

**Rural Energy for America
Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) Program
Frequently Asked Questions
Maine**

We've been following the REAP program for years. What is new?

This is the first time [Technical Assistance Grants](#) (TAG) have been offered. The purpose of the REAP TAG Program is to enable applicants to provide technical assistance to agricultural producers and rural small businesses applying to REAP, with priority for applicants assisting distressed or disadvantaged communities and for applicants pursuing projects using underutilized technologies or seeking grants under \$20,000.

If I'm interested in applying for TAG funding, where should I begin?

Begin by reviewing the information in the [Federal Register :: Notice of Funding Opportunity for Rural Energy for America Program Technical Assistance Grant Program for Fiscal Year 2023](#). This document is often called simply the "NOFO," and you should read it carefully before deciding whether to apply and during the application process.

The NOFO contains some unfamiliar language. Where can I find definitions?

Please refer to [eCFR :: 7 CFR Part 4280 -- Loans and Grants](#).

How much time do we have to take advantage of this new program, and will it be offered again?

The deadline to apply for the current REAP TAG round is August 15th, 2023. We anticipate that there *may* be future opportunities to apply, but that is not certain.

Does this program impact the deadline for regular REAP grant applications?

No. REAP applications are due by September 30th.

What are the maximum and minimum grant amounts, and how long will awardees have to utilize the funds?

The minimum award is \$100,000 and the maximum is \$500,000. The funds must be utilized within 3 years. Ideally, we will make awards for several different types of technical assistance. It is not possible to request an extension beyond three years.

Can a business or organization apply for a Technical Assistance Grant to fund its own future REAP grant application?

No. The TAG program is designed so that one business or organization can provide technical assistance to multiple rural businesses and farms. Awardees may use the funds to provide grant

writing or other consultations to assist these entities in applying for a REAP grant, or they may provide assistance not directly related to REAP.

What is meant by an “underutilized technology”?

Underutilized technology and underutilized renewable energy technology is defined as “renewable energy technologies which make up less than 20 percent of the total grant dollars obligated at the end of the fiscal year, two years before the current year.” For this opportunity, all renewable energy technologies are considered underutilized except solar photovoltaic (PV) systems.

Is TAG funding only available for advising regarding renewable energy system installations?

No. Energy assessments and efficiency upgrades are examples of other services that may be eligible. Refer to the NOFO for more information.

When planning our proposal, how do we know if a particular address or community is considered rural?

Almost all of Maine is classified as “rural” except for Portland and areas immediately surrounding Portland. You can check the eligible areas map here: [Eligibility \(usda.gov\)](https://www.usda.gov/eligibility)

If my company puts together a proposal, do we have to spell out exactly what entities will receive our services if we are awarded TAG funds?

No, you do not need to specify the recipients in advance. However, you do need to clearly define the recruitment plan you will use. (Read the NOFO for more details.) Although you do not have to designate your applicants in advance, you must have a plan in place to ensure you meet established goals such as serving an underserved community and facilitating installation of underutilized technology.

Are there specific communities that your office considers to be underserved?

Yes. During the “office hours” webinar we offered regarding this grant opportunity, Maine State Director Rhiannon Hampson was more specific. She noted that we would like to ensure that populations that may have limited connectivity, BIPOC organizations, farmers and small business owners for whom English is a second language, etc. are included. Successful applicants should design their recruitment efforts to reach a diverse rural audience. See the [Executive Order On Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#) for more detail.

If my business or organization is awarded a REAP TAG, how will we access the funds?

The funds will be distributed on a reimbursement basis. Keep records of the eligible services your business provides, including the entities you worked with, the date(s), their location, hours spent on the TA, mileage for any site visit(s), and what you provided for TA. Be prepared to provide a copy of this information and documentation of the work completed.

Is it possible to get an advance on TAG funds (before providing services), or are they only available by reimbursement?

Although the NOFO indicates this may be possible, we do *not* anticipate providing advances. We expect that the funds will be distributed on a reimbursement basis only.

What happens if we are awarded a grant and cannot use all the funds in three years?

It is not possible to receive an extension. Any unused funds will revert to the U.S. Treasury and will no longer be available to the awardee or the program. Although there is no penalty for not using all of your grant, returning funds potentially impacts future funding for the program. Please budget carefully and request an amount that you expect to be able to use in that timeframe.

How do we formally submit our completed application?

Please notify Katrina Shaw, RBCS Maine State Energy Coordinator (email katrina.shaw@usda.gov or call her at 207-990-9129), that you intend to apply. To submit your application, you may:

- Deliver the application in person to the State Office in Bangor (967 Illinois Avenue, Suite 4) by 4 pm on August 15, 2023, or
- Email the application to the State Energy Coordinator, Katrina Shaw (Katrina.Shaw@usda.gov) by 11:59 pm on August 15, 2023, or
- Apply online through <https://www.Grants.gov> by 11:59 pm on August 15, 2023.

Any applications received after these times will not be reviewed or considered for funding.

My company works in multiple states. Must I apply in each state?

You may submit one application for up to \$500,000 in the state of your choice and explain in the application which states you will cover, or you may submit applications in each state in which you intend to provide REAP TAG services. Keep in mind that the grant award cannot exceed \$500,000 per applicant.

Can we provide TA to entities that are not eligible for REAP, such as schools, non-profits, municipalities, or businesses not in rural areas?

No. Funding must be targeted to agricultural producers and rural small businesses. Assisting schools, nonprofits, urban businesses, etc. would not be eligible activities.

Can we include administrative costs in our REAP TAG proposal?

Up to 5% of the grant award can be used for administrative costs. The balance of a proposed budget must be for costs that are directly related to technical assistance,

We are already actively providing technical assistance to REAP applicants now. Can I submit those costs as part of a reimbursement request if my company wins a TAG grant?

No. Only costs incurred for services provided after the date a complete application is received by the Agency can be considered. You will receive a letter with the date that your application was deemed complete.

When will my company find out if we will receive a REAP TAG?

We will begin scoring applications once they are deemed complete. The timeline for awards will depend upon how many applications are received, but we expect to notify recipients in early September. All awards will be made no later than September 30th.

If we know of a farm or rural business that wants to receive free technical assistance to prepare their REAP proposal, should we advise them to wait until September to apply?

That depends on the capacity of that farm or business. It is normally advisable to apply sooner rather than later. They could miss out on the current round of REAP funding if they delay applying.

My company has never received a grant like this, and we are nervous about the compliance requirements if we are awarded. Is there any help available to navigate this?

Yes. Our office will provide a voluntary training session to successful applicants to explain program specifics, the reimbursement process, reporting requirements, etc. shortly after the awards are announced.

How can businesses find out who has received TAG awards to request free technical assistance?

Once the awards are finalized, we will post a list online of awardees who will be offering free technical assistance as a result. With this or any other questions, you may also contact:

Katrina L. Shaw
RBCS Maine State Energy Coordinator
Rural Development
United States Department of Agriculture
967 Illinois Avenue, Suite 4 | Bangor, ME 04401-2767
Phone: 207-990-9129
Fax: 855-589-1098