Urban Agriculture and Innovation Production (UAIP) Competitive Grants Program FY 2020 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Please note that this document has been updated with additional questions for the final time as of June 19, 2020. The last day to submit questions was June 5, 2020.

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General

Q: What support will USDA be able to offer applicants during the application process?
A: USDA is happy to field any general, high-level inquiries that grantees may have regarding the application process. However, USDA is unable to offer specific guidance or advice on how to craft, structure or write one's proposal. In an effort to provide unbiased support to all those interested in the funding opportunity, USDA will refrain from providing advice that cannot otherwise be obtained through the resources that have been made publicly available via www.farmer.gov/urban and Grants.gov.

Q: Will USDA host a webinar about this funding opportunity?
A: Yes. NRCS hosted a webinar about the Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (UAIP) Competitive Grants Program on June 3, 2020 at 2:00 PM Eastern Standard Time. The presentation provided an overview of the UAIP program purpose, project types, eligibility, and basic requirements for the submission of an application.

Q: I participated in the UAIP webinar on June 3, 2020 and would like to view the recording. Is it available?
A: Yes. The webinar was recorded and is posted online at Farmers.gov/urban for any time viewing.

Q: Can I get a copy of the handout associated with the UAIP webinar?
A: Yes. The handout associated with the UAIP webinar was a copy of the PowerPoint presentation in PDF format. Both the UAIP Webinar Presentation and the webinar transcript are posted under the "Related Documents" tab in the Notice of Funding Opportunity at Grants.gov.

Q: Is the grant only available to organizations that participated in the webinar?
A: No. UAIP is open to all of the eligible entities listed in the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

Q: When will the FAQs be updated?
A: The period to submit questions about this funding opportunity closed on June 5, 2020. The Frequently Asked Questions document will be updated and available the week of June 15th on Grants.gov and at Farmers.gov/urban.

Q: What are the legislative authorities guiding this program?
A: Section 12302 (codified at 7 U.S.C. 6923) of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 also referred to as the 2018 Farm Bill, established the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production to assist eligible entities through grants to support the development of urban agriculture and innovative production.

Q: Who is the awarding agency for this grant program?
A: USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is the awarding agency for this grant opportunity and is leading the USDA-wide Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production.

Q: What is the mission of OUAIP?

A: The Office's mission is to encourage and promote urban, indoor, and other emerging agricultural practices, including -

- community gardens and farms located in urban areas, suburbs, and urban clusters;
- rooftop farms, outdoor vertical production, and green walls;
- indoor farms, greenhouses, and high-tech vertical technology farms;
- hydroponic, aeroponic, and aquaponic farm facilities; and
- other innovations in agricultural production.

Q: What is the purpose of this grant program?

A: UAIP supports the development of urban agriculture and innovative production activities by funding Planning Projects (PP) and Implementation Projects (IP) led by nonprofit organizations, local or Tribal governments, and schools that serve any of the grades K-12 in areas of the United States.

Q: What are the program priorities?

A: Projects – whether Planning Projects or Implementation Projects – should target a single or multiple urban areas, suburbs, or urban clusters in the United States where access to fresh foods is limited or unavailable and should include one or more partner organizations to achieve project goals within the target area(s).

Q: Does this grant pertain to the landscape, ornamental or cut flower industry?

A: UAIP grants fund urban agriculture and innovative production activities that increase access to fresh food in urban and suburban areas in the United States. Projects will be evaluated on their consistency with UAIP's purpose and priorities.

Q: Is this a one-time funding opportunity or will there be future opportunities for this program?

A: NRCS cannot provide an answer regarding funding beyond fiscal year 2020 at this time. Approximately $3 million is available for UAIP grants in fiscal year 2020.

Grant Types: Planning Project and Implementation Project

Q: What is the purpose of a Planning Project (PP) grant?

A: Planning Projects support the development of projects that will either initiate, build upon or expand the efforts of farmers, gardeners, citizens, government officials, schools, and other stakeholders in urban agriculture and innovative production. PPs may be designed to develop recommendations; facilitate assessments; or support the development of business plans, feasibility studies, strategies, and municipal planning that consider policies and zoning.

Q: What is the purpose of an Implementation Project (IP) grant?
A: Implementation Projects accelerate existing and emerging models of urban, indoor, and other agricultural practices and improve access to local food. IPs may be designed to offer needed resources, such as job training, land, equipment, mentoring, and other business development assistance; increase food production; train students for careers in agriculture; or expand operations of community gardens or nonprofit farms.

Q: Can you highlight the specific difference between planning versus implementation grants?
A: The biggest difference between the project types is the project phase. PP grants are early stage investments and IP grants accelerate or expand existing work.

Q: Do you have examples of projects that have been funded under this grant?
A: No. UAIP is a newly established grant program under the 2018 Farm Bill and this fiscal year is the first time USDA is soliciting applications for this grant opportunity.

Q: Can a planning project actually implement a project?
A: No. An applicant should not include implementation activities in a Planning Project grant proposal.

Q: Can I submit an application for more than one type of grant (Planning and Implementation) in the same funding cycle?
A: No. Applicants must choose between submitting a grant application for a Planning Project or Implementation Project. If an applicant submits more than one proposal seeking funding for the same project, only one application will be forwarded for review.

Q: How many projects can I lead or participate in?
A: An eligible applicant can serve as the lead on only one Planning Project or Implementation Project grant application. You may be listed as a partner on more than one application.

Q: Can you receive a Planning Project and an Implementation Project together?
A: No.

Q: What is the expected funding amount for Planning Project grants?
A: Planning Projects will be a minimum of $200,000 and shall not exceed $500,000.

