

# Calendar Year 2022 Disaster Circuit Rider Technical Assistance Grant Program 2023 Application Guide

## Instructions and notice to applicants:

- This guide is intended to help you, but you do not 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 Calendar Year (CY) 2022 Circuit Rider Technical Assistance (CRTA) Grant Program. By checking, signing, or otherwise acknowledging these elements, you confirm they are true and correct.
- The application window for this program is open September 28, 2023, through October 30, 2023. To be considered for the CY 2022 CRTA Grants Program funding, you must submit your complete, signed application and all required documents no later than **11:59 p.m. eastern time on October 30, 2023**.

**A note about website links:** For ease of reference, this guide provides links to relevant, useful information hosted outside the USDA domain. Endorsement of non-USDA programs or activities is neither intended nor implied. 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 September 2023.

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**NOTE:** The information requested in this application guide is being collected and will be used by USDA Rural Development (RD or Agency) to determine eligibility for grants and to meet reporting requirements. According to the Paperwork Reduction Act (available at this link: <https://pra.digital.gov/>), you are not required to respond to a request for collection of information unless the request displays a valid Office of Management and Budget (OMB) control number. The valid OMB control number associated with this information collection is 0572-0138.

## Section 1: Technical Assistance for Disaster Relief Grant Program

### 1.1 Introduction

The Calendar Year (CY) 2022 Circuit Rider Technical Assistance (CRTA) Grant Program is designed to help communities through funding technical assistance to support rural water infrastructure impacted by Presidentially declared disasters that occurred during CY 2022. Qualified organizations may use the CY 2022 Disaster CRTA Grants funds to provide on-site technical assistance for post-disaster mitigation. Funds may be used to identify and evaluate solutions to impacted water, wastewater, stormwater and solid waste challenges, help communities develop and prepare applications for water and waste loans and grants, deliver training and other resources to operators, managers, and other system personnel, and to pay certain expenses associated with the provision of such services. The use of grant funds under this program must relate specifically to a Presidentially declared disaster that occurred in CY 2022. A current list of CY 2022 disasters can be found at the following location: <https://www.fema.gov/disaster/declarations>.

In this guide, you will find the following information:

- Application process and deadlines
- Eligibility information
- Components of a complete application
- Scoring criteria and application review process

### 1.2 Authorization

The CY 2022 Disaster CRTA Grants Program is authorized pursuant to Section 306(a)(22) of the *Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act* (Public Law 87-128); Division N of the *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023* (Public Law 117-328); and 2 CFR parts 200 and 400, *Uniform and Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards*. This program is implemented under 7 CFR part 1775,

*Technical Assistance Grants*, Subpart A, General Provisions, and B, Grant Application Processing; and the provisions of the associated Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). Other federal statutes and regulations are listed at 7 CFR 1775.8, *Other Federal statutes*.

The statutes and regulations listed above take precedence over the interpretation of any information in this guide. This guide is to be used in conjunction with applicable provisions of 7 CFR part 1775 and the NOFO.

### **1.3 Fiscal Year 2023 Funding Availability**

The funding amount available for Fiscal Year 2023 is up to \$8,000,000.

### **1.4 Contact**

USDA Rural Utilities Service (RUS or Agency), Water and Environmental Programs (WEP), staff administers the CY 2022 Disaster CRTA Grants Program. If you have questions, contact the WEP staff early in your application process.

Email: [Water-RD@usda.gov](mailto:Water-RD@usda.gov)

Phone: (202) 253-0504

### **1.5 Online Resources**

Additional information about the CY 2022 Disaster CRTA Grants Program, including application guidance and a copy of the NOFO, is available at this link:

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/water-environmental-programs/calendar-year-2022-disaster-circuit-rider-technical-assistance-grants-program>.

## **Section 2: Requirements for a Complete Application**

### **2.1 Preparing Your Application**

All applicants must be eligible entities and must submit a complete application by the deadline stated in Section 3.3. See the NOFO (available at this link:

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/water-environmental-programs/calendar-year-2022-disaster-circuit-rider-technical-assistance-grants-program> for eligibility

criteria. Additionally, applicants must have no delinquent federal debt and no outstanding judgments to repay a federal debt.

Grant funds can be used for the purposes listed in the NOFO.

In order to prepare the budget and successfully complete other parts of your application, you must consult the cost principles and general administrative requirements for grants

pertaining to your organization type (See 2 CFR Part 200, *Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards* – available at this link: <https://go.usa.gov/xJjq4>).

You must also demonstrate compliance – or intent to comply – with a number of public policy requirements using certification or other means stated within this Application Guide, within the NOFO, or at grants.gov.

## 2.2 Application Components

### 2.2.1 Required Forms

1. All applications must be submitted as outlined within Section 3 and the NOFO. Copies of the following required forms are available at <https://sam.gov/content/home> or <https://www.grants.gov>:
  - a. Standard Form 424, *Application for Federal Assistance* – available at this link: <https://go.usa.gov/xJj3P>)
  - b. Standard Form 424A, *Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs* – available at this link: <https://go.usa.gov/xJj3P>)
  - c. Standard Form LLL, *Disclosure of Lobbying Activities* - available at this link: <https://go.usa.gov/xJj3K>
  - d. Form RD 400-1, *Equal Opportunity Agreement* - available at this link: <https://go.usa.gov/xJj3Z>
  - e. Other forms and information as listed in the NOFO.

