. Your application must show that a majority of the board of directors or governing board is comprised of individuals who are members of Socially-Disadvantaged Groups. Your application must include a list of your board of directors/governing board and the percentage of board of directors/governing board that are members of Socially-Disadvantaged Groups. Please Note: An advisory board for the proposed project does not meet the requirement of majority Socially Disadvantaged members. Your application must also reflect if they have received any SDGG Grant prior to applying for the current year FY2023.

## Use of Funds

**[Instructions]** Discuss how the proposed Project activities meet the FEDERAL NOTICE definition of Technical Assistance and identify the Socially-Disadvantaged Groups that will be assisted.

PROJECT ELIGIBILITY:

## Project Area Eligibility

**[Instructions]** You must provide specific information that details the location of the Project area and explain how the area meets the FEDERAL NOTICE definition of “Rural Area.”

If the project is in PP area/underserved, economically distressed areas please clearly provide in short, the name of the areas/county that are targeted for the project (Please refer to Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool)

## Grant Period Eligibility

**[Instructions]** Provide a time frame for the proposed Project and discuss how the Project will be completed within that time frame. Applications must have a time frame of one year or less. Your proposed time frame should begin no earlier than the grant award date October 1,2024 and end no later than December 31, 2025. You may not have more than one SDGG during the same grant period. If you extend the period of performance for your current award, you may not be eligible to receive a SDGG for the next grant cycle.

Grant period must include breakdown of each task timeframes within the project.

Satisfactory Performance Eligibility

**[Instructions]** If applicable, you must discuss the status of your existing SDGG and/or RCDG award at application time and be performing satisfactorily to be considered for a new SDGG award. Please note that if you have any unspent grant funds on SDGG awards prior to FY 2022, your application will not be considered for funding. If your FY 2023 award has unspent funds of 50 percent or more than what your approved work plan and budget projected at the time of evaluation of your FY 2023 application, your FY 2024 application may not be considered for funding.

If applicable, you must discuss the status of your existing SDGG and/or RCDG award at application time and be performing satisfactorily to be considered for a new SDGG award.

Completeness Eligibility

**[Instructions]** Your application must provide all the information requested in Section D (2) of this Federal Notice. Applications lacking sufficient information to determine eligibility and scoring will be considered ineligible.

Duplication of current services

**[Instructions]** Please indicate if the applicant has received any RCDG/SDGG awards prior to FY2024 application timeframe.You may not duplicate services. Your application must demonstrate that you are providing services to new customers or new services to current customers. If your work plan and budget is duplicative of your existing or any previous RCDG and/or SDGG award, your application will not be considered for funding.

# **SCORING CRITERIA**

## Technical Assistance *(3 page limit)*

**[Instructions]** (a) Technical Assistance(maximum score of 25 points). A panel of USDA employees will evaluate your application to determine your ability to assess the needs of and provide effective Technical Assistance to Socially-Disadvantaged Groups. You must discuss the:

(1) Needs of the Socially-Disadvantaged Groups to be assisted and explain how those needs were determined,

(2) Proposed Technical Assistance to be provided to the Socially-Disadvantaged Groups; and

(3) Expected outcomes of the proposed Technical Assistance by the applicant, including how Socially-Disadvantaged Groups will benefit from participating in the Project. Applicant will score higher on this criterion if you provide examples of past projects funded/not funded from SDGG that demonstrate successful outcomes in identifying specific needs and providing Technical Assistance to Socially-Disadvantaged Groups.

Work Plan / Budget *(6 page limit)*

**[Instructions**] (b) Work Plan /Budget (maximum of 25 points). Your work plan must provide specific and detailed descriptions of the tasks and the key project personnel that will accomplish the project’s goals. Budget will be reviewed for completeness. You must list what tasks are to be done, when it will be done, timeframe associated with each tasks, who will do it, and how much it will cost. Reviewers must be able to understand what is being proposed and how the grant funds will be spent. The budget must be a detailed breakdown of estimated costs. These costs should be allocated to each of the tasks to be undertaken. The amount of grant funds requested will be reduced if the applicant does not have justification for all costs.