Q: What is the expected funding amount for Implementation Project grants?
A: Implementation Projects will be a minimum of $100,000 and shall not exceed $300,000.

Q: Can we apply for a one-year Planning Project grant that has a budget of $150,000?
A: No. The minimum award amount for a Planning Project is $200,000. An applicant may only request a minimum budget amount of $200,000 or up to a maximum budget amount of $500,000.

Q: Can we apply for a one-year Implementation Project grant that has a budget of $50,000?
A: No. The minimum award amount for an Implementation Project is $100,000. An applicant may only request a minimum budget amount of $100,000 or up to maximum budget amount of $300,000.

Q: Is the minimum funding an organization can request $200,000 for PP grants and $100,000 for IP grants?
A: Yes. The budget range for Planning Project grants is $200,000 to $500,000. The budget range for Implementation Project grants is $100,000 to $300,000.

Q: Why are budget ranges for Planning Projects higher than Implementation Projects?
A: Planning Projects have a higher minimum and maximum award amount because these are new, start-up projects that may require a greater initial investment such as research, surveys and assessments, development of technology, design and planning, and so forth. Funding for Implementation Projects should be used to accelerate existing and emerging efforts.

Q: What is the time period for execution of Planning Project grants?
A: Projects are expected to be completed within 12 to 36 months (one to three years). Applicants should expect the grant life cycle to include start up activities, execution, and close out activities (final financial and program reports, accounting, etc.). Applicants are expected to plan accordingly in order to achieve project deliverables within the grant period specified.

Q: What is the time period for execution of Implementation Project grants?
A: Projects are expected to be completed within 12 to 36 months (one to three years). Applicants should expect the grant life cycle to include start up activities, execution, and close out activities (final financial and program reports, accounting, etc.). Applicants are expected to plan accordingly in order to achieve project deliverables within the grant period specified.

Q: What should I put as my project's start and end date on the SF 424?
A: The Notice of Funding Opportunity states that applicants should plan their project with a start date of September 15, 2020. Use September 15, 2020 as your start date on your Application Form (SF 424). The end date depends on your project's length, which would be one to three years after September 15, 2020.

Q: If we successfully complete the Planning Project grant, will we get an Implementation Project grant in the next round of funding?
A: While you will be encouraged to apply through the competitive process for an Implementation Project grant upon successful completion and close out of a Planning Project grant, there are no guarantees that this grant program will be funded beyond fiscal year 2020.

Q: Can I subaward to another entity?
A: Subawards are allowed ONLY if an eligible entity subawards to another eligible entity as defined by authorizing legislative language. Subawards can be included in an applicant's budget as a line item under Other on the form SF-424A and include the detailed subaward budget and scope in the Budget Narrative.

Q: Can I subaward to a partner?
A: Partners that are not eligible to receive a UAIP grant cannot receive subawards. However, a project partner that is essential to the proposed project may be included in an applicant's budget as a line item under Contractual on the form SF-424A or receive a stipend in an applicant's budget as a line item under Other on the form SF-424A. Remember to include details about the contractor and/or stipend budget and scope in the Budget Narrative. USDA will review applicant's budgets to ensure that all costs are reasonable, allowable, and allocable, and necessary.

Q: If UAIP is awarded to a local government agency, can other local government agencies in that city be awarded subawards?
A: Yes. Only eligible entities can receive a UAIP grant and/or subaward. Eligible entities are nonprofit organizations, local or Tribal governments, and schools that serve any of the grades K-12 in areas of the United States as defined by authorizing legislative language.

Q: What rules apply to subawards?
A: NRCS does not require subawards to be awarded through a competitive process. Subawards must be managed in accordance with 2 CFR 200.331.

Q: Is hemp or marijuana cultivation an allowable project activity?
A: No. The UAIP Competitive Grants Program does not fund hemp or marijuana production including research related activities. Any activity related to growing marijuana under the UAIP program would be an illegal Federal activity and not in compliance with Federal law.

Q: How are the terms "hemp" and "marijuana" defined?
A: The term "hemp" means the plant species Cannabis sativa L. and any part of that plant, including the seeds thereof and all derivatives, extracts, cannabinoids, isomers, acids, salts, and salts of isomers, whether growing or not, with a delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol concentration of not more than 0.3 percent on a dry weight basis. Delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC, is the primary intoxicating component of cannabis. Cannabis with a THC level exceeding 0.3 percent is considered marijuana, which remains classified as a schedule I controlled substance regulated by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) under the Federal Controlled Substances Act.

Target Area(s)

Q: What is the project location requirement for UAIP?
A: Projects should target a single or multiple urban areas, suburbs, or urban clusters in the United States.

Q: Can project activities take place outside of the United States?
A: No.

Q: How is "urban" or "suburbs" defined?
A: USDA is specifically not defining "urban agriculture," "urban areas," "suburbs," "suburban areas," and "urban clusters" to create broad parameters for UAIP grants in fiscal year 2020 instead USDA is utilizing the US Census Bureau definition of rural to determine ineligible and eligible target areas for UAIP projects.

Q: How do I know if my project target area(s) fit within the UAIP project criteria?
A: The US Census Bureau defines urban and rural areas on the basis of population density. Rural areas comprise open country and settlements with fewer than 2,500 residents. Therefore, UAIP Projects that target area(s) with 2,500 or greater residents are eligible.

Q: Are rural areas excluded from this grant program?
A: Yes. Projects that target a rural area (fewer than 2,500 residents) are not eligible.

Q: Can a project be multistate?
A: Yes. A project could work in a single or multiple target area(s) with 2,500 or greater residents in any of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Caribbean Area (Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands), and the Pacific Islands Area (Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands).

