|  |
| --- |
| **2025 Rural Business Development Grant Application****Submit the Following:**  |
| [ ] Application Template Sections 1-4[ ] Appendix A- Required Documents[ ] Appendix B- Organizational Documents and Attorney Opinion[ ] Appendix C- Proposed Scope of Work[ ] Appendix D-Leveraged Funds Verification[ ] Appendix E-Documentation of Experience[ ] Appendix F-Letters from Businesses Assisted[ ] Appendix G-Additional Supporting Documentation[ ] Appendix H-Financial Documentation**Submit tO:**Denise SundeenBusiness and Cooperative Program DirectorUSDA Rural DevelopmentPO Box 1737Bismarck, North Dakota 58502-1737**You must submit your application by February 28, 2025 or it will not be considered for funding. Original paper applications hand delivered, mailed, shipped, or sent overnight must be received by 4:30 PM CST, local time, on February 28, 2025. Electronic applications submitted via** **denise.sundeen@usda.gov** **must be received by 4:30 PM CST on February 28, 2025. Late applications are not eligible for grant funding in FY 2025.** *The RBDG program operates under RD Instruction 4280-E located at:* [*http://www.rd.usda.gov/files/4280e.pdf*](http://www.rd.usda.gov/files/4280e.pdf)*This application template is a guide created to assist the applicant in submitting a complete RBDG application. The application guide does not replace the instruction.* ***Use of the application guide is not required (Optional)****. However, applicants must provide all required information as stated in the Instruction. The Agency may request additional information to assist in the application review process. Applicants are encouraged to read the Instruction and discuss the program requirements with USDA Rural Development staff.* |

This application guide and the required attachments may serve as your Rural Business Development Grant application. Please complete all questions, attach requested forms, complete and attach the requested information in each of the appendices. If an area does not apply to your grant, please indicate (N/A).

Grant applicants are encouraged to print this guide, read it through in its entirety (including the Q&A and Notes Sections) and then begin to build your RBDG application. A word version of this application guide is available upon request. **This guide does not replace RD Instruction 4280-E, “Rural Business Development Grants.” Your application will be processed in accordance with RD 4280-E.**

The required forms listed within the application are available on our website or from any USDA Rural Development office.

# NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

*In accordance with Federal civil rights law and the 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 on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/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 deadlines vary by program or incident.*

*Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should 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. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.*

*To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at* [*http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\_filing\_cust.html*](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html) *and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:*

1. *Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture*

*Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights*

*1400 Independence Avenue, SW*

*Washington, D.C. 20250-9410*

1. *Fax: (202) 690-7442; or*
2. *Email:* *program.intake@usda.gov*

***USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.***

# Purpose

USDA Rural Development provides grants to eligible public bodies/Government entities, Indian Tribes, or nonprofit entities for use in funding various business enterprise and business opportunity projects that serve rural areas.

**Enterprise Grant** type funds may be used to finance and/or develop small and emerging businesses in rural areas including but not limited to, the following activities: 1) Acquisition and development of land, easements and rights-of-way; 2) Construction, conversion, enlargement, repairs or modernization of buildings, plants, machinery, equipment, access streets and roads, parking areas, utilities, and pollution control and abatement facilities; 3) Provisions of loans for startup operating cost and working capital; 4) Reasonable fees and charges for professional services necessary for the planning and development of the project (ex. Services similar to architectural, engineering, and legal); 5) Establishment of a revolving loan fund program; 6) Establishment, expansion, and operation of rural distance learning networks or development of rural learning programs that provide educational instruction or job training instruction related to potential employment or job advancements for adult students (this includes but is not limited to workforce development training); 7) Provision of technical assistance for small and emerging businesses, including but not limited to feasibility studies and business plans; and 8) Provision of technical assistance and training to rural communities for the purpose of improving passenger transportation services or facilities.

 **Opportunity Grant** type funds may be used for business opportunity projects that include one or more of the following activities: 1) Identify and analyze business opportunities that will use local rural materials or human resources. This includes opportunities in export markets, as well as feasibility and business plan studies; 2) Identify, train, and provide technical assistance to existing or prospective rural entrepreneurs and managers; 3) Establish business support centers and otherwise assist in the creation of new rural businesses; 4) Conduct leadership development training of existing or prospective adult rural entrepreneurs and managers; 5) Establish centers for training, technology, and trade that will provide training to rural businesses in the utilization of interactive communications technologies to develop international trade opportunities and markets; or 6) Pay reasonable fees and charges for professional services necessary to conduct the technical assistance, training, or planned functions.

Grant funds may be used for projects identified as either business opportunity type grants or business enterprise type grants. The Agency will set aside 10 percent of its RBDG appropriation for business opportunity type grants. The Agency reserves the right to reallocate funds set aside for business opportunity type grants to business enterprise type grants.