A panel of USDA employees will evaluate your work plan for detailed actions and an accompanying timetable for implementing the proposal. Clear, logical, realistic, and efficient plans that reconciles specific tasks using applicable budget object class categories provided on the Form SF-424A will result in a higher score. Please refer to Federal Notice for more details.

You must discuss at a minimum:

1. Specific tasks to be completed using grant funds.
2. How customers will be identified.
3. Key personnel, and how their qualifications are tied to workplan task(s)
4. The Applicants evaluation methods to be used to determine the success of specific tasks and overall project objectives. Please provide qualitative methods of evaluation. For example, evaluation methods should go beyond quantitative measurements of completing surveys or number of evaluations.

The following task budget format is strongly recommended to ensure all required budgetary information is provided. Please note, your work plan should provide an explanation for each task budget, including the basis for budget figures.

**Task Budget Format – (***Edit budget categories and add additional tables as needed.)*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Activity Number(Activity can have more than one Tasks)** | **Task Description** | **Key Personnel** | | | **Timeframe**  **Start date & End date** | **Total** |
| 1. Activity 1 | Task 1 |  | | |  | Personnel: $  Fringe Benefits: $  Travel: $  Supplies: $  Contractual: $  Other: $  **Task 1 Total**: $ |
|  | Task 1 – Narrative budget justification | | | | |
|  | Task 2 |  | | |  | Personnel: $  Fringe Benefits: $  Travel: $  Supplies: $  Contractual: $  Other: $  **Task 2 Total**: $ |
|  | Task 2 – Narrative budget justification | | | | |
|  | Task 3 |  | | |  | Personnel: $  Fringe Benefits: $  Travel: $  Supplies: $  Contractual: $  Other: $  **Task 3 Total**: $ |
|  | Task 3 – Narrative budget justification | | | | |
|  | Task 4 | |  |  | | Personnel: $  Fringe Benefits: $  Travel: $  Supplies: $  Contractual: $  Other: $  **Task 4 Total**: $ |
|  | Task 4 – Narrative budget justification | | | | | |
|  | **TOTAL** | | | | | | $ |

## Experience *(3 page limit)*

**[Instructions]** (c) Experience (maximum score of 25 points). A panel of USDA employees will evaluate your experience, commitment and availability for identified staff or consultants in providing Technical Assistance, as defined in this Notice. Applicant must describe the Technical Assistance experience for each identified staff member or consultant, as well as years of experience in providing that assistance. Applicant must also discuss the commitment and the availability of identified staff, consultants, or other professionals to be hired for the project—especially those who may be consulting on multiple SDGG/RCDG projects. If staff or consultants have not been selected at the time of application, applicant must provide specific descriptions of the qualifications required for the positions to be filled. In addition, resumes for each individual staff member or consultant must be included as an attachment in Appendix B. The attachments will not count toward the maximum page total. We will compare the described experience in this section and in the resumes to the work plan to determine relevance of the experience. Applications that do not include the attached resumes will not be considered for funding.

Applications that demonstrate strong credentials, education, capabilities, experience and availability of Project personnel that will contribute to a high likelihood of Project success will receive more points than those that demonstrate less potential for success in these areas.

## Commitment *(3 page limit)*

**[Instructions**] (d) Commitment (maximum of 10 points). A panel of USDA employees will evaluate your commitment to providing Technical Assistance to Socially-Disadvantaged Groups in Rural Areas.

You must list the number and location areas and counties of Socially-Disadvantaged Groups that will directly benefit from the assistance provided. You must also define and describe the underserved and economically distressed areas within your service area and provide current and relevant statistics that support your description of the service area. All project activities must be for the benefit of a rural area, or Persistent Poverty counties, as defined in The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022, SEC. 736, with a population that does not exceed 55,000. Projects located in persistent poverty counties as defined by USDA’s Economic Research Service will score higher on this factor.