Q: May a school district propose a project that serves multiple schools?
A: Yes. An eligible entity like a school district could apply with a project that operates at various sites within target area(s).

Q: Can project activities take place at homes? Would a private home be considered an eligible site?
A: No, individuals are not eligible beneficiaries under this program.

Partnerships

Q: If the project is geared towards the urban community, can you work with a non-profit or farm partner in a rural community?
A: The project should target urban, suburban, and urban clustered areas. A project partner does not have to be an eligible entity and can be located in a rural area. However, the partner must work with the eligible entity on a Planning Project or Implementation Project in target area(s) with 2,500 or greater residents.

Q: What is the partnership requirement for UAIP?
A: Eligible entities should collaborate with one or more partner organizations to achieve project goals within the target area(s). Partners may be eligible and/or non-eligible entities.

Q: Do I need to partner with others?
A: Yes. To be eligible to receive a Planning Project or Implementation Project award applicants must collaborate with **one or more** partner organizations working in the project target area(s).

Q: Who can be a partner?
A: Applicants are encouraged to seek and create partnerships with public or private, nonprofit or for-profit entities including farms, institutions of higher education (IHEs), academic institutions (including minority-serving colleges and universities), cooperative extension, public and private schools, and/or other appropriate professionals, community-based organizations, and Federal, state, local and Tribal government entities to achieve project objectives and outcomes. Only the applicant must meet the eligibility requirements for a UAIP grant. Eligible and non-eligible entities may be partners on a project.

Q: Can you clarify how "partnership" is defined?
A: The eligible entity that submits the application to the Natural Resources Conservation Service is responsible for receiving and managing the award, if selected. Applicants that apply as "partnerships" or other similar groupings must clearly describe the relationship between the applicant and the "partner" parties in the narrative of the Project Proposal. Each award will ONLY be made to a single entity.

Q: What documentation does NRCS need about the Partnership?
A: Applicants must include information about project partner(s) within the narrative of their Project Proposal. The Notice of Funding Opportunity (NFO) includes the required headings, supporting narrative required content, and format including page limits, structure, font type, and font size of the Project Proposal. More detailed information about this requirement is included in the Notice of Funding Opportunity on Grants.gov.

Q: In addition to the narrative, is an MOU or other documentation required to verify the partnership?
A: No. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the applicant and partner(s) is not required. Letters of intent or support from partners are not required either. However, if an applicant wishes to include them, simply attach the MOU or letters to the application in Grants.gov. There is no competitive advantage for an applicant to provide supporting documentation from partners. This documentation is considered voluntary, does not count towards page limits, and does not need to follow a specific format or structure.

Q: If I'd like to include a letter, who should the letters of intent or support be addressed to?
A: Write a letter addressed to Louis Aspey, Deputy Chief for Management and Strategy, Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Q: My project partner would like to mail their letter of support to USDA directly, what is the mailing address?
A: Attach a copy of the letter(s) to your application in Grants.gov. Do not send a letter by postal mail or email.

Q: Is there a limit to the number of partners that can collaborate on a project?
A: There is no limit. Priority will be given to an applicant that collaborates with **one or more** partners on their UAIP Planning Project or Implementation Project. The number of partners (whether one or 10) does not constitute a competitive advantage.

Q: How might I find others to partner with?
A: USDA recommends reaching out to public or private, nonprofit or for-profit entities, including academic institutions and/or other appropriate professionals, community-based organizations, and government entities in your area of the United States. The USDA Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement may have useful tools and information to assist with partnership development. You can find more information at www.usda.gov/partnerships.

Food Access

Q: What is the food access criteria/requirement for UAIP?
A: Access to fresh foods should be limited or unavailable in the project target area(s).

Q: How do I identify areas where access to fresh foods are limited or unavailable?
A: Eligible applicants should have experience serving communities where access to fresh foods are limited or unavailable. The USDA Economic Research Service provides a definition for food access and tools like the USDA Food Access Research Atlas to measure food access.

Q: If you have access to grocery stores in the target area, would that disqualify your project from consideration?
A: No.

Q: Regarding the food access requirement, does serving low-income people living within a high-income community qualify? There are many markets and stores available but we're serving individuals experiencing homelessness in this high rent city.
A: There are many ways to measure food access for individuals and for neighborhoods, and many ways to define which areas are food deserts—neighborhoods that lack healthy food sources. Most measures and definitions take into account at least some of the following indicators of access. Applicants can use any of these measures or others to measure access to fresh foods in their project's target area(s).

- Accessibility to sources of healthy food, as measured by distance to a store or by the number of stores in an area.
- Individual-level resources that may affect accessibility, such as family income or vehicle availability.
- Neighborhood-level indicators of resources, such as the average income of the neighborhood and the availability of public transportation.

Q: If we have other metrics to demonstrate food insecurity, may we use those in addition to or instead of USDA developed resources?
A: Yes. Applicants are not required to use tools developed by USDA's Economic Research Service such as the USDA Food Access Research Atlas (Formerly referred to as the Food Desert Locator) or the Food Environment Atlas to measure access to fresh foods in the target area(s). However, these data and mapping tools are available and free to use online. You can go to www.ers.usda.gov/ and search "Food Access" in the upper right corner to find a list of resources.

Eligibility

Q: Who is eligible to apply?

A: The following entities in any of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Caribbean Area (Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands), and the Pacific Islands Area (Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) are eligible to apply for either a Planning Project grant or Implementation Project grant:

- Tribal governments;
- Nonprofits having a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS (other than institutions of higher education);
- Nonprofits that do not have a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS (other than institutions of higher education);
- A unit of local government; and
- Any school that serves any of the grades kindergarten through grade 12.

Q: Is a description of the eligible applicant types available?

