

## **SUMMARY**

The Rural Utilities Service (RUS), an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), herein referred to as RUS or the Agency, announces its Revolving Funds for Financing Water and Wastewater Projects (Revolving Fund Program (RFP)) application window for Fiscal Year (FY) 2022. Grant funding will be awarded to qualified applicants to create a revolving fund to finance predevelopment water and wastewater projects, and for other eligible purposes. Funding is made available through the FY 2022 appropriations in an amount of \$1 million.

## **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

**Federal Awarding Agency Name:** United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Utilities Service

**Funding Opportunity Title:** Revolving Funds for Financing Water and Wastewater Projects (Revolving Fund Program (RFP))

**Announcement Type:** Funding Opportunity Announcement

**Funding Opportunity Number:** RDRUS-22-RFP

**Catalog Of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number:** 10.864

**DATES:** Completed applications must be submitted between June 21, 2022 and timestamped or received no later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on July 31, 2022. Applications will only be accepted via <https://www.grants.gov/> (Grants.gov) to be eligible for FY 2022 grant funding. No applications or supporting documentation submitted via courier, U.S. mail, fax, or electronic mail will be accepted. Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted.

**ADDRESSES:** Entities wishing to apply for assistance may download the application documents and requirements delineated in this notice from: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/water-environmental-programs/revolving-funds-financing-water-and-wastewater-projects>. Application information for electronic submissions may be found at <http://www.Grants.gov>.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Penny Douglas, Grant Manager, Water and Environmental Programs, Rural Utilities Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, at [Water-RD@usda.gov](mailto:Water-RD@usda.gov) or by phone at (202) 253-0504.

**ADMINISTRATIVE:** The Agency encourages applicants to consider projects that will advance the following key priorities (more details available at <https://www.rd.usda.gov/priority-points>):

- Assisting rural communities to recover economically from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly disadvantaged communities;
- 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.

*Discretionary Points:* At the Administrator's discretion, points will be awarded for proposals addressing these key priorities as further described in Section E.

## **A. Program Description**

Drinking water systems are vital to both health and economic development. With dependable water facilities, rural communities can attract families and businesses that will invest in the community and improve the quality of life for all residents. Without dependable water facilities, these communities cannot sustain economic development.

RUS provides financial and technical assistance to help communities bring safe drinking water and sanitary, environmentally sound waste disposal facilities to rural Americans. RUS supports the sound development of rural communities and the growth of our economy without endangering the environment.

The RFP was established under 7 CFR part 1783 to assist communities with water or wastewater systems. Qualified private, non-profit organizations selected for funding will receive RFP grant funds to establish a lending program for eligible entities. Eligible entities for the revolving loan fund will be those entities eligible under 7 U.S.C.1926(a)(1) and (2) to obtain a loan, loan guarantee, or grant from the Water and Waste Disposal Loans and Grants program administered by RUS. As grant recipients, qualified non-profit organizations will set up a revolving loan fund to provide loans to finance predevelopment costs of water or wastewater projects, or short-term small capital projects not part of the regular operation and maintenance of current water and wastewater systems. The total amount of loan financing to an eligible entity shall not exceed \$200,000 and shall be repaid in a term not to exceed 10 years. The interest rate shall be determined by the grant recipient and approved by RUS.

## **B. Federal Award Information**

The Agency will make awards, and the successful applicants will be required to execute documents appropriate to the project before funding will be advanced. Award documents specify the term of each award. Prior RFP grants cannot be renewed; however, existing RFP awardees can submit applications for new projects which will be evaluated as new applications. Grant applications must be submitted during the application window.

### **C. Eligibility Information**

1) *Eligible Grant Recipients.* To be considered an eligible organization to receive a grant, applicants must meet the eligibility requirements of 7 CFR 1783.5, *What are the eligibility criteria for grant recipients?* All submitted proposals must meet the intent outlined in 7 CFR 1783.1, *What is the purpose of the Revolving Fund Program?* and 1783.12, *What are eligible uses of grant proceeds?* and be in conformance with 1783.13, *What administrative expenses may be funded with grant proceeds* and 1783, Subpart C.