# CHECKLIST

***Before you submit your application, please be sure you have addressed all the following elements:***

**Application Forms**

[ ] Form SF-424, “[Application for Federal Assistance](https://www.rd.usda.gov/media/file/download/sf424-4-0-v40-ex-113025.pdf)”

[ ] Form SF-424A, “[Budget Information-Non-Construction Programs](https://www.rd.usda.gov/media/file/download/sf424a-v10-ex-022825.pdf)”

[ ] Form SF-424C, “[Budget Information -Construction Programs](https://www.rd.usda.gov/media/file/download/sf424c-2-0-v20-ex-022825.pdfdf)” *(for construction projects only)*

[ ] Form RD 400-1, “[Equal Opportunity Agreement](https://www.rd.usda.gov/media/file/download/rd-400-1-v10-ex-073125.pdf)”

[ ] Form RD 400-4, “[Assurance Agreement](https://www.rd.usda.gov/media/file/download/rd-400-4-v10-ex-073125.pdf)”

[ ] RD Inst. 1940-Q, Exhibit A-1, “[Certification for Contracts, Grants, & Loans](https://www.rd.usda.gov/media/file/download/rd-instruction-1940-q-exh-1.pdf)”

[ ] [North Dakota Applicant’s Guide to Providing Environmental Review Information](https://www.rd.usda.gov/media/file/download/nd-environmentalreviewinformation.pdf) **(Note 1)**

[ ]  [SF LLL “Disclosure of Lobbying Activities](https://www.rd.usda.gov/media/file/download/sflll-exp-2025.pdf)” **(Note 2)**

[ ]  Certification of Relationship to RD Employee (Compliance with [RD 1900-D](https://www.rd.usda.gov/media/file/download/rd1900-d-compliance-instruction.pdf)­ Instruction)

[ ]  Resolution passed by the board authorizing entity to apply and administer the RBDG including the name and title of the person authorized to sign grant agreements (Appendix B)

[ ]  RBDG Applicant Certification [Applicant Certifications](https://www.rd.usda.gov/media/file/download/nd-rbdg-certifications-2024.pdf)

[ ]  Form RD 1980-88 “[Strategic Economic and Community Development (Section 6025) Pr](https://www.rd.usda.gov/media/file/download/fy-2022-secd-application-form1980-88.pdf)iority” (Only if Applicable**) (Note 3)**

**Section 1. Summary Information**

[ ] Legal name of applicant

[ ] Requested Grant Amount

[ ] UEI Number **(Note 4)**

[ ] SAM Registration Cage Code and Expiration Date **(Note 5)**

[ ] NAICS Code Number **(Note 6)**

[ ] REAP Zone Benchmark Number **(Note 7)** (Southwest or CONAC REAP Zone Set Aside Applications only)

[ ] Native American Set-Aside Request **(Note 8)**

**Section 2. Applicant Eligibility**

[ ] Applicant Type

**Section 3. Project Eligibility**

[ ] Business Enterprise Grant Project (See RD 4280.417(a)(2))

 [ ]  Clear identification (list) of Small and Emerging Business(es) assisted.

 [ ]  Demonstration of Need

 [ ]  Suggested Performance Criteria

 **OR**

[ ] Business Opportunity Grant Project (See RD 4280.417(a)(1))

 [ ]  Economic Development Result

 [ ]  Local and Area-Wide Strategic Plans

 [ ]  Demonstration of Need

 [ ]  Suggested Performance Criteria

**Section 4. Written Narrative**

[ ]  Project Need and Benefits

[ ]  Eligible Grant Purpose

[ ]  Area to be Served/Method and Rationale to Select Service Area and Business Recipients

[ ]  Coordination with Area Economic Development Activities

[ ]  Businesses to be Assisted and Economic Development to be Accomplished

[ ]  Jobs Created/Supported

[ ]  Applicant Expertise & Work Performance

[ ]  Suggested Performance Criteria

 **Appendices**

[ ] Appendix A- Required Documents

[ ] Appendix B- Organizational Documents and Attorney Opinion

[ ] Appendix C- Proposed Scope of Work

[ ] Appendix D-Leveraged Funds Verification

[ ] Appendix E-Documentation of Experience

[ ] Appendix F-Letters from Businesses to be Assisted

[ ] Appendix G-Additional Supporting Documentation

[ ] Appendix H-Financial Documentation

[ ] Appendix I-Frequently Asked Questions

[ ] Appendix J-Notes

***APPLICATION TEMPLATE***

***The additional instructional items in [blue] may be deleted.***

**SECTION 1: SUMMARY INFORMATION**

**Legal Name of Applicant:** Click or tap here to enter text.

**(Verify from Articles/Bylaws)**

**Signing Official and Title (Mayor, President, Chair):** Click or tap here to enter text.

**Additional Applicant Contact(s):** Click or tap here to enter text.

**Applicant and Additional Applicant Contact(s) Email Address (In case we need to clarify any items):** Click or tap here to enter text.

**Complete Applicant Physical and Mailing Address:** Click or tap here to enter text.

**Applicant Phone Number(s):** Click or tap here to enter text.

**Requested Grant Amount: $**Click or tap here to enter text.

**UEI #** Click or tap here to enter text.

**SAM/CCR Registration Cage Code:** Click or tap here to enter text. **Expiration Date:** Click or tap here to enter text.

**Applicant** [**NAICS Code**](https://www.census.gov/eos/www/naics/) **:** Click or tap here to enter text.

**CONAC or Southwest REAP Zone Benchmark #:**  Click or tap here to enter text. (REAP Zone Set-Aside Funding Requests Only)

**Native American Set-Aside Funds Request:** [ ]  **Yes** [ ]  **No Note 8**

**SECTION 2: APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY**

**Applicant Type– Please Check One and Provide Information as Described in Appendix A “Organizational Documents”:**

[ ] **Rural Public Body/Government Entity/Institutions of Higher Education**

[ ] **Indian Tribe/Tribal Government/Federally Recognized Tribe**[ ] **Nonprofit Corporation**

**SECTION 3: PROJECT ELIGIBILITY**

**Type of Project – Please Check One:**

[ ] **Business Enterprise Grant Project**  [ ] **Business Opportunity Grant Project**