A: The following terms for local government, nonprofit organization and Tribal government are from the Common Data Element Repository (CDER) Library. The CDER Library is the authoritative, Federal-wide source of financial and business terms, which is based on the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Uniform Grants Guidance and the Digital Accountability and Transparency Act (DATA Act).

Entity Type	Description
Local government	Any unit of government within a state, including a county; borough; municipality; city; town; township; parish; local public authority, including any public housing agency under the United States Housing Act of 1937 (50 Stat. 888 (P.L. 75—412); special district; school district; intrastate district; council of governments, whether or not incorporated as a nonprofit corporation under State law; and any other agency or instrumentality of a multi-state, regional, or intra-state or local government.
Nonprofit organization	Any corporation, trust, association, cooperative, or other organization, not including IHEs, that: (a) Is operated primarily for scientific, educational, service, charitable, or similar purposes in the public interest; (b) Is not organized primarily for profit; and (c) Uses net proceeds to maintain, improve, or expand the operations of the organization.
Tribal Government	Governing bodies or governmental agencies of any Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community (including any native village as defined in Section 3 of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, 85 Stat. 688 (43 U.S.C. § 1602)) certified by the Secretary of the Interior as eligible for the special programs and services provided through the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Q: Are private, elementary schools eligible?
A: Yes. Any school – public or private – that serves any of the grades kindergarten through grade 12 are eligible.

Q: Are soil and water conservation districts eligible for UAIP?
A: Yes.

Q: Are 501(c)(4) eligible for these grants?
A: Yes. Nonprofits that do not have a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS are eligible for UAIP grants, which includes nonprofit organizations with 501(c)(4) status such as social welfare organizations and local associations of employees.

Q: Who is not eligible to apply?
A: Individual such as a farmer or gardener, for-profit organizations and small businesses, Federal agencies, state governments, Institutions of Higher Education including extension programs, and foreign applicants are not eligible to apply for UAIP grants. It is important to note that non-eligible entities can be partners on a project.

Q: Can Individuals apply?
A: No. Individuals such as a farmer, gardener, etc. are not eligible to apply for the UAIP Competitive Grants Program. USDA offers a variety of funding opportunities to help farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners finance their businesses. Please visit www.farmers.gov/fund for information about programs that individuals are eligible for.

Q: I'm an individual; however, I have my EIN and DUNS number. Does that make me eligible?
A: No. Individuals are not eligible applicants for this opportunity. However, individuals can be a partner.

Q: I am a for-profit entity, am I eligible for this grant?
A: No. For-profit organizations and small businesses are not eligible to receive a UAIP grant. However, for-profit organizations and small businesses can be partners.

Q: Can Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) apply for this funding opportunity?
A: No. IHEs as defined at 20 U.S.C. 1001 are not eligible. However, IHEs can be a partner.

Q: If an institution of higher learning or extension program is considered a non-profit 501(c)(3); can they apply as a non-profit?
A: No.

Q: If an institution of higher learning or extension program is considered a state or local agency; can they apply as a state or local agency?
A: No.

Q: Can a fiscal agent/sponsor apply on my behalf?

A: The fiscal agent or sponsor would need to be an eligible entity to apply for and receive UAIP grant funds as defined by authorizing legislative language and an active participant/partner on project activities. The fiscal agent or sponsor cannot provide a subgrant to a non-eligible entity.

Q: As a non-profit applying for a UAIP grant, do I have to have an audited financial statement?

A: No.

Q: My non-profit has never been audited; are we eligible to apply as the lead organization?

A: Applicants are not required to have received an audit prior to being selected for a UAIP grant. However, as required in Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations Part 200, Subpart F Audit Requirements, all U.S. states, local governments, Federally-recognized Indian tribal governments, and non-profit organizations expending $750,000 USD or more in Federal award funds in a fiscal year must submit a Single Audit report for that year through the Federal Audit Clearinghouse's Internet Data Entry System.

Budget

Q: What does UAIP fund?

A: Project activities that may be funded under this grant include the following:

- Production-related expenses such as materials, supplies and other costs related to community gardens and farms; rooftop farms, outdoor vertical production, and green walls; indoor farms, greenhouses, and high-tech vertical technology farms; hydroponic, aeroponic, and aquaponic farm facilities; and other innovations in agricultural production.
- Purchase, lease or rental of special purchase equipment, vehicles, land, and building space.
- Activities that encourage and promote urban, indoor, and other emerging agricultural practices.
- Construction such as building a permanent or a non-permanent, temporary or moveable structure such as fencing.
- Contractual costs including labor such as a consultant, architect or other professional service.
- Personnel costs.

Q: What can I include in my budget?

A: Budget expenses can include personnel and fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contractors, construction, other (direct costs), and indirect charges.

Q: What should I include in the Budget Narrative?

A: In a separate narrative titled Budget Narrative justify all budget items and costs. Detail how the totals on the form SF 424A were determined and provide a description for every allowable cost line item. Descriptions should demonstrate a clear connection between the costs and the proposed project. For example, the narrative should describe the positions, related duties, rates, and the percentage of time to be spent on the project, the number of travel trips, rates, and the average cost per trip, the types of supplies to be purchased, the specific equipment to be purchased, contractor tasks, etc.

Q: Does the Budget Narrative have a specific page length?
A: No. The Notice of Funding Opportunity does not have a length for the Budget Narrative.

Q: Does the page limit also include the Budget Narrative?
A: No. NRCS includes instructions for completing the Budget Narrative in the funding opportunity under the "Related Documents" tab in Grants.gov.

Q: Are there any mandatory costs not mentioned in the NFO that should be added to the project proposal such as mandatory grantee training or gatherings?
A: No.