2) *Eligible RFP Loan Recipients.* To be eligible for a revolving loan, applicants must meet the criteria of 7 CFR 1783.3, *Definitions*, and 1783.14, *What are the eligibility criteria for RFP loan recipients?*

3) *Cost Sharing or Matching.* Applicants must contribute at least 20 percent of funds from sources other than the proceeds of an RFP grant to pay part of the cost of a loan recipient's project. In-kind contributions will not be considered.

### **D. Application and Submission Information**

The FY 2022 RFP Application Guide provides specific, detailed instructions for each item of

a complete application. The Agency emphasizes the importance of including every item and strongly encourages applicants to follow the instructions carefully, using the examples and illustrations in the FY 2022 RFP Application Guide. Applicants should ensure they are using the most updated version of the Application Guide before submitting an application. Any updates to the Application Guide will be posted at <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/water-environmental-programs/revolving-funds-financing-water-and-wastewater-projects>. For requirements of completed grant applications, refer to 7 CFR part 1783 Subpart B.

Prior to official submission of applications, applicants may request technical assistance or other application guidance from the Agency, so long as such requests are made prior to the application deadline. RUS contact information can be found in Section G of this document. The Agency will not solicit or consider extra scoring or eligibility information that is submitted after the application deadline. The Agency reserves the right to contact applicants to seek clarification on materials contained in the submitted application.

1) *Location of RFP Grant Program Information.* The FY 2022 RFP Application Guide, copies of necessary forms and samples, and the RFP regulation are available at <https://www.grants.gov/> or <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/water-environmental-programs/revolving-funds-financing-water-and-wastewater-projects>

2) *Content and Form of Application Submission.*

(a) To be considered for funding, applicants must be an eligible entity and must submit a complete application by the deadline date. Applicants should consult the cost principles and general administrative requirements for grants pertaining to their organizational type to prepare the budget and complete other parts of the application. Applications should be prepared in

conformance with 7 CFR part 1783, and departmental and other applicable regulations including 2 CFR parts 180, 182, 200, 400 and 421, or any successor regulations.

(b) Carefully review this document, the FY 2022 RFP Application Guide, and 7 CFR part 1783, which detail all required items for a complete application.

(c) Applicants are required to maintain a Unique Entity ID (UEI) and maintain an active registration in the System for Award Management (SAM) database. Renewal can be completed online at: [SAM.gov | Home](https://sam.gov). This registration must be renewed and revalidated every 12 months for as long as there is an active loan, grant, or guaranteed loan with the Agency. To ensure the information is current, accurate and complete, and to prevent the SAM account expiration, the review and updates must be performed within 365 days of the activation date, commonly referred to as the expiration date. The registration process may take up to 10 business days. (See 2 CFR Part 25 and the “Help” section at [SAM.gov | Home](https://sam.gov).)

(d) Complete the Financial Assistance General Certifications and Representatives in SAM.

### 3) *Application Submittal.*

(a) Applications must be submitted electronically. To file an electronic application over the internet, please visit <https://www.Grants.gov>. Applications and supporting material will not be accepted via courier, U.S. Mail, fax, or email.

(b) Applicants must be registered with Grants.gov before a grant application can be submitted. If you have not used Grants.gov before, you will need to register in SAM. SAM registers your organization and stores your organizational information, which allows Grants.gov

to use it to verify your identity. The registration processes may take up to 10 business days to complete. Follow the instructions at Grants.gov for registering and submitting an electronic application. RUS may request original signatures on electronically submitted documents later. All electronic documents must be submitted in Excel, Word, or PDF format. If system errors or technical difficulties occur, use the customer support resources available at the Grants.gov website.

