

Water and Waste Disposal Technical Assistance and Training Grant Program | Fiscal Year 2024 Application Guide

Instructions and notice to applicants:

- This guide is intended to help you, but you don't have to use it in order to submit an application.
- 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 ensure you provide complete responses to all questions in the application.
- 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 Technical Assistance and Training Grant program. By checking, signing, or otherwise acknowledging these elements, you confirm they are true and correct.
- To be considered for Technical Assistance and Training Grant program funding, you must submit your complete, signed application and all required documents to no later than **11:59 p.m. eastern time on December 31, 2023**.

A note about website links: For ease of reference, this guide provides links to relevant, useful information hosted outside the USDA domain. Please be aware that, when you access information through a link provided in this document, you are subject to the copyright and licensing restrictions of those sites. All links in this document were active as of June 2023.

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Section 1: Technical Assistance and Training Grant

1.1 Introduction

The Water and Waste Disposal Technical Assistance and Training Grant (TAT) program is designed to assist communities with water or wastewater systems through technical assistance and training provided by grant recipients to rural water and wastewater organizations. Qualified private, nonprofit organizations receive TAT program funds to identify and evaluate solutions to water and waste disposal problems in rural areas, assist applicants in preparing applications for water and waste grants made at state-level offices, and improve the operation and maintenance of existing water and waste disposal facilities in rural areas.

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

- Application process and deadlines
- Components of a completed application
- Scoring criteria and application review process

1.2 Authorization

The Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act (CONACT) Section 306(a)(14)(A) authorizes the TAT program (see 7 U.S.C. 1926(a) (available at this link: <https://go.usa.gov/xMvaY>).

The regulation implementing the TAT program is found in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). Should any differences result in the interpretation of these guidelines and 7 CFR Part 1775 – Technical Assistance Grants, the regulation will take precedence over information contained in this guide. This guide is to be used in conjunction with 7 CFR Part 1775 (available at this link: <https://go.usa.gov/xMva8>).

1.3 Fiscal Year 2024 Funding Availability

The funding amount available for Fiscal Year 2024 will be determined when the budget is approved by Congress.

1.4 Contact

USDA Rural Development's Rural Utilities Service, Water and Environmental Programs (WEP) staff administers the TAT program. The grant manager is Lorrie Davis, Community Programs Specialist. If you have questions, contact the WEP staff early in your application process.

Email: Water-RD@usda.gov

Phone: (202) 720-1938

1.5 Online Resources

Additional information about the TAT program is available at <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/water-environmental-programs/water-waste-disposal-technical-assistance-training-grants>

Additional application guidance is available in the Fiscal Year 2024 Notice of Solicitation of Applications (NOSA) available at this link: <https://www.grants.gov/>.

Section 2: Requirements for a Complete Grant Application

2.1 Preparing the Application

To be considered for funding, you must be an eligible entity and must submit a complete application by the deadline date. You should consult the cost principles and general administrative requirements for grants pertaining to their organizational type in order to prepare the budget and complete other parts of the application. You also must demonstrate compliance (or intent to comply), through certification or other means, with a number of public policy requirements.

2.2 Required Forms

Applicants must complete and submit the following forms to apply for a TAT. **Note:** Forms are available via www.sam.gov or www.grants.gov. All forms are required regardless of the method of submittal.

- Standard Form 424, “Application for Federal Assistance”
- Standard Form 424A, “Budget Information—Non-Construction Programs”
- Standard Form LLL, “Disclosure of Lobbying Activity”
- Other required supporting forms and information as listed in 7 CFR Part 1775.10 (c) and (d) (available at this link: <https://go.usa.gov/xMfVz>).

2.3 Project Proposal

The project proposal must outline the project in sufficient detail to provide the reader with a complete understanding of how the proposed project will work. Explain what your project will accomplish by utilizing the grant funds. Demonstrate the feasibility of the proposed project in meeting the objectives of this grant program. Proposals must be no more than 20 pages, single-sided, using a font size of 12 points (The Times New Roman font is preferred). The proposal must cover the following

elements:

2.3.1 Project Summary

Present a brief project overview. Explain the purpose of the project, how it relates to USDA Rural Development's purposes, how you will carry out the project, what the project will produce, and who will direct it.