Q: If the project includes construction costs such as the building of a greenhouse should we submit both the form SF-424A and form SF-424C?
A: Use the form SF-424A for projects that include construction and non-construction. Put the construction costs in the Construction Object Class category in Section B of the form and include the detailed construction budget in the Budget Narrative.

Q: Can you provide examples of allowable supplies?
A: Production-related supplies such as soil, plants, seeds, shovels, gardening tools, tillers, fish, livestock, bees, hoop houses, irrigation, fencing, greenhouse covering, growing containers, walk-in cooler, wash station, or other items necessary to grow, harvest and store food are allowable. Supplies and materials needed to host a workshop or training including nutrition education or cooking classes are allowable. This list is not exhaustive.

Q: What is the maximum allowable amount for supplies?
A: The per unit cost of each supply item requested in the project budget must be below $5,000 dollars. Any item with a per unit cost of $5,000 dollars or above and having a useful life of more than one year is considered equipment under 2 CFR § 200.33 and not a supply.

Q: Can a project budget include equipment like a tractor? Is there a maximum allowable amount for equipment?
A: Yes. The purchase, lease or rental of special purpose equipment is allowable and there is no maximum threshold. The purchase, lease or rental of general purpose equipment is unallowable.

Q: What type of equipment is considered "general purpose equipment"?
A: General purpose equipment means equipment which is not limited to research, medical, scientific or other technical activities under 2 CFR § 200.48. Examples include office equipment and furnishings, modular offices, telephone networks, information technology equipment and systems, air conditioning equipment, reproduction and printing equipment, and motor vehicle.

Q: How is "special purpose equipment" defined?
A: Special purpose equipment is defined as equipment that is used only for research, medical, scientific, or other technical activity under 2 CFR § 200.89.

Q: Can land or building space be purchased under a UAIP grant?
A: Yes. However, an applicant that submits a budget that includes the rental or lease of land or building space during the length of the grant (instead of purchase) will be given higher consideration as listed under the Application Review Information section of the NFO.

Q: Is it true that equipment must be leased or rented and not purchased?
A: No. An applicant may include the purchase of special purpose equipment in their Project budget. However, an applicant that submits a budget that includes the rental or lease of special purpose equipment during the length of the grant (instead of purchase) will be given higher consideration as listed under the Application Review Information section of the NFO.

Q: Can an applicant rent equipment and lease land from a project partner?
A: Yes. An applicant can rent or lease equipment, building space, greenhouses, or land from a project partner and/or other. The cost of rental or lease can be included in an applicant's budget as a line item under Contractual.

Q: If we are to rent a facility, equipment, etc. are we expected to terminate those contracts when the grant is over?
A: Yes. Any lease or rental agreement must terminate at the end of the award period.

Q: What if land is donated?
A: Project activities may occur on donated land. Please be clear in your submission who is donating the land and for what length and purpose.

Q: Why will Projects that include the lease or rental of vehicles, land, building space, and special purchase equipment receive higher consideration?
A: Each project proposal will be evaluated on its fiscal plan and resources. As part of the administrative review process, USDA will review applicants' budgets to ensure that all costs are reasonable, allowable, allocable, and necessary. Due to the high demand and limited ability of NRCS to manage the acquisition and disposition of real property, applications with budgets that include the rental or lease of land, special purpose equipment, building space, and vehicles will receive higher consideration.

Q: Is the purchase of water shares or/and water rights an allowable cost under UAIP?
A: Yes. However, an applicant that submits a budget that includes the lease of water shares or rights during the length of the grant (instead of purchase) will be given higher consideration as listed under the Application Review Information section of the NFO.

Q: Will a project be negatively scored if it does not include the rental or purchase of vehicles, land, building space, and special purchase equipment in its budget?
A: No. Projects that do not include the purchase of or lease or rental of special purpose equipment, land, building space, or vehicles will not weigh lower under the Application Review Information section of the NFO.

Q: Can this grant cover insurance expenses as a part of the budget?
A: Yes. The cost of insurance can be included in an applicant's budget as a line item under Other (direct costs).

Q: Are pre-award costs allowable such as paying for a grant writer?
A: No. Any pre-award costs incurred will not be reimbursed.

Q: Would breeding activities be eligible under UAIP grants?
A: Activities that encourage and promote urban, indoor, and other emerging agricultural practices are allowable and may include food production, outreach activities, hosting trainings and educational workshops, conducting assessments and surveys, technology and software development, and research such as breeding activities. This list is not exhaustive.

Q: Can I use grant funds to purchase food?
A: The goal of funded projects should be to increase access to fresh foods. Purchasing local products should not be a primary use of grant funds. Food purchases should be limited to costs related to incidental food and refreshments for participants at workshops or trainings.

Q: Is construction an allowable cost?
A: Yes. Grant funds may be used to construct, alter, or repair (including dredging, excavating, and painting) of buildings, structures, or other real property. Erecting a building or making substantial changes to the footprint of a building would be considered a construction project.

Q: Is building a greenhouse or permanent structure an allowable cost?
A: Building a non-permanent, temporary or movable structure is an allowable cost. Building a permanent structure, which may include, but not limited to, pouring concrete, laying asphalt or installing plumbing is also an allowable cost.

Q: Is revitalizing a greenhouse an allowable cost?
A: UAIP funds can be used to expand or improve current operations of an existing greenhouse.

Q: Does this grant allow for funding of an architect or consulting firm for a Planning Project?
A: Yes. Contractual costs such as hiring a consultant or labor can be included in an applicant's budget as a line item under Contractual. Contractual costs are expenses associated with purchasing goods and/or procuring services performed by an individual or organization other than the applicant in the form of a procurement relationship.