 **(Respond to either Enterprise or Opportunity ONLY)**

**Development or Financing of Small & Emerging Private Businesses**

*Business Enterprise Grant Projects*

***A Small and Emerging Business is defined as “Any private and/or Nonprofit business which will employ 50 or fewer new employees and has less than $1 million in gross revenue; for retail operations, gross revenue may be reduced by cost of goods sold and returns or for a service organization, gross revenue may be reduced by the cost of providing service or for a manufacturing operation, gross revenue may be reduced by the cost of raw materials and the cost of production. The $1 million gross revenue and 50 or fewer new employee thresholds apply only to each individual Tribal owned enterprise applicant or recipient. Due to the unique structuring of Tribal economic development, the revenue, or employees of the Tribe and/or parent Tribal enterprise will not apply towards the individual Tribal enterprise applicant or recipient, regardless of shared ownership or Directors. The revenue of Tribes, subdivisions of Tribes and Tribal entity applicants, will not be considered revenue in determining program and project eligibility.***

***The small and emerging business must be a clearly separate entity from the applicant. The applicant will work with the small and emerging business. Example: Applicant purchases equipment and leases it to the business; Applicant rehabs a building and leases it to the business; Applicant provides technical assistance (training) to the business (directly or by hiring a consultant to provide the technical assistance); Applicant creates a revolving loan fund and makes loans to the business.***

***[Respond only if applying under the Enterprise Grant portion of the RBDG] [Insert description how grant funds will specifically result in the development of Small and Emerging Businesses in Rural Areas. Please also describe the plan for leasing the equipment/building to the small and emerging business. Please see Q&A regarding leasing requirements]***

*Business Opportunity Grant Projects*

Click or tap here to enter text.

* **Economic Development Result**

***Opportunity Type Grants may be made only when there is reasonable prospect that the project will result in economic development of a rural area.***

***[Respond only if applying under the Opportunity Grant portion of the RBDG] [Insert description how economic development will occur as a result of the proposed project. Include demonstration of project sustainability once the grant is complete. Supporting documentation may be inserted in Appendix G]***

Click or tap here to enter text.

* **Local and Area-Wide Strategic Plans**

***Grants may be made only when the proposed project is consistent with local and area-wide strategic plans for community and economic development, coordinated with other economic development activities in the project area and consistent with USDA Rural Development State Strategic Plan. The ND State Strategic Plan may be located at the RBDG website under “Other Requirements” or requested.***

***[Respond only if applying under the Opportunity Grant portion of the RBDG] [Describe how the project coincides with local or regional strategic plans. Supporting documentation may be inserted in Appendix G******]***

Click or tap here to enter text.

**SECTION 4: WRITTEN NARRATIVE (All Applicants Complete the Following)**

**4.1 Project Need and Benefits**

***[Explain why the project is needed and the benefits of the proposed project. Supporting documentation may be inserted in Appendix G.]***

Click or tap here to enter text.

* 1. **Eligible Grant Purpose**

***[Explain how the proposed project meets the grant eligible purposes as listed in the Regulation*** [***http://www.rd.usda.gov/files/4280e.pdf***](http://www.rd.usda.gov/files/4280e.pdf) ***Section 4280.417 Project Eligibility or page 3 under “Purpose” of this application template. As an example, an application for equipment would describe the eligibility as “This project is eligible under 4280.417 (a)(2)(ii) …equipment…]***

Click or tap here to enter text.

**4.3 Area to be Served/Method and Rationale to Select Service Area & Business Recipients**

***[Describe the area to be served, identifying each governmental unit (i.e. city, township, county, etc.) to be affected by the project. Example: If the project will mostly only benefit the residents of a specific city, state the city name; if the project service area will include several counties, list the counties.]***

Click or tap here to enter text.

***[Describe how the service area was selected and the businesses that will receive assistance. If the business(es) haven’t been selected, describe how they will be selected. This could be based on the pre-defined service area of the applicant such as business(es) located within the JDA service area.]***

Click or tap here to enter text.

* 1. **Coordination with Area Economic Development Activities**

***[Describe how the project will coordinate with other Economic Development Activities within the project area. Is this part of a larger plan? Are there existing partnerships etc.?]***

Click or tap here to enter text.

* 1. **Businesses to be Assisted and Economic Development to be Accomplished**

***[Describe Businesses to be assisted (if applicable) and Economic Development to be accomplished. Letters from the businesses may be placed in Appendix F]***

Click or tap here to enter text.

* 1. **Jobs Created/Supported**

***[Describe how the proposed project will create, increase or support jobs in the service area and provide an estimated number of direct jobs created and/or jobs saved within the next 3 years. Jobs are based on 35 hours as a Full -time Equivalent. If part-time or seasonal employees, please provide the hours per week and number of weeks per year. This is evidenced by letters from rural businesses that will be directly assisted in Appendix F. It is noted opportunity grant projects typically do not directly create jobs. Those jobs created by the hired consultant to conduct a study will not be counted as jobs created.]***

Click or tap here to enter text.

* 1. **Applicant Expertise & Work Performance**

***[Describe how the work will be performed including whether organizational staff, consultants or contractors will be used. Provide the name of the consultant.]***

Click or tap here to enter text.

***[Insert description of Applicant’s demonstrated capability and expertise in providing the proposed project assistance or similar economic development activities, including experience of key staff members and persons who will be providing the proposed project activities and managing the project. If consulting with others on tasks, include their applicable experience. Attach resumes and other supporting documentation of experience in Appendix E]***

Click or tap here to enter text.