### 2.2.2 Project Proposal

The project proposal must outline the project with enough detail to provide a reader with a full understanding of how you intend to provide technical assistance to the eligible communities. It must demonstrate the feasibility of the proposed scope of work in meeting CY 2022 Disaster CRTA Grants Program objectives.

The proposal must cover the following elements:

1. **Project Summary** – Present a brief project overview. Explain the purpose of the project, how it relates to the objectives and eligible uses of the CY 2022 Disaster CRTA Grants Program, how the project will be carried out, what it will produce, and who will direct it.
2. **Needs Assessment** – Describe why the project is necessary. Outline the communities to be served in relation to specific needs that will be met by the project. Provide statistical or other supporting documentation to justify the needs.

- a) Quantify the anticipated number of water and waste disposal systems that will receive assistance under the grant or provide statistical or narrative evidence that a sufficient number of beneficiaries will exist to justify the grant award. Proposals should highlight how assistance will be provided equitably. Priority will be given to projects proposing to focus the majority of available services to rural communities with populations below 10,000 and/or 5,500.
3. **Project Goals and Objectives** – Clearly state your project goals. The objectives must clearly describe your goals and be concrete and specific enough to be quantitative and measurable. Goals should relate specifically to the purpose of the CY 2022 Disaster CRTA Grants program.
4. **Project Narrative** – This must be more detailed than your project summary. Demonstrate your substantial experience and expertise in providing the proposed services.

### **2.2.3 Work Plan**

The work plan establishes the scope of work and must describe the tasks and activities that will be accomplished with available resources during the grant period.

It must show the work planned to achieve the intended outcomes, goals, and objectives set out for the CY 2022 Disaster CRTA Grants Program. The work plan must:

- a. Describe the work to be performed by each person.
- b. Provide a schedule or timetable of work to be done. The project duration must be clearly defined.
- c. Show evidence of previous experience with the services to be provided.
- d. Provide a marketing plan, if specific projects have not already been identified.
- e. Describe ongoing or follow-up activities that will occur after project completion (such as following up with water and waste disposal systems that received your service).
- f. Using your project objectives, describe how project results will be evaluated to measure the success of the CY 2022 Disaster CRTA Grants Program.
- g. List all personnel responsible for administering the CY 2022 Disaster CRTA Grants Program. Include a statement of each person's qualifications and experience.

### **2.2.4 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 applicant contributions or non-federal

sources. The justification must account for all expenditures, and it must reflect any cost-sharing contributions. The budget justification must explain the proposed (or already in use) budget and accounting system. 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 to the nearest dollar. You can consult 2 CFR part 200, subpart E, *Cost Principles*, (available at this link: <https://go.usa.gov/xJjq4>) for information about appropriate cost principles for each budget category.

## 2.2.5 Required Information Not Found on Standard Application Forms

In addition to completing all standard application forms and the narrative items above, the following supplementary materials must be submitted:

1. **Evidence of legal existence.** Provide satisfactory documentation that your organization is legally organized under state and federal law to provide the service you propose. The documentation also must show you have the legal authority to enter into a grant agreement with RUS, and to perform the activities proposed under the grant application. Among other things, satisfactory documentation includes certificates from the Secretary of State, copies of state statutes or laws establishing your organization, and copies of your organization's articles of incorporation and bylaws. **NOTE:** Letters from the IRS awarding tax-exempt status are **not** considered adequate evidence.
2. **A list of your board of directors and officers.** Submit a certified list of current directors and officers. Include their respective terms of service.
3. **IRS tax-exempt status.** Submit evidence of this status from the IRS, if applicable.
4. **Audit.** In accordance with 2 CFR Part 200, Subpart F, *Audit Requirements*, (available at this link: <https://go.usa.gov/xJDqN>) submit your organization's most recent, independently conducted audit. A link for website access to an audit is not acceptable.
5. **Financial information and sustainability.** Submit the following:
  - a. Balance sheets, income statements, and cash flow statements for the last three years.
  - b. 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.

- c. Projected cash flow and income statements for at least three years, supported by a list of assumptions showing the basis for the projections.
6. **Additional supporting information.** Additional information may be submitted to support and describe how the project plan will achieve CY 2022 Disaster CRTA Grants Program objectives. This supplemental information 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 CY 2022 Disaster CRTA Grants Program application package can be found by searching for the grant opportunity number on the NOFO at this link: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/water-environmental-programs/calendar-year-2022-disaster-circuit-rider-technical-assistance-grants-program>.

**NOTE:** RUS 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

Every applicant is 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>. The registration must be renewed and revalidated every 12 months for as long as there is an active direct loan, guaranteed loan, or grant with the Agency.

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 System for Award Management is found 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 2023 application window opens on **September 28, 2023**. To be considered for funding, the application must be time-stamped electronically on [www.grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) no later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on the filing deadline of **October 30, 2023**.