Q: Would the UAIP funds provide funding for personnel for nutrition, education, or cooking classes that encourage or teach the use of foods grown in an urban garden?
A: Yes. It is allowable to fund personnel whose time and effort can be specifically identified and easily and accurately traced to project activities.

Q: Is the creation of a new position for project coordination an allowable cost?
A: Grant funds may be used for personnel whose time and effort can be specifically identified and easily and accurately traced to project activities.

Q: How do I determine where to input salary costs on the SF-424A?
A: Salaries for personnel that are employed by the applicant would go on the Personnel line and all other labor costs from sources outside the organization would go under the Contractual section. Any associated fringe benefits should be separated from personnel costs on the SF-424A.

Q: What rate should I use for indirect costs?
A: To be eligible to recover any indirect cost under a Federal award, recipients must either 1) have a current Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) with a Federal agency that has not expired; 2) have an existing De Minimis Agreement; or 3) qualify for use of the De Minimis rate authorized by 2 CFR 200.414(f). If requesting indirect costs, use the rate and base specified in your organization's NICRA or existing De Minimis Agreement. The NICRA or De Minimis Agreement must be in PDF format and attached to the Grants.gov application package.

Applicants requesting indirect costs who do not have a NICRA or De Minimis Agreement can use an indirect cost rate of 10% with a base of Modified Total Direct Costs (MTDC). Such applicants selected for an award will be required to execute the 10% De Minimis Agreement with NRCS, which constitutes establishing an approved rate. Recipients who do not request indirect costs are prohibited from charging indirect costs to a Federal award.

Q: Can food grown with a UAIP grant be sold?
A: Yes. Program income is the gross revenue generated by a Federally funded activity earned during the length of the award. Program income may be earned by recipients from fees charged for conference or workshop attendance, from rental fees earned from real property or equipment acquired with Federal funds, or from the sale of commodities or items developed under the grant. Any program income generated during the grant period must be used to further the objectives of the project. All program income must be recorded on the Federal Financial Report (SF-425) for the period in which it was earned. Recipients are not accountable for program income earned after the grant period.

Q: Can food grown with a UAIP grant be donated or grown for personal use?
A: Food grown with grant funds can be donated to non-profits such as food banks. Food cannot be grown for personal use or profit.

Matching Funds

Q: Are matching funds required?
A: There is no cost sharing or matching requirement for this opportunity.

Q: While there is no cost sharing requirements, is preference given to proposals who can and are willing to provide a match?
A: There is no competitive advantage to applicants who voluntarily provide a match.

Grants.gov

Q: How do I find the UAIP funding opportunity on Grants.gov?
A: You can find and download the Notice of Funding Opportunity and related documents by going directly to Grants.gov and either 1) conduct a keyword search for the program acronym "UAIP"; 2) enter the Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NRCS-NHQ-UAIP-20-NOFO0001013; or 3) search the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 10.935.

Q: Is the UAIP Notice of Funding Opportunity available in Spanish?
A: Not at this time.

Q: If I have problems with Grants.gov, will USDA staff help me submit or accept my application package?
A: No. USDA cannot support applicants regarding Grants.gov accounts or provide applicants technical assistance with the Grants.gov system. The Grants.gov technical support center can be reached at 1-800-518-4726 or support@Grants.gov.

Q: Do I have to register with Grants.gov before submitting an application through Grants.gov?
A: Yes. The applicant must be registered with Grants.gov. There is a free, one-time registration for using Grants.gov, regardless of the Federal agency you may be submitting an application to through Grants.gov. Information about how to register is included on the Grants.gov registration page.

Q: What is involved in the Grants.gov registration process?
A: More detailed information is included on the Grants.gov registration page and the Grants.gov On-line User Guide. The following information is a general overview.

1. Obtain a TIN/EIN from the IRS (if your organization does not have one).
2. Obtain a DUNS number (if your organization does not have one).
3. Register with SAM.gov (if your organization does not have an active account)
4. Create a Grants.gov username and password. You will need to create a Grants.gov user profile by visiting the Get Registered section of the website.
5. The E-Business Point of Contact (POC) at your organization must respond to the registration email from Grants.gov and login at Grants.gov to authorize you as an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR). Note there can be more than one AOR for an organization.
6. At any time, you can track your AOR status by going to the Applicant Login with your username and password.

Important Note: These steps are a general overview and include the main steps a new organization or organizations that have never applied for a Federal grant before must complete outside of Grants.gov prior to submitting an application through Grants.gov.

Q: Does USDA have any helpful tips when seeking assistance on registration steps?
A: Don't wait until the last minute to apply at Grants.gov. Keep a record of any correspondence with Grants.gov or other helpdesks, including any ID or case numbers provided.

Q: How long does the registration process take?
A: The time it takes to complete each step varies. Don't wait until the last minute to complete the steps listed above. The Grants.gov registration process must be completed prior to submission of an application. You should allow two full weeks to register with Grants.gov, but additional time may be required.

Q: Who should I contact for help if I need assistance or have technical difficulties while trying to complete any of the registration steps?
A: These systems are not owned or managed by USDA. You must contact the applications directly for assistance.

1. IRS TIN/EIN issues or questions: Businesses: 1-800-829-4933 and Non-profit taxes: 1-877-829-5500
2. DUNS Number issues or questions: 1-866-705-5711 (U.S. Only) or SAMHelp@dnb.com
3. SAM.gov assistance and user guides: Go to the Help tab on the SAM.gov website
4. Grants.gov support: 1-800-518-4726 or support@Grants.gov

Q: Can you get an EIN within minutes through IRS.gov?
A: Please send issues or questions regarding an Employer Identification Number (EIN) also known as a Federal Tax Identification Number (TIN) to the Internal Revenue Service.