**4.8 Suggested Performance Criteria**

* ***[Insert a description of the basis for determining the success or failure of the project and individual major elements of the project. Outline procedures that will be taken to assess the project’s impact at its conclusion. Example: Suggest one or more relevant criterion to be used to evaluate the performance of the grant project during its operational phase and post-award, as quantitative benchmarks to assess whether or not the primary goals and objectives proposed in the scope of work are accomplished during the project period. These criteria should relate to the overall project goal of financing and/or assisting small and emerging businesses or conducting business opportunity projects, with a resulting creation or saving of jobs. Keeping in mind that the project performance criteria will be monitored after the grant is completed. ]***

Click or tap here to enter text.

#

*Scoring Criteria for Information Purposes Only*

Applications for Rural Business Development Grants will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

*Scoring Criteria: Leveraging - Applicant has evidence of commitment of funds from nonfederal sources for proposed project. Rural Development funds divided by total project costs $ X 100 = % which is Rural Developments portion of project funding*

*If Rural Development portion of project funding is:*

*1. Less than 20 percent 30 points*

*2. 20 but less than 50 percent 20 points*

*3. 50 but less than 75 percent 10 points*

*4. 75 percent or more 0 points*

*Scoring Criteria: Size of Grant Request*

*1. Less than $100,000 25 points*

*2. $100,000 to $200,000 15 points*

*3. More than $200,000 but not more than $500,000 10 points*

*Scoring Criteria: Indirect cost - Applicant is* ***not*** *requesting grant funds to cover their administrative or indirect costs. 5 points*

*Scoring Criteria: Population - Proposed project(s) will be located in a community of:*

*1. Under 5,000 15 points*

*2. Between 5,000 and less than 15,000 10 points*

*3. Between 15,000 and 25,000 5 points*

*Scoring Criteria: Unemployment - Proposed project(s) will be located in areas where the unemployment rate:*

*1. Exceeds the State rate by 25% or more 20 points*

*2. Exceeds the State rate by less than 25% 10 points*

*3. Is equal to or less than the State rate 0 points*

*Scoring Criteria: Median Household income - Proposed project(s) will be located in areas where the median household income (MHI) for the State is:*

*1. Less than poverty line 25 points*

*2. More than poverty line but less than 65% 15 points*

*3. Between 65% and 85% 10 points*

*4. Equal to or greater than 85% 0 points*

*Scoring Criteria: Economic Distress - Points will be awarded for each of the following criteria met by the community or communities to benefit from the grant (cannot exceed 40 points total):*

1. *Trauma 15 points*

*(Natural disaster occurred not more than 3 years prior to filing application) FEMA Designation *

1. *Economic distress 15 points*

*(Military Base/Employer 20% or more loss in total jobs)*  

1. *Long-Term Poverty 10 points*

*(Demonstrated by being a former EZ/EC, REAP, CC or a persistent poverty county) - indicate which *

1. *Long-term population decline 10 points*

 *(Demonstrated by latest 3 decennial Census) - Show amounts *

 *Subtotal = *

 *(Cannot Exceed 40 Points)*

*Scoring Criteria: Applicant has written evidence that small business development will be supported by startup or expansion as a result of the grant. Add 5 points for each letter of support to reflect businesses to be assisted to receive a maximum of 25 points.*

 *Total points for supporting letters =  (Total points cannot exceed 25)*

*Scoring Criteria: Applicant has written evidence that the proposed project will create and/or support existing jobs. The number of jobs must be evidenced by a* ***written commitment from the business to be assisted****.*

*1. One job for less than $5,000 25 points*

*2. One job for 5,000 but less than $10,000 20 points*

*3. One job for $10,000 but less than $15,000 15 points*

*4. One job for $15,000 but less than $20,000 10 points*

*5. One job for $20,000 but less than $25,000 5 points*

 *Amount of Grant divided by number of jobs = $ /jobs*

*Scoring Criteria: Applicant has evidence of successful experience in type of activity.*

*1. 10 or more years 30 points*

*2. At least 5 but less than 10 years 20 points*

*3. At least 3 but less than 5 years 10 points*

*4. At least 1 but less than 3 years 5 points*

 *Number of years’ experience *

**Additional Scoring Criteria**

*Scoring Criteria: Discretionary points - Either the State Director or Administrator may assign up to 50 discretionary points to an application. Discretionary points may only be assigned to initial grants. Assignment of discretionary points must include a written justification. Permissible justifications are geographic distribution of funds or special Secretary of Agriculture initiatives such as Priority Communities, or a state’s strategic goals. The following are examples of special Secretary of Agriculture initiatives that can support obtaining discretionary points:*

1. **Opportunities**

**Assisting rural communities recover economically through more and better market opportunities and through improved infrastructure**. Applicant would receive priority points if the project is located in or is serving a rural community whose economic well-being ranks in the most distressed tier of the Distressed Communities Index using the Distressed Communities Look-Up Map available at

*https:// www.rd.usda.gov/priority-points*.