Late or incomplete applications are not eligible for funding.



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

## Section 4: The Application Review Process

### 4.1 Acknowledging Receipt of your Application

RUS will acknowledge receipt of each application by email. All applications are reviewed for completeness. If an application is determined to be incomplete, the applicant will be notified in writing within 30 days of receipt, and no further action will be taken. If an application is determined to be ineligible, the Agency will notify the applicant in writing with an explanation.

### 4.2 Evaluating your Application

A team comprised of at least three Agency employees will independently evaluate all applications and proposals. The team will score applications using criteria outlined in Section 4.3, and will base its recommendations on factors such as eligibility, clarity, detailed information, application completeness, and conformity to application requirements.

### 4.3 Scoring Criteria

In accordance with the information in this application guide, the application and supporting information will be used to determine the priority for available CY 2022 Disaster CRTA Grants Program funds. Points are given only for well-documented factors in the application package that, in the opinion of the reviewers, meet the objective outlined under each factor as outlined in the NOFO (available at this link: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/water-environmental-programs/calendar-year-2022-disaster-circuit-rider-technical-assistance-grants-program>).

The scoring criteria and points system will be used as follows:

1. Applicant experience in developing and implementing successful technical assistance or training programs similar to the proposed project (up to 15 points)

|                     |             |
|---------------------|-------------|
| More than ten years | (15 points) |
| Six to ten years    | (10 points) |
| Up to five years    | (5 points)  |
| No experience       | (0 points)  |
2. Applicant's actual capacity: Use of grant funds for grantee's staff versus contract personnel to carry out the technical assistance or training (up to 15 points)

|                           |             |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| At least 75 percent staff | (15 points) |
|---------------------------|-------------|

- |                                   |             |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|
| 50 percent to 74.99 percent staff | (10 points) |
| Fewer than 50 percent staff       | (0 points)  |
3. Population of the proposed area or areas to be served - based on the 2010 U.S. Census, available at this link: <https://go.usa.gov/xMwbH> (up to 15 points)

|                  |             |
|------------------|-------------|
| Fewer than 5,500 | (15 points) |
| 5,500 to 9,999   | (10 points) |
| 10,000 or more   | (0 points)  |
  4. Application Development. Technical Assistance is for pre-development or activities related to an application filed under the CY 2022 Disaster Water Grant Program (available at <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/>). (up to 15 points)
  5. Needs assessment. The problems or issues being addressed are clearly defined and supported by data. (up to 10 points)
  6. Goals and objectives. Clearly defined, tied to the need as defined in the Needs Assessment, and measurable. (up to 10 points)
  7. Work Plan. Clearly articulates a well-thought-out approach to accomplishing objectives and clearly identifies who will be benefitted by the technical assistance. Includes a timeframe for completing the goals and objectives. (up to 30 points)
  8. Evaluation Methods. Specific to the activity, clearly defined, and measurable with expected project outcomes. (up to 10 points)
  9. Administrator Discretionary Points. In order to be considered for Administrator Discretionary Points, the applicant must provide adequate documentation to address the following factor:

Project is located in a Disadvantaged Community or a Distressed Community (15 points). A Disadvantaged Community will be determined by the Agency by using the Council on Environmental Quality's Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (which is incorporated into the USDA look-up map) which identifies communities burdened by climate change and environmental injustice. Additionally, all communities within the boundaries of Federally Recognized Tribes and Alaska Native Villages will also be determined to be Disadvantaged Communities by the Agency. Distressed Community will be determined by the Agency by using the Economic Innovation Group's Distressed Communities Index (which is incorporated into the USDA look-up map), which uses several socio-economic measures to identify communities with low economic well-being. To determine if your project is located in a Disadvantaged Community or a Distressed Community, please use the following USDA look-up map:

<https://ruraldevelopment.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=4acf083be4c44bb7864d90f97de0c788>.

The Administrator Discretionary Points will be awarded solely on these criteria.

#### **4.4 Application Selection**

The Agency will rank qualifying applications by final score. Applications are selected based on the highest ranking and funding availability. RUS reserves the right to not award CY 2022 Disaster CRTA Grants Program funding if applications are incomplete or earn low scores. All applicants will be notified of their selection status by email.

#### **4.5 Possible Application Actions**

RUS will decide among the following:

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

#### **4.6 Appeals Process**

In accordance with 7 CFR Part 1900, Subpart B, *Adverse Decisions and Administrative Appeals*, (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 CY 2022 Disaster CRTA Grants Program funds – cannot be appealed.

Applicants can request review of a decision by the National Appeals Division (NAD). The appeal must be received within the proper timeframe in accordance with 7 CFR Part 1900, 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*:  
<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>
- 7 CFR Part 1970, *Environmental Policies and Procedures* – available at this link: <https://go.usa.gov/xJjYM>

- 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/xJDry>
- 2 CFR Part 417, *Nonprocurement Debarment and Suspension* – available at this link: <https://go.usa.gov/xJjgs>
- 2 CFR Part 421, *Requirements for a Drug-free Workplace (Financial Assistance)* – available at this link: <https://go.usa.gov/xJj4T>
- 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](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

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