Q: Is there a cost to use the System for Award Management (SAM)?
A: SAM.gov is an official website of the U.S. government. There is no cost to use SAM. You can use the site for free to register to do business with the U.S. government; update or renew your entity registration; check status of an entity registration; and search for entity registration and exclusion records. More detailed information on how to use SAM is included on the SAM.gov Help page.

Q: Why does my organization need to register with SAM.gov?
A: Registering with the System for Award Management (SAM) is a required step in order for your organization to be able to apply for Federal grants. The registration process is free. In order to register for a SAM account, you must have either EIN, TIN or a DUNS number. If you don't have a DUNS, you cannot register in SAM. If your organization previously registered in SAM and has received Federal grants in the past, check to make sure your organization's SAM account is active.

Q: Is the SAM requirement being waived for this grant?
A: Currently, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has offered some flexibility to the SAM registration requirements. Right now, the awarding agency can relax the requirement to have the SAM registration at the time of application. Currently, Grants.gov will accept applications without it. However, to do so, you must contact the Grants.gov applicant support. The delay or the absence of an active SAM registration must be due to the loss of operational capacity and increased costs due to the COVID-19 crisis. It cannot be because the application process was started late. When this flexibility will end is unclear. It is possible that this flexibility could end before the July 6th deadline per the Memorandum issued by OMB on March 19th, 2020, and it is set for consideration, 90 days after that date, which would be prior to the July 6th UAIP application deadline.

Q: What website is free for the DUNS number?
A: A DUNS number is a unique nine-digit identifier for businesses. Obtaining a DUNS number is free for anyone required to register with the Federal government. There are a lot of scam websites that charge a fee to help you obtain your DUNS number. Go to the DUN & Bradstreet website to obtain a DUNS number.

Application

Q: Will all the specifics for submitting a UAIP grant application be on the website?
A: All instructions and requirements for this funding opportunity are posted on Grants.gov under the Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NRCS-NHQ-UAIP-20-NOFO0001013. Once you click on the opportunity, there are four tabs. The very first tab on the left is the "Synopsis" tab, which is an overall view and summary of the grant opportunity. The main information is located under the "Related Documents" tab – where you can find and download the full announcement (NFO) with details and instructions along with the Frequently Asked Questions (PDF), webinar handout and transcript, General Terms and Conditions, supporting documents and forms, and other instructions. When ready to apply, select the "Package" tab and click on apply.

Q: What do I need to include in my grant application?
A: Please refer to the NFO as well as Appendix A under the "Related Documents" tab in the Notice of Funding Opportunity at Grants.gov. Appendix A is an Application Checklist that lists the required and conditionally required documents for an application package.

Q: Is the application downloadable before logging into Grants.Gov?
A: Yes. You do not need to be logged into Grants.gov to find and download the Notice of Funding Opportunity and related documents.

Q: Can you start the application, save and go back in to work on it in Grants.gov?
A: Yes. You can start the application at Grants.gov and return to work on it within the workspace feature.

Q: Does the grant require specific headings in the narrative?
A: Yes. Please refer to Section D. *Application and Submission Information* of the Notice of Funding Opportunity for the content and format of the Project Proposal Narrative, which includes headings for both Planning Projects and Implementation Projects. Each grant type has different required headings.

Q: Is there a narrative template required or provided?
A: There is not one provided for the Budget Narrative. For the Proposal Narrative, two different Word documents entitled Appendix B and Appendix C have been posted under the "Related Documents" tab in the Notice of Funding Opportunity at Grants.gov. Appendix B is a sample of a Planning Project Proposal Narrative and Appendix C is a sample of an Implementation Project Proposal Narrative. These sample forms may be thoroughly filled out and included as either your Planning Project Proposal or Implementation Project Proposal.

Q: Where can I find instructions for the Project Proposal Narrative?
A: Please refer to Section D. *Application and Submission Information* of the Notice of Funding Opportunity in Grants.gov for the content and format of the application submission. The NFO includes page limits, fonts, structure, and the project narrative headings.

Q: Is it okay to use a 10-point font for tables, charts, and footnotes?
A: No. The text of the proposal must be single spaced and typed in New Times Roman, no smaller than 12-point font and must not exceed 15 pages. The proposal should not exceed 10 pages of written text, and up to 5 additional pages for figures and tables. We have established this maximum (15 pages) to ensure fair and equitable competition. This page limit only applies to the Project Proposal Narrative.

Q: Will NRCS accept applications that do not follow the required format?
A: No. Proposals that fail to comply with the required content and format will not be considered for funding. Material exceeding stated page limits and/or formatting structure will not be considered. Incomplete and/or noncompliant proposals will not be considered.

Q: When are applications due by for UAIP?
A: USDA will accept applications on Grants.gov until 11:59 P.M. Eastern Standard Time (i.e. 8:59 P.M. Pacific Time) on Monday, July 6, 2020.

Q: Can I apply through the mail instead of electronically?
A: No. Only applications submitted through the electronic Grants.gov system will be considered.

Q: Will applications submitted after the deadline be reviewed?
A: No. Applications must be received by 11:59 P.M. Eastern Time on July 6, 2020 through Grants.gov. Applications received after this deadline will not be considered for funding. Late submissions will not be reviewed or considered.

Q: How will the agency know if my application was submitted on time?
A: NRCS will rely on system generated date and time receipt documentation to determine whether applications meet the submission deadline. Grants.gov provides an automatic acknowledgement when applications are received.

Q: Can I apply for a UAIP grant and a grant from a different USDA agency and/or Federal agency?
A: Yes. If the projects have specifically different objectives, you may apply for and receive both a UAIP grant and a grant from a different USDA agency or other Federal agency. Please check with the other federal programs to ensure that you are not violating their terms and conditions.