1. **Equity**

**Ensuring all rural residents have equitable access to RD programs and benefits from RD funded projects**. Using the Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) Look-Up Map (available at *https://* [*www.rd.usda.gov/priority-points*](http://www.rd.usda.gov/priority-points)), an applicant would receive priority points if the project is:

* + Located in or serving a community with a score of 0.75 or above on the Social Vulnerability Index.
	+ Is a Federally recognized Tribe, including Tribal instrumentalities and entities that are wholly owned by Tribes; or
	+ Is a project where at least 50 percent of the project beneficiaries are members of a Federally Recognized Tribes and non-Tribal applicants include a Tribal Resolution of Consent from the Tribe or Tribes that the applicant is proposing to serve.
1. **Climate**

**Reduce climate pollution and increasing resilience to the impacts of climate change through economic support to rural communities**. Using the Disadvantaged Community and Energy Community Look-Up Map

 (available at *https://* [*www.rd.usda.gov/priority-points*](http://www.rd.usda.gov/priority-points)), applicants can receive priority points in three ways:

* + If the project is located in or serves a Disadvantaged Community as defined by the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST), from the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) or
	+ If the project is located in or serves an Energy Community as defined by the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA).
	+ If applicants demonstrate through a written narrative how proposed climate-impact projects improve the livelihoods of community residents and meet pollution mitigation or clean energy goals.

**Additional information that may be provided to back-up the scoring above which has not already been made a part of this application may be attached in Appendix G.**

# APPENDICES

**APPENDIX A Application Forms**

**Application Forms**

[ ] Form SF-424, “[Application for Federal Assistance](https://www.rd.usda.gov/media/file/download/sf424-4-0-v40-ex-113025.pdf)”

[ ] Form SF-424A, “[Budget Information-Non-Construction Programs](https://www.rd.usda.gov/media/file/download/sf424a-v10-ex-022825.pdf)”

[ ] Form SF-424C, “[Budget Information -Construction Programs](https://www.rd.usda.gov/media/file/download/sf424c-2-0-v20-ex-022825.pdfdf)” *(for construction projects only)*

[ ] Form RD 400-1, “[Equal Opportunity Agreement](https://www.rd.usda.gov/media/file/download/rd-400-1-v10-ex-073125.pdf)”

[ ] Form RD 400-4, “[Assurance Agreement](https://www.rd.usda.gov/media/file/download/rd-400-4-v10-ex-073125.pdf)”

[ ] RD Inst. 1940-Q, Exhibit A-1, “[Certification for Contracts, Grants, & Loans](https://www.rd.usda.gov/media/file/download/rd-instruction-1940-q-exh-1.pdf)”

[ ] [North Dakota Applicant’s Guide to Providing Environmental Review Information](https://www.rd.usda.gov/media/file/download/nd-environmentalreviewinformation.pdf) **(Note 1)**

[ ]  [SF LLL “Disclosure of Lobbying Activities](https://www.rd.usda.gov/media/file/download/sflll-exp-2025.pdf)” **(Note 2)**

[ ]  Certification of Relationship to RD Employee (Compliance with [RD 1900-D](https://www.rd.usda.gov/media/file/download/rd1900-d-compliance-instruction.pdf) Instruction)

[ ]  Resolution passed by the board authorizing entity to apply and administer the RBDG including the name and title of the person authorized to sign grant agreements (Appendix B)

[ ]  RBDG Applicant Certification - [Applicant Certifications](https://www.rd.usda.gov/media/file/download/nd-rbdg-certifications-2024.pdf)

[ ]  Form 1980-88 “[Strategic Economic and Community Development (Section 6025) Pr](https://www.rd.usda.gov/media/file/download/fy-2022-secd-application-form1980-88.pdf)iority” (Only if Applicable**) (Note 3)**

**APPENDIX B Organizational Documents and Attorney’s Opinion**

**Rural Public Body:**

* Documentation of organization (Example: Provide a page from the most current North Dakota Blue Book or other proof of existence.)
* Attorney Opinion Letter
* Resolution passed by the board authorizing entity to apply and administer the RBDG including the name and title of the person(s) authorized to sign grant documents.

**Indian Tribe:**

* Documentation indicating the Tribe is listed on the Federally Recognized Native American Indian Tribes list as published by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.
* Attorney Opinion Letter
* Resolution passed by the Tribal Council authorizing entity to apply and administer the RBDG including the name and title of the person(s) authorized to sign grant documents.

**Non-Profit Corporation:**

* Articles of Incorporation or Organization (including any amendments)
* By-Laws (Including any amendments)
* Copy of Non-Profit Status (IRS or State)
* Certificate of Good Standing from the Secretary of State. Certificate should be less than one-year-old.
* Attorney Opinion Letter
* Resolution passed by the board authorizing entity to apply and administer the RBDG including the name and title of the person(s) authorized to sign grant documents.

**The attorney’s opinion letter should state the following:**

1. The applicant is duly organized, is in good standing, has the power to execute, deliver and perform its obligations under the grant documents and that there is no pending or threatened litigation that would adversely affect the applicant’s ability to perform its obligations to Rural Development.
2. All actions by the applicant meet statutory requirements, no litigation threatens applicant and the project meets zoning laws.

**APPENDIX C Proposed Scope of Work**

Please attach your proposed scope of work (SOW) which will include a description of the proposed project, e.g., Revolving Loan Fund, Technical Assistance, Industrial Site, Business Opportunity and Other Business Development, details of the proposed activities to be accomplished, budget for the proposed activities to be accomplished, timeframes for completion of each task, the number of months duration of the project, and the estimated time it will take from grant approval to beginning of project implementation.