2.3.2 Needs Assessment

Describe why the project or service is necessary. Demonstrate why eligible entities need grant funds. Quantify the number of prospective communities or provide statistical or narrative evidence that enough communities exist to justify the grant award. Describe the service area, including the names of communities to be served, population, and median household income (MHI). Address the specific needs of the proposed service area.

2.3.3 Project Goals and Objectives

Clearly state your project goals. Your objectives must clearly describe these goals and be concrete and specific enough to be quantitative or observable. They must also be feasible and relate to the purpose of the project.

2.3.4 Project Narrative

The narrative must cover in more detail the items briefly described in the Project Summary. It must establish the basis for any claims that you have substantial expertise in providing effective Technical Assistance and Trainings. In describing what the project will achieve, tell the reader if it also will have broader influence. The narrative must address the following points:

A. Work Plan

The work plan must describe the tasks and activities that will be accomplished with available resources during the grant period. It must show the work you plan to do to achieve the anticipated outcomes, goals, and objectives set out for the TAT program. The plan must include:

- The benefits of the technical assistance or training
- A brief description of how the service will be provided, and whether currently employed personnel or contracted personnel will be used

B. Budget and Budget Justification

The written justification for projected costs must explain how budget figures were determined for each category. It also must indicate which

costs are to be covered by grant funds, and which costs will be met by your organization or other entities. The justification must account for all expenditures discussed in the narrative. It must reflect appropriate cost-sharing contributions. The budget justification also must explain the budget and accounting system proposed or already in place.

The administrative costs for operating the budget must be expressed as a percentage of the overall budget. The budget justification must provide specific budget figures, rounding-off figures to the nearest dollar.

Applicants must consult 2 CFR Part 200, Subpart E “Cost Principles,” (available at this link: <https://go.usa.gov/xMvaQ>) for information about appropriate costs for each budget category.

C. Area(s) to be Served

Describe the areas to be served, including population, non-metropolitan median household income (MHI) information, and the name and state of association(s) or type of association(s) that will be served as defined by 7 CFR Part 1775.2, Definitions (available at this link: <https://go.usa.gov/xMfdz>). Also describe the method used to select the association(s) that will receive the service.

D. Summary of Experience

Provide a concise summary of experience of the organization to provide the proposed service. More details, including experience of key staff members, resumes, and person(s) providing the technical assistance and training, can be included in an appendix.

E. Evaluation Method(s)

Describe the evaluation method(s) to determine if objective(s) or the proposed activity is being accomplished.

F. Duration of Project or Service

Briefly describe the duration of the project or service, and the estimated time from grant approval to beginning of project or service, not to exceed 12 months. The grant period generally begins on October 1 of each year and ends September 30 of the following year.

G. Sustainability

Briefly describe the plans for increased self-sustainability for the project or service in future years, including how the project will be sustained in the future without federal award.

Briefly describe the duration of the project or service, and the estimated time from grant approval to beginning of project or service, not to exceed 12 months. The grant period begins October 1 of each year and ends September 30 of the following year.

H. Administrative Points

Only include if the applicant would like to be considered for administrative points on the factors listed in Section 4.3.

2.4 Required Information Not Found on Standard Application Forms

In addition to completing the standard application forms, you must submit the following supplementary materials:

1. **Evidence of Legal Existence.** Demonstrate that your organization is legally recognized under state and federal law. Examples of satisfactory documentation include certificates from the Secretary of State, or copies of state statutes or laws establishing your organization. Letters from the IRS awarding tax-exempt status are not considered adequate evidence.
2. **List of Directors and Officers.** Submit a current certified list of directors and officers with their respective terms.
3. **IRS Tax exempt Status.** Submit evidence of tax-exempt status from the IRS.
4. **Audit.** Submit a copy of the most recent audit of your organization. A link for website access to an audit is not acceptable.
5. **Financial statements.** Submit the following financial statements:
 - Balance sheets
 - Income and cash flow statements for the last three years.
 - If the applicant organization was formed fewer than three years ago, financial statements must be submitted for the periods from inception to the present, including the pro-forma balance sheet at start-up and for at least three additional years.
6. **Other Organizational Documents.** If contracting with an affiliated organization, provide the contract or legal documents that illustrate the affiliation between the contractor and your organization. For additional information, contact the WEP staff at 202-720-1938.

