



Technical Assistance for Rural Cooperatives Program

Q&A

Are 501(c)(6) organizations eligible to apply?

Yes

Are state government offices eligible to apply?

Yes

Are mission-aligned LLCs eligible to apply?

Yes

Are mission-aligned cooperatives eligible to apply?

Yes

Are there definitions for the different target performance metrics?

- Rural Groups – nonmetropolitan counties or open countryside and towns with fewer than 50,000 residents.
- Cooperatives – a user-owned, user-controlled business that operates for the benefit of its members rather than outside investors. These entities distribute earnings based on patronage rather than outside investors.
- Mutually Owned businesses – entities where ownership is held by the users, customers, or members who use the business’s services or products.
- Businesses – businesses that are not cooperatives or mutually owned.

Are co-ops separated from LLCs?

Only co-ops that are not LLC co-ops should be reported under this target performance metric. Co-ops that are an LLC should be reported under the co-op target performance metric section.

Is there a word/page limit on various sections and overall document link?

The application format and any word or character limits are defined within the online application platform, which structures each section of the submission. More information on limits can also be found on CDF’s website by clicking learn more.

<https://www.cdf.coop/ruralcooperativegrant>

Does an organization have to have matching funds to apply? Does a match strengthen an application?

Matching funds are not required; however, applicants may describe leveraged contributions or additional resources as part of the overall strength of the proposal.



Is more weight given to an individual project or a county being served or are we encouraged to support as many individuals/groups as possible?

Preference will be given to organizations that work in persistent poverty counties, as defined by USDA, to apply.

What is the anticipated timing for announcing the award?

March 31, 2026

Is this a grant?

No. It is a sub-award under CDF's existing RCDG. If awarded, the organization must comply with USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture regulations.

Please provide a link to a website or report that provides USDA's definition of a county being in persistent poverty, underserved, or economically distressed.

<https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/poverty-area-measures/descriptions-and-maps>

Do ESOPs, Employee Ownership Trusts, and community-based enterprises qualify as mutually-owned businesses?

Yes

What is the definition of underserved community?

Populations or geographic areas that have faced systemic barriers to full participation in economic, social, and civic life. This includes various groups such as persons of color, religious minorities, LGBTQ+ individuals, persons with disabilities, rural residents, and those affected by poverty or inequality.

Is the scoring rubric available? How will applications be reviewed and scored?

Applications will be reviewed using a 100-point scoring framework: Relevant Experience (20 points), Rural Experience (10 points), Alignment with Rural Cooperative Development Goals (15 points), Workplan Quality and Feasibility (20 points), Contribution to Performance Metrics (15 points), Budget Reasonableness (10 points), and Reporting Capacity (10 points). Bonus points (up to 10 total) are available for projects serving Persistent Poverty Counties (5 points) and for projects supporting food and agriculture-related cooperatives or enterprises (5 points).

What is the expected disbursement approach?

Funding is expected to be distributed in multiple payments over the project period, tied to milestones and reporting.



Are U.S. territories eligible under this grant? The online application appears to restrict the address/country field on the first page before the applicant can enter the full address.

Yes. U.S. territories are eligible under this grant. If the online application's initial address/country section presents difficulties, applicants may leave that field blank (if permitted by the system) and continue to the next section to enter the full and correct address. Applicants should proceed using the platform's available options to complete and submit the application.