## Local Support *(3 page limit)*

**[Instructions**] (e) Local support (maximum of 10 points). A panel of USDA employees will evaluate your application for local support of the Technical Assistance activities. The discussion on local support should include previous and/or expected local support and plans for coordinating with other developmental organizations in the proposed service area or with state and local government institutions. Applicant will score higher if they demonstrate strong support from potential beneficiaries of the proposed Technical Assistance and other developmental organizations. Applicant may also submit a maximum of 10 letters of support or intent to coordinate with the application to verify your discussion.

Support letters should come from potential beneficiaries of the proposed Technical Assistance and other local organizations. Letters received from Technical Assistance providers, USDA Agency staff and Congressional members will not be included in the count of support letters received. Letters must be dated and signed after the publication date of this Federal Notice. Additionally, letters having the appearance of being identical in form and signed by multiple potential beneficiaries and/or local organizations will not be included in the count of support letters received. Support letters should be included as an attachment (Appendix C) to the application and will not count against the maximum page total.

Administrator Discretionary Points (1 page limit)

**[Instructions**] (f)Administrator Discretionary Points (maximum of 10 points).

The Administrator may choose to award points to an eligible application that has never previously been awarded an SDGG grant and/or whose application seeks to advance identified key priorities addressed in the Supplemental Section of the Federal Notice.  The applicant must specifically discuss how their work plan addresses one or more of the key priorities of the administration.

Points will be assigned as follows:

I. Applicant has never received a SDGG award – 5 points;

II. Applicant seeks to advance one or more key priorities addressed in the Supplemental

Section of this notice – 5 points

# **PERFORMANCE EVALUATION MEASURES**

**[Instructions**] You must provide estimates on the following USDA/RD Annual performance measures as part of your narrative:

* Number of cooperatives assisted; and
* Number of socially disadvantaged groups assisted

And, if applicable:

* Number of jobs created/saved.
* Number of jobs created/saved in persistent poverty area and or underserved and economically distressed areas .
* Number of business plans developed.
* Number of Cooperatives incorporated.
* Number of Feasibility Studies completed.
* Number of workshops /seminars conducted.
* Number of conferences held.
* For consumer coops (grocery, retail), number of people with access to goods or services.

# **Appendix A**

**[Instructions**] If applying as a Cooperative or a Group of Cooperatives, Applicants must verify your incorporation and status in the State that you have applied by providing the State’s Certificate of Good Standing and your Articles of Incorporation. Applicant should submit their Bylaws in case they provide additional information not included in Articles of Incorporation that will verify your status as a Cooperative or a Group of Cooperatives. If applying as a nonprofit corporation, applicant must provide evidence of your status as a nonprofit corporation in good standing and your Articles of Incorporation. If applying as an institution of higher education, you must qualify as an Institution of Higher Education as defined at 20 U.S.C. 1001. You must apply as only one type of applicant. If the requested verification documents are not included, your application will not be considered for funding.

# **Appendix B**

**[Instructions**] Resumes for each individual/all personnel listed on the Workplan/Budget and Experience sections must be included. Provide their experience for the type of Technical Assistance proposed. The attachments will not count toward the maximum page total. We will compare the described experience to the work plan to determine relevance of the experience. Applications that do not include the attached resumes will not be considered for funding.

# **Appendix C**

**[Instructions**] Applicant may submit a maximum of 10 letters of support. Support letters should come from potential beneficiaries receiving proposed Technical Assistance and other local organizations. Letters received from Technical Assistance providers and Congressional members will not be included in the count of support letters received. Letters must be signed and dated after the publication of Federal Notice. Additionally, letters having the appearance of being identical in form signed by multiple potential beneficiaries and/or local organizations will not be included in the count of support letters received.