2.5 Additional Information Not Found on Standard Application Forms

You can present additional information to support and describe your plan for

achieving the grant objectives. This information, which can include such things as letters of support, resolutions, and policies, can be regarded as essential for understanding and evaluating your proposed project. Such supplements can be presented in appendices to your proposal.

Section 3: Application Submission Process

3.1 Electronic Filing

Applications must be filed electronically using Grants.gov (available at this link: <https://www.grants.gov>). The TAT program application package can be found by searching for the grant opportunity number located on the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) available at this link: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/water-environmental-programs/water-waste-disposal-technical-assistance-training-grants>.

NOTE: USDA Rural Development will not accept applications by email or fax. If you have questions, see Section 1.4 for contact information.

3.2 Actions Required Prior to Submitting Your Application

You are required to get 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: <https://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's Rural Utilities Service.

To ensure your information is current, accurate, and complete, and to prevent SAM account expiration, reviews and updates must be performed within 365 days 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: <https://go.usa.gov/xJbS4>. You can also check the "Help" section at SAM.gov.

3.3 Application Window

The FY 2024 application window opens on October 2, 2023. To be considered for FY 2024 funding, your application must be time-stamped electronically on www.grants.gov no later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on the filing deadline December 31, 2023.

NOTE: If a receipt date falls on a weekend or a federal holiday, the deadline will be extended to the next business day.

Section 4: The Application Review Process

4.1 Acknowledging Receipt of your Application

USDA Rural Development will acknowledge by email receipt of your application. It will be reviewed for completeness to determine if you included all required items.

4.2 Evaluating your Application

A review team, composed of at least two members, will independently 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. They will score the applications based on criteria in the next section.

4.3 Scoring Criteria

The application and supporting information will be used to determine the applicant's priority for available funds. All applications will be reviewed and scored for funding priority in accordance with this application guide. Points will be given only for factors that are well documented in the application package and, in the opinion of the reviewers, meet the objective outlined under each factor, as guided by 7 CFR Part 1775.11, Priority (available at this link: <https://go.usa.gov/xMf2w>) and outlined below.

1. **Project Area** (10 points possible)

National Organization	(10 points)
Multi-State Organization	(5 points)
Single-State/Area Organization	(2 points)

2. **Applicant experience at developing and implementing successful technical assistance or training programs similar to the proposed project** (5 points possible)

More than ten years	(5 points)
Six to ten years	(2 points)
Up to five years	(1 point)

3. **Applicant resources: Use of grant funds for grantee's staff versus contract personnel to carry out the technical assistance or training** (10 points possible)

At least 75 percent staff	(10 points)
Between 50 percent and 74.99 percent staff	(5 points)
Fewer than 50 percent staff*	(ineligible)

4. **Population of the proposed area or areas to be served - based on the 2020 U.S. Census** – available at this link: [Census Bureau Data \(P1 Table for population\)](#) (15 points possible)

Fewer than 2,500	(up to 15 points)
Fewer than 5,500	(up to 10 points)
5,500 or more	(0 points)

5. **State Nonmetropolitan Median Household Income (SNMHI) of the proposed area(s) to be served based on data from the 2017-2021 American Community Survey**, available at this link [Census Bureau Data \(S1903 or B19013 tables\)](#) (up to 10 points possible)

Less than 80 percent of the SNMHI	(up to 10 points)
80 percent to 100 percent of the SNMHI	(up to 5 points)
More than 100 percent of the SNMHI	(0 points)

6. **Duration of projects providing technical assistance or training** (up to 5 points possible)

Projects meeting the objective within a 12-months or less timeframe	(5 points)
Projects that last more than 12 months	(0 points)

7. **Needs assessment: The problems or issues being addressed are clearly defined, supported by data, and address the need** (up to 15 points possible)

8. **Goals and objectives are clearly defined, tied to the need as defined in the work plan, and are measurable** (up to 15 points possible)