*The Scope of Work will be used to measure the performance of the grantee. It is important to provide specific information as to how the grant funds will be utilized and who is responsible for each task of the project. Please provide enough detail to the scope of work to thoroughly explain your project. RBDG grants must be utilized within twelve months. It is recommended to start the SOW as of October 1, 2025 and running it as late as September 30, 2025.*

*Revolving Loan Fund applicants may request an example of an RLF specific Scope of Work as well as lending policies. RLF’s must also plan to fully expend grant funds within twelve months.*

*If indirect (administration) costs are included within the budget, the grant applicant may use an approved federally negotiated indirect cost rate. A copy of the current rate agreement must be provided with the application. Otherwise, indirect costs are limited to 10% of the modified total direct costs as defined by the CFR 200 “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards.”*

*The budget within the SOW should match the total line-item budget submitted as SF424A (Non-Construction Budget) or SF424C (Construction Budget) and the “Estimated Funding” (Item #18 of the SF424)*

***Please utilize the below tables within your Scope of Work. A separate Scope of Work excel spreadsheet is available on our website.***

1. **Project Scope of Work and Budget Summary**

*Summarize the total project budget by task. Insert additional rows as needed.*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Task #** | **Task Name and Description** | **Person or Entity Responsible**  | **Start Date** | **End Date** | **RBDG Funds** | **Supplemental Funds** | **Total Project Costs** |
|  |  What will be accomplished and how?  | Who is responsible?  | 10/1/2025 |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  | 9/30/2025 |  |  |  |
|  | **TOTAL PROJECT** |  |  |  | $Must match the SF424 Budget | **$** Any supplemental funds listed must be verified in Appendix D | $Must match the SF424 Budget |

**[Insert full description of each task.]**

1. **Task Budget Format**

*Provide a budget table for* ***each task*** *that will be completed for* ***each main activity*** *listed above* ***only if appropriate*** *to further break down the item.*

 ***Add additional task tables as needed.***

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Task #1****Budget Categories** | **RBDG Funds** | **Supplemental Funds** | **Total Project Costs** |
| Personnel-Salaries |  |  |  |
| Fringe Benefits |  |  |  |
| Travel |  |  |  |
| Supplies |  |  |  |
| Contractual |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  **Total** | **$** | **$** | **$** |

Provide explanation/clarification of the basis for the above budget figures:

***[Insert task budget explanation]***

*The final page of the Scope of Work should include the below language and a signature by the Grantee.*

**This Scope of Work is submitted by the grantee. Upon approval by the grantor, the grantee agrees that no changes will be made to the Scope of Work without prior written approval by the grantor.**

**[APPLICANT NAME] (GRANTEE)**

**By: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

 **(Signature) (Title) (Date)**

**This Scope of Work is hereby approved by USDA - Rural Development.**

**USDA - RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

**By: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

 **(Signature) (Title) (Date)**

## APPENDIX D Leveraged Funds Verification

Documentation verifying the availability and amount of other funds to be used in conjunction with the RBDG. The documentation should evidence that the leveraged funds are available and have been committed to the project. The documentation must be included in your application to qualify for consideration under the applicable scoring criterion. (Note: Other Federal Funds and ***applicant******contributed*** in-kind are not considered match for scoring purposes.)

### *Examples of acceptable documentation include: copy of a current bank statement or a copy of the confirmed funding commitment from the funding source.*

*Scoring Criteria: Leveraging - Applicant has evidence of commitment of funds from nonfederal sources for proposed project. Rural Development funds divided by total project costs $ X 100 = % which is Rural Developments portion of project funding.*

*If Rural Development portion of project funding is:*

*1. Less than 20 percent 30 points*

*2. 20 but less than 50 percent 20 points*

*3. 50 but less than 75 percent 10 points*

*4. 75 percent or more 0 points*

 **

### APPENDIX E Documentation of Experience

Please attach documentation of experience with proposed project activities (resumes, statement of qualifications, etc.) Experience should include specific descriptions (including years of the specific experience) and examples to match experience with the application proposal. Example: If the project is for a Revolving Loan Fund, please describe the applicant’s experience with revolving loan funds including the dates of experience. If the project involves providing technical assistance, please describe the applicant’s history in providing similar TA. If the TA is to be provided by a contracted provider, provide information on that provider. If the project involves the purchase and subsequent lease of equipment or a building to a business, please provide the applicant’s experience in leasing equipment or a building.

Documentation must be provided to receive points.

*Scoring Criteria: Applicant has evidence of successful experience in type of activity.*

*1. 10 or more years 30 points*

*2. At least 5 but less than 10 years 20 points*

*3. At least 3 but less than 5 years 10 points*

*4. At least 1 but less than 3 years 5 points*

*Number of years’ experience *

### APPENDIX F Letters from Businesses to be Assisted

### Please attach letters evidencing small business development will be supported by startup or expansion as a DIRECT result of the activities to be carried out under the grant. Written evidence of commitment by a small, or a small and emerging business must be provided to the Agency.

*Scoring Criteria: Applicant has written evidence that the small business development will be supported by startup or expansion as a result of the grant. Add 5 points for each letter of commitment to reflect businesses to be assisted to receive a maximum of 25 points.*

  *Total points for commitment letters =* 

  *(Total points cannot exceed 25)*

Business Assisted Summary:



### The anticipated development, expansion, or furtherance of business enterprises as a DIRECT result of the proposed project will create and/or support existing jobs associated with the affected businesses. The number of jobs must be evidenced by a written commitment form the business to be assisted. Part-time jobs MUST indicate the number of hours per week so that a full-time equivalent may be determined. Full-time equivalent positions are based on a 35-hour workweek. Generic or duplicated letters are not acceptable; letters must be on the business’ letterhead and address the specific business preparing the letter, the connection to the project activities and further provide information relative to jobs to meet the criteria.