Priority Consideration

Q: How would an applicant receive higher consideration?

A: Applicants meeting the following four criteria will be given higher consideration:

1. Have Experience in the area of:
   a. agriculture and/or innovative production for **three years or more**; and
   b. serving communities in urban areas, suburbs, or urban clusters where access to fresh foods are limited or unavailable
2. Demonstrate competency to implement a project, provide fiscal accountability, collect data, and prepare reports and other necessary documentation.
3. Demonstrate a willingness to share information with researchers, evaluators, practitioners, and other interested parties, including a plan for dissemination of results.
4. Collaborate with one or more partner organizations working in the project target area(s).

Q: In terms of the higher consideration, does the level of experience apply only to the applicant or can it be collective experience of the group (applicant and partners)?

A: The four criteria for higher consideration listed above apply solely to the UAIP applicant. The applicant will be given high consideration if they have experience in the area of agriculture and/or innovative production for three years or more.

Q: Does UAIP give preference to disabled individuals or veterans?

A: No. The Natural Resources Conservation Service has other programs that offer preference to disabled veterans. More information is available on the NRCS Outreach & Advocacy website.

Q: Does this USDA grant acknowledge extra points for applicants from "Opportunity Zones"?

A: Yes.

Q: Can you explain Opportunity Zone priority eligibility?

A: A qualified opportunity zone (QOZ) is an economically distressed community where new investments, under certain conditions, may be eligible for preferential tax treatment. Localities qualify as QOZs if they have been nominated for that designation by a state, the District of Columbia, or a U.S. territory and that nomination has been certified by the Secretary of the U.S. Treasury via his delegation of authority to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Projects located in or targeting an Opportunity Zone will be given higher consideration. The list of Opportunity Zones is located at https://www.cdfifund.gov/Pages/Opportunity-Zones.aspx. Please refer to information regarding Opportunity Zones in the NFO.

Q: Is higher consideration given to projects that scale versus projects focused on a single location?

A: No.

Evaluation and Notification

Q: What happens after I submit my application?
A: USDA will conduct an initial screening of all applications to ensure they are eligible and fully responsive. Eligible and responsive applications are those that meet the following requirements: 1. Submitted by eligible applicants; 2. Meet all other eligibility criteria; 3. Submitted on or before the required deadline; 4. Are complete; and 5. Meet required content, format and formatting structure.

Q: How will my application be reviewed?
A: After initial screening, applications that meet the administrative review requirements will be technically evaluated by a review panel. Appropriate members of NRCS and other USDA agencies will review all applications submitted, and where necessary, also may seek the opinions of others who are qualified to give expert advice on that specific topic. Reviews will be conducted by teams comprised of three USDA employee who represent different agencies, subject areas and geographic locations.

Q: Can you elaborate on the specific weights and scoring of the evaluation criteria?
A: Applications will be evaluated on a 100-point scoring scale based on information provided in your application. Refer to the NFO under Section E.1.B. for the specific weights and evaluation criteria.

Q: How will applications be selected for funding?
A: The Notice of Funding Opportunity contains the specific weights and evaluation criteria that reviewers will be considering when evaluating each proposal. Be sure to review the six criteria yourself so that you can understand what you should address in your project and budget narratives. After reviews have been completed, Planning Projects and Implementation Projects recommended for funding will be submitted to the approving official – who is the Chief of USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service – to make the final award decisions.

Q: What is the timeline of the Urban Agriculture and Innovation Production Competitive Grants Program?
A: USDA will accept applications on Grants.gov until 11:59 P.M. Eastern Standard Time on July 6, 2020. The agency anticipates announcing or notifying successful and unsuccessful applicants by August 31, 2020 and expects to have Federal awards in place by September 30, 2020.

Q: How many grants will be awarded?
A: There is no commitment by NRCS to make a specific number of awards.

Q: Will my application be funded at the amount requested?
A: As part of the technical review process, USDA will review applicants' budgets to ensure that all costs are reasonable, allowable, allocable, and necessary. Applications selected and approved for funding with budgets that are realistic, well justified, and supported will likely be funded at the requested amounts. However, USDA reserves the right to fund applications at a lower amount if USDA determines that the project can be implemented with less funding; or at lesser amounts if Federal funding is not sufficient to fully fund all applications that merit awards. This is subject to availability of funds.

Q: What type of financial and progress reporting is required by awardees?

A: Please review the General Terms and Conditions for financial and performance report requirements posted under the "Related Documents" tab in the Notice of Funding Opportunity at Grants.gov.

Q: Will grant funds be provided to awardees as a lump sum, or will they be reimbursed?

A: This depends on the agencies business evaluation of your organization and risk assessment. Recipients will either receive reimbursement or advances using a properly completed and executed SF-270, submitted with supporting documentation to either the ezFedGrants system or to the e-mail address specified in the grant agreement.

Q: Can I be an application reviewer?

A: USDA is not seeking external reviewers for this funding opportunity. Applications submitted to NRCS for the FY 2020 UAIP Competitive Grants Program will be evaluated by a panel of internal USDA reviewers to ensure that applicants receive full and uniform consideration, and that the selected proposals merit receipt of Federal funds. If you are a USDA employee and would like to receive more information about being a reviewer, please email UrbanAgriculture@usda.gov.

Contact Information

Q: Where can I get more help if I still have questions about the Urban Agriculture and Innovation Production Competitive (UAIP) Grants Program or application?

A: The Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Team strongly recommends that you read the UAIP Notice of Funding Opportunity (NFO) at Grants.gov before submitting questions. Questions must be submitted by June 5, 2020 to: UrbanAgriculture@usda.gov.

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