9. **Work plan: The work plan clearly articulates a well-thought-out approach to accomplishing objectives, and clearly identifies who will be served by the project** (up to 40 points possible)

10. **Actual assistance provided** (projects using multiple methods may receive a maximum total score of up to 30 points for this criterion)

Applicant is providing “hands-on” technical assistance or training primarily to water and waste systems managers and operators	(10 points)
Applicant is providing technical assistance primarily through the distribution of educational materials and other outreach methods	(10 points)
Applicant is providing technical assistance through a demonstration and/or evaluation project	(5 points)
Applicant is providing technical assistance to address the contamination of drinking water and surface water supplies by emerging contaminants, including per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances	(5 points)

11. Evaluation methods are specific to the activity, clearly defined, measurable, and with expected project outcomes (up to 20 points possible)

12. In-kind support (up to 10 points possible)

Demonstrated commitment of non-federal resources of more than 25 percent of the total project costs (10 points)

Demonstrated commitment of non-federal resources of ten percent to 25 percent of the total project costs (5 points)

Fewer than ten percent of non-federal resources committed toward total project costs (0 points)

13. Sustainability: The applicant demonstrates ability to sustain the project without federal awards using a thorough financial analysis, including such things as cash on hand, projected revenues, and outside source contributions (up to 10 points possible)

14. Administrator discretion: The Administrator for the Rural Utilities Service can provide additional points based on geographic, economic, or agency priority issues** (up to 15 points possible)

* In accordance with 7 CFR 1775.35(e)(3), Eligibility (available at this link: <https://go.usa.gov/xMw5X>), applicants can contract with a nonaffiliated organization for not more than 49 percent of the grant to provide the proposed assistance. WEP's definition of an affiliated organization is as follows:

1. In corporate law and taxes, an affiliate is a company that is related to another company, usually by being in the position of a member or a subordinate role (must be verified by organizational documentation). Two companies may be affiliated if one company has control over the other, or if both are controlled by a third company, and
2. One corporation can be affiliated with another corporation by shareholdings, by holding a minority interest, or one corporation might be a subsidiary of another.

** Administrator's discretion, which can include such factors as:

- Assisting rural communities recover economically through more and better market opportunities and through improved infrastructure.
- Ensuring all rural residents have equitable access to Rural Development (RD) programs and benefits from RD funded projects; and
- Reducing climate pollution and increasing resilience to the impacts of climate change through economic support to rural communities.

Administrative points are awarded solely on the above three factors: five points

each – up to 15 points.

More information about USDA Rural Development’s priority points is available at this link: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/priority-points>.

4.4 Application Selection

USDA Rural Development will rank all qualifying applications by their final averaged score. Applications will be selected for funding, based on the highest scores and the availability of funding for TAT program. USDA reserves the right to make no grant awards if all applications are incomplete or score or earn low scores, in the opinion of USDA. All applicants will be notified of their selection status by email.

4.5 Possible Application Actions

USDA Rural Development will decide among the following:

- Eligible, and selected for funding
- Eligible, but offered fewer funds than requested
- Eligible, but not selected for funding
- Ineligible

4.6 Appeals Process

In accordance with 7 CFR Part 1900, Subpart B (available at this link: <https://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 TAT program funds, cannot be appealed.

Applicants 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:

<https://www.usda.gov/oha/nad/contact>. You can call NAD toll-free at (877) 487-3262.

Appendix: Rules and Regulations

- 7 CFR Part 1775, “Technical Assistance Grants” – available at this link: <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-XVII/part-1775>
- 7 CFR Part 1900, Subpart B: Adverse Decisions and Administrative Appeals – available at this link: <https://go.usa.gov/xJDaW>
- 2 CFR Part 200: Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards – available at this link:

<https://go.usa.gov/xJjq4>

- 2 CFR Part 400: Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards – available at this link: <https://go.usa.gov/xJDrv>
- Code of Federal Regulations – available at this link: <https://www.ecfr.gov/>

Civil Rights Information

In accordance 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. Those with disabilities who need alternative means of communication (for example, Braille, large print, audiotape, and American Sign Language, among others) 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. Call (866) 632-9992 to request a copy of the complaint form. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) postal mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 (2) fax: (202) 690-7442, or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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