*Scoring Criteria: Applicant has written evidence that the proposed project will create and/or support existing jobs. The number of jobs must be evidenced by a* ***written commitment from the business to be assisted****.*

*1. One job for less than $5,000 25 points*

*2. One job for 5,000 but less than $10,000 20 points*

*3. One job for $10,000 but less than $15,000 15 points*

*4. One job for $15,000 but less than $20,000 10 points*

*5. One job for $20,000 but less than $25,000 5 points*

*Amount of Grant divided by number of jobs = $/jobs*

Jobs Summary:



### APPENDIX G– Additional Supporting Documentation

* Attach any additional documentation to back up scoring information.
* Population, Unemployment and Median Household Income will be determined by RD staff utilizing weighted averages based on the project area provided in 4.3. These numbers will be obtained by RD staff and not required to be submitted with the application.
* If the area provided in 4.3 has had a FEMA designation within the past three years, please include the FEMA designation number. <https://www.fema.gov/disasters/>
* Economic Distress must be documented by data and/or facts showing the documented job loss within the previous three years.

## APPENDIX H Applicant’s Financial Documentation

Attach your latest 3 years of financial information to evidence your financial capacity to carry out the proposed work. If your entity is less than 3 years old, the information should include all balance sheet(s), income statement(s) and cash flow statement(s) available. Audited financial statements are preferred, if available. Please attach complete copies.

**APPENDIX I -Frequently Asked Questions**

Q: What is the CFDA (Code of Federal Domestic Assistance) Number?

A: The CFDA for the Rural Business Development Grant program is 10.351.

Q: What is the Funding Opportunity Number?

A: The RBDG does not have a funding opportunity number. You may leave this field blank on the SF424.

Q: Do you accept emailed applications?

A: Emailed applications will be accepted.

Q: How do I address the application package?

A: Please address to:

Denise Sundeen

USDA Rural Development

PO Box 1737

Bismarck, ND 58502-1737

Q: I’ve heard that we need to lease out the property purchased with these funds. I thought this was a grant program.

A: The RBDG is a grant to the applicant. The applicant must purchase the property or otherwise complete the Scope of Work (purchase a building etc.) and then leases the property to a small and emerging business at a fair market rate (IRS depreciation rate at a minimum). If the applicant were to lease the property for a minimum amount (such as a $1/year) it is considered a “pass through grant” which is an ineligible use of funds. The applicant can then continue to use those funds for other eligible RBDG type projects or if sitting idle, returned to the Federal government at the Federal Government’s participation percentage of the project.

Q: Who should sign the SF424 as the “Authorized Official”?

A: Please have the Chairperson/President/Mayor sign the SF 424 with the appropriate title. This person should have the authority to commit the organization to the requirements of the grant. Looking ahead, this is the person that will receive the correspondence from USDA including the documents accepting the grant if awarded.

Q: Question \*19 of SF424 - Is Application Subject to Review By State Under Executive order 12372 Process?

 

A: Select option b. Program is subject to E.O. 12372 but has not been selected by the State for Review.

Q: Can someone else be the “Contact” for the grant?

A: Yes, please place this information in Section “F” of the SF424 “Name and Contact Information of Person to be Contacted on Matters Involving this Application.”

Q: What are the administration requirements of the RBDG?

A: The administration of the RBDG does require some time for quarterly reports and proper documentation of expenditures. There are other on-going reports which may be annual or tri-annual once the project is completed dependent upon the nature of the project (technical assistance, equipment purchases, building construction or RLF). RBDG grant administration is a separate training provided to all grant recipients once the grant is awarded. USDA staff works closely with the awardees so that they become comfortable with the reporting and process. If you would like to receive the administration training material prior to application, please make a request to Denise.Sundeen@usda.gov or Jacqueline.Vilandre@usda.gov

Q: Can we include administration costs in the budget?

A: Yes – applicants may utilize a previously negotiated (and approved) Federal indirect cost rate. Otherwise, indirect costs are limited to 10% of the modified total direct costs as defined by the CFR 200 “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards.” The CFR 200 may be located at: <http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/retrieveECFR?gp=&SID=e399902ddf78b795f75a66f7b5cf08fd&mc=true&n=pt2.1.200&r=PART&ty=HTML> *Please remember that the scoring process awards 5 points if the applicant DOES NOT include administration in the budget.*

Q: What areas must meet accessibility compliance?

A: All projects funded with Federal funds are required to be ADA accessible or a transition plan created to become accessible. This includes the applicant’s place of business as well as the assisted project.

Q: Why is it so important to have the Federal Tax ID and SAM registration match the applicant?

A: Previous applicants have had issues with submitting a general SAM registration number. Example: a county utilizes one SAM registration for itself and its political subs. However, since the RBDG grant applicant was a political sub, the actual applicant (i.e. political sub) was required to either have its own Federal tax ID and SAM registration or the actual grant applicant should be the actual holder of the Federal tax ID and SAM registration.

Q: My project could fall under the state funds, REAP Zone set-aside funds and the Native American set-aside funds. Which should I apply under?

A: We recommend that since the benchmark process is time-sensitive, to go ahead and have your project benchmarked by the respective zone. Projects that fit within the Native American Set-Aside are first reviewed under that set-aside at the national level. If not funded, they can compete under the REAP Zone Set-Aside within the state and finally under the state regular allocation.

Q: What is the funding allocation for the various funds?

A: The final numbers have not been determined as of this writing. We recommend being prepared in anticipation of REAP Zone set-aside, Native American set-aside and the regular RBDG funding being allocated.