4) *Submission Dates and Times.*

(a) Electronic grant applications must be received no later than 11:59 p.m., Eastern Standard Time, on July 31, 2022, to be eligible for FY 2022 funding. Late or incomplete applications will not be eligible for FY 2022 grant funding.

(b) Applications and supporting material will not be accepted via courier, U.S. mail, fax, or email.

(c) If the submission deadline falls on Saturday, Sunday, or a Federal holiday, the application is due the next business day.

**E. Application Review Information**

1) *Review Standards.* Within 30 days of receiving your application, RUS will provide you with written acknowledgement of the receipt of an application. Your application will be reviewed for completeness to determine if you included all of the items required. As a result of the review, the following actions will then be taken:

(a) Incomplete or ineligible applications as of the deadline for submission will not be considered. If an application is determined to be incomplete or ineligible, the applicant will be

notified in writing of the reason and the application will be returned.

(b) Complete, eligible applications will be evaluated competitively by a review team, composed of at least two RUS employees from the Water and Environmental Programs. They will make overall recommendations based on factors such as eligibility, application completeness, and conformity to application requirements. They will score and rank the applications based on criteria as described in the 7 CFR 1783, the FY 2022 RFP Application Guide, and below. RUS reserves the right to request additional information once an application is determined to be complete to minimize the risk of duplication of other federal efforts. Low-scoring projects may not be awarded funding even if funding remains available at RUS's discretion.

(c) Regardless of the score an application receives, if RUS determines that the project is technically infeasible or ineligible, RUS will notify the applicant in writing and the application will be returned with no further action.

2) *Evaluation Criteria.* All applications that are complete and eligible will be ranked competitively based on the following scoring criteria:

<b>Criteria No.</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Points</b>
1	Degree of expertise and successful experience in making and servicing commercial loans, with a successful record, for the following number of full years:	
	○ At least 1 but less than 3 years	5 points
	○ At least 3 but less than 5 years	10 points
	○ At least 5 but less than 10 years	20 points
	○ 10 or more years	30 points



2	Extent to which the work plan demonstrates a well thought out, comprehensive approach to accomplishing the objectives of this part, clearly defines who will be served by the project, clearly articulates the problem/issues to be addressed, identifies the service area to be covered by the RFP loans, and appears likely to be sustainable.	Up to 40 points
3	Percentage of applicant contributions. Points allowed under this paragraph will be based on written evidence of the availability of funds from sources other than the proceeds of an RFP grant to pay part of the cost of a loan recipient's project. In-kind contributions will not be considered. Funds from other sources as a percentage of the RFP grant and points corresponding to such percentages are as follows:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Less than 20%</li> </ul>	Ineligible
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ At least 20% but less than 50%</li> </ul>	10 points
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 50% or more</li> </ul>	20 points
4	Extent to which the goals and objectives are clearly defined, tied to the work plan, and are measurable.	Up to 15 points
5	Lowest ratio of projected administrative expenses to loans advanced.	Up to 10 points
6	The evaluation methods for considering loan applications and making RFP loans are specific to the program, clearly defined, measurable, and are consistent with program outcomes.	Up to 20 points
7	<p>*Administrator’s discretionary points. In order to be considered for these points, the applicant’s work plan must include a separate section titled, “Administrative Points.” Applications may be awarded up to a total of 10 points for the following three priorities:</p> <p>1. Assisting rural communities recover economically from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly disadvantaged communities.</p>	Up to 10 points