**APPENDIX J– Notes**

**Note 1 - North Dakota Request for Environmental Information.** [**https://www.rd.usda.gov/files/ND\_EnvironmentalReviewInformation.pdf**](https://www.rd.usda.gov/files/ND_EnvironmentalReviewInformation.pdf)

Applications for Technical Assistance or Planning Projects are generally excluded from the environmental review process by 7 CFR 1970.53 provided the assistance is not related to the development of a specific site. However, as further specified in 7 CFR 1970.53, the grantee for a Technical Assistance grant, in the process of providing Technical Assistance, must consider the potential environmental impacts of the recommendations provided to the recipient of the Technical Assistance as requested by the Agency and in accordance with 7 CFR part 1970. Proposals for financial assistance that involve no or minimal alterations in the physical environment and typically occur on previously disturbed land are categorically excluded without an environmental report in accordance with RD 1970.53. Other project proposals involving small-scale site-specific development, small-scale corridor development, and small-scale energy proposals will require an environmental report in accordance with RD 1970.54.

**Note 2 - Disclosure of Lobbying Activity.**

This form serves as a notice that the applicant has a professional lobbyist. If you DO NOT have a lobbyist, please X or NA the form and sign.

**Note 3 - 1980-88 Section 6025 Priority**

[**https://www.rd.usda.gov/files/vt.nh\_.RBDG\_.6025factsheet.16.pdf**](https://www.rd.usda.gov/files/vt.nh_.RBDG_.6025factsheet.16.pdf)

The Section 6025 Priority application has the potential to place your application in a special pool of funds which may limit competition. Please read the requirements carefully and submit all information required. We recommend that grantees consult with USDA RD prior to submitting for the Section 6025. Only complete this form if your project qualifies under this priority.

**Note 4 - UEI Number (Replaces DUNS)**

To conduct business with the Federal Government, organizations are required to obtain a Unique Entity ID (UEI) number. The federal government stopped using the DUNS Number to uniquely identify entities. Now, entities doing business with the federal government use the Unique Entity ID created in SAM.gov. You no longer go to a third-party website to obtain your identifier. This transition allows the government to streamline the entity identification and validation process, making it easier and less burdensome for entities to do business with the federal government. If your entity is registered in SAM.gov today, your Unique Entity ID has already been assigned and is viewable in SAM.gov [**Unique Entity Identifier Update | GSA**](https://www.gsa.gov/about-us/organization/federal-acquisition-service/office-of-systems-management/integrated-award-environment-iae/iae-systems-information-kit/unique-entity-identifier-update)

**Note 5 - SAM Number**

All applicants for Federal grant funding must register in the System for Award Management (SAM), at <https://www.sam.gov>, whether applying electronically or by paper, and at no cost. Registration may take 1-1.5 hours to complete and requires a tax ID and business name, statistical and financial information about the business (including number of employees and annual receipts for each of previous 3 years), and Electronic Funds Transfer information for payment of grant disbursements to grantee (Routing #, Account #, ACH contact).  Registration activation will take 1-5 days with an established tax ID; OR 2-5 weeks if a new Employer Identification Number is used.  A CAGE code number and expiration date will be provided when the registration is activated and **must** be included in your RBDG application information. For technical assistance, call the toll-free assistance line at 1-866-606-8220 and press “1.” Enter the registration cage code and expiration date in field 5(a), “Federal Entity Identifier,” on Form SF-424.

This registration must remain active, with current information, always during which an entity has an application under consideration by an Agency or has an active Federal Award. To remain registered in the database after the initial registration, the applicant is required to review and annually update its information in the database to ensure it is current, accurate and complete.

**Be sure that the Federal Tax ID and SAM registration match the applicant.**

**Note 6 – NAICS Code**

<https://www.census.gov/eos/www/naics/>

The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) is the standard used by Federal statistical agencies in classifying business establishments for the purpose of collecting, analyzing, and publishing statistical data related to the U.S. business economy.

NAICS was developed under the auspices of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and adopted in 1997 to replace the [Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) system](http://www.osha.gov/pls/imis/sic_manual.html).

**Please provide the NAICS code for the applicant organization.**

**Note 7 – REAP Zone Benchmark**

<https://reapmatters.org/>

In 1995, two United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) revitalization Rural Economic Area Partnership (REAP) Zones were created in southwestern and north-central North Dakota. They were created to address critical issues related to out-migration, constraints in economic activity and growth, low density settlement patterns, stagnant or declining employment and isolation that led to disconnection from markets, suppliers and centers of information and finance.

CONAC counties include: Benson, Bottineau, McHenry, Pierce, Rolette, Towner and the Spirit Lake Nation and the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa.

Southwest counties include: Adams, Billings, Bowman, Dunn, Golden Valley, Hettinger, Slope and Stark.

Applicants wishing to apply under a REAP Zone set-aside must have the project benchmarked by the respective REAP Zone prior to the application submission.

Rural Economic Area Partnership funds will be used for projects identified in the Rural Economic Area Partnership Strategic Plan and Benchmark Management System documents, provided at least 75 percent of the benefits of the project will be received by residents within the Rural Economic Area Partnership census tract boundaries.

**The respective REAP Zone will provide a benchmark number, if approved, to be included on the application under Section 1 on page 6 of this template.**

**Note 8 - Native American Set-Aside**

Native American funds will be used for projects where at least 75 percent of the benefits of an approved grant would assist beneficiaries in the designated area.