	<p>Proposals where the project is located in or serving one of the top 10% of counties or county equivalents based upon county risk score in the United States. Information on this priority may be found at: <a href="https://www.rd.usda.gov/priority-points">https://www.rd.usda.gov/priority-points</a></p> <p>2. Ensuring all rural residents have equitable access to RD programs and benefits from RD funded projects. Direct technical assistance to a project located in or serving a community with a score 0.75 or above on the CDC Social Vulnerability Index. Information on this priority may be found at: <a href="https://www.rd.usda.gov/priority-points">https://www.rd.usda.gov/priority-points</a></p> <p>3. Reduce climate pollution and increasing resilience to the impacts of climate change through economic support to rural communities. Direct technical assistance to a project addressing climate impacts shown as either quantitative or qualitative. Additional information on this priority may be found at: <a href="https://www.rd.usda.gov/priority-points">https://www.rd.usda.gov/priority-points</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quantitative: Project is located in or serving coal, oil and gas, and power plant communities whose economic well-being ranks in the most distressed tier of the Distressed Communities Index.</li> <li>• Qualitative: Demonstrating how proposed climate-impact projects improve the livelihoods of community residents and meet pollution mitigation or clean energy goals.</li> </ul>	
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\*The administrative points will be awarded solely on the aforementioned factors, up to a cumulative total of 10 points.

## **F. Federal Award Administration Information**

1) *Application Outcomes.* There are four possible outcomes following the submission of an application under the RFP. RUS reserves the right to make no grant awards if all applications are ineligible, incomplete, and/or do not meet the established program objectives and priorities. RUS may determine that the application is:

- a) Eligible and selected for funding,
- b) Eligible but offered less funds than requested,
- c) Eligible but not selected for funding due to ranking of all applications by score, or
- d) Ineligible for the grant.

2) *Award Notices.* RUS will notify applicants selected for funding by an award letter accompanied by a grant agreement and multi-tier action environmental compliance agreement. The grant agreement will contain the terms and conditions for the grant; the multi-tier action environmental compliance agreement will detail the recipient's responsibilities in meeting the Agency's Environmental Policies and Procedures, 7 CFR 1970, in particular §1970.55 which applies to multi-tier actions or relending actions. The multi-tier action environmental compliance agreement acknowledges that further "tiered" environmental review is required and coordinated by the recipient prior to approving subrecipient applications for relending purposes.

3) *Payments/Reimbursements.* Pursuant to the grant agreement, grant funds will be released over the course of the grant period in reimbursement for the performance of eligible, approved activities, which do not duplicate similar federal efforts or tasks. The grant agreement will also include reporting and outline actions containing pre-approval requirements consistent

with 7 CFR part 1783 and 2 CFR part 200 which if not met, may result in a delay in reimbursement, disallowance of expense, or a suspension of the grant.

4) *Scope of Services.* Any change in the scope of the project, budget adjustments of more than 10 percent of the total budget, or any other significant change in the project must be reported to and approved prior to the change by the approval official by written amendment to the grant agreement. Any change not approved may be cause for termination of the grant.

5) *Reporting.* Performance reporting, including applicable forms, narratives, and other documentation, are to be completed and submitted in accordance with the provisions of 7 CFR 1783, 2 CFR 170, and 2 CFR 200. Further, all grantees must submit an audit or financial information covering the defined period of performance as outlined in 2 CFR 200.

## **G. Federal Awarding Agency Contacts**

- 1) Website: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/water-environmental-programs/revolving-funds-financing-water-and-wastewater-projects>
- 2) Telephone: (202) 253-0504
- 3) E-mail: Water-RD@usda.gov
- 4) Main point of contact: Penny Douglas, Community Programs Specialist, Water and Environmental Programs, Rural Utilities Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

## **H. Other Information**

### **Paperwork Reduction Act**

In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act, the paperwork burden associated with this

notice has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under OMB Control Number 0572–0138.

## **Non-Discrimination Statement**

### USDA Non-Discrimination Statement

In accordance with Federal civil rights laws and USDA civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Mission Areas, agencies, staff offices, 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/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 by program or incident.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language) should contact the responsible Mission Area, agency, or staff office; the USDA TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY); or the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a complainant should complete a Form AD-3027,

USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, which can be obtained online at <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/usda-program-discrimination-complaint-form.pdf> from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted 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; or

(2) Fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or

(3) Email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

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Christopher A. McLean  
Acting Administrator  
Rural Utilities Service