

Frequently Asked Questions for the Trade Adjustment Assistance for Firms Program

What is Trade Adjustment Assistance for Firms?

The Trade Adjustment Assistance for Firms (TAAF) program was established by Congress under the Trade Expansion Act of 1962. The Trade Act of 1974 (Trade Act), as amended, included an more extensive Trade Adjustment Assistance program for firms that expanded eligibility to services firms, increased authorized funding levels, and provided greater flexibility for a firm to demonstrate eligibility for assistance.

The authority for the TAAF program is Chapters 3 and 5 of Title II of the Trade Act of 1974, as amended (Pub. L. 93-618, 19 U.S.C. §2341 et seq.), and as further amended by P.L. 97-35, 98-120, 98-369, 99-272, 99-514, 100-418, 103-66, 105-277, 107-210, 111-5, 111-344, 112-40, 113-203, and 114-27. The Trade Act of 1974 authorizes the Secretary of Commerce (the Secretary) to establish Trade Adjustment Assistance Centers (TAACs) to assist EDA in implementing TAAF. The Secretary has delegated this authority to EDA. Specific program requirements for TAAF are set forth at 13 C.F.R. part 315.

What is the mission of the Trade Adjustment Assistance for Firms program?

EDA's mission is to lead the Federal economic development agenda by promoting innovation and competitiveness, preparing American regions for economic growth and success in the worldwide economy. EDA fulfills this mission through strategic investments and partnerships that create the regional economic ecosystems required to foster globally competitive regions throughout the United States. The TAAF program is an important part of EDA's investment portfolio as it supports direct technical assistance to import-impacted businesses to help strengthen their global competitiveness.

What are Trade Adjustment Assistance Centers?

While TAAF does not provide funding to businesses directly, direct technical assistance is provided by TAACs, which are generally non-profit organizations or university-affiliated entities, and industry consultants and experts. TAAF funds the TAACs to coordinate direct technical assistance to eligible businesses. TAACs provide technical assistance to U.S. manufacturing, production, and service firms in all 50 States, the District of Columbia and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. EDA's partnership with the TAACs allows firms to receive customized assistance from industry experts knowledgeable about the unique needs, challenges and opportunities facing industries in their respective regions. Firms work with the TAACs to apply for certification of eligibility for TAAF assistance. TAACs work closely with company management to identify the firm's strengths and weaknesses, and develop a customized business recovery plan (Adjustment Proposal) designed to stimulate recovery and growth.

How does TAAF assist firms?

TAAF assists firms that have lost domestic sales and employment due to increased imports of similar or competitive goods as global competition intensifies. TAAF accomplishes this through a national network of TAACs, which assist import-impacted firms in:

1. Preparing and submitting petitions to EDA for certification of eligibility necessary to apply for assistance under TAAF (i.e. to become a “certified firm”);
2. Developing and submitting Adjustment Proposals for EDA approval; and,
3. Implementing the technical assistance tasks as set forth in approved Adjustment Proposals, primarily through private sector consultants.¹

What is the competition being offered through this program?

EDA is soliciting applications from organizations to operate as TAACs. A Federal Funding Opportunity (FFO) has been published on Grants.gov on September 25, 2015. Through this competition, EDA aims to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the TAAF program through enhanced program performance measurement, decreased program administrative costs, closer alignment of geographic service areas of TAACs with the service areas of EDA’s six regional offices², and a more equitable distribution of services across all U.S. states and territories.

EDA anticipates selecting up to 11 TAACs through this FFO. EDA does not anticipate creating or funding any additional TAACs outside of this competitive solicitation, unless a TAAC cooperative agreement recipient withdraws from the program or does not perform to EDA’s satisfaction. In such cases, EDA may choose to hold an intervening competition.

What are the requirements for Trade Adjustment Assistance Centers?

Each TAAC is expected to provide technical assistance to import-impacted firms in preparing petitions for certification of eligibility under the program, and in developing and implementing Adjustment Proposals for such firms. EDA encourages the submission of applications that will significantly benefit import impacted manufacturing and production firms, as historical trends suggest that such firms make up the majority of import-impacted firms. EDA expects applications to demonstrate familiarity or an ability to quickly become familiar with all aspects of TAAF (e.g. statutory, regulatory, and other requirements) along with the activities and services in which TAACs engage to assist firms as outlined in Appendix B of the FFO.

¹ 13 C.F.R. §§ 315.8 and 315.16.

² EDA does not intend to administer the TAAF program through its Regional Offices, only to better align the geographic services areas of TAACs and its Regional Offices. A list of EDA Regional Offices can be found at <http://www.eda.gov/contacts.htm>

How are TAAC Centers different from the Manufacturing Extension Partnership and the Small Business Investment Company?

While the DOC's National Institute of Standards and Technology's Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) works with small and mid-sized U.S. manufacturers, TAAF provides technical assistance exclusively to import-impacted firms as defined by the Trade Act. The Small Business Administration (SBA) Small Business Investment Company (SBIC) partners with private investors to capitalize professionally-managed investment funds (known as "SBICs") that finance small businesses. Funding awarded through the TAAF program cannot be used for such a purpose. Instead, applicants may request funding to support seed capital funding programs and direct supporting programs. Additional information about SBA's SBIC program can be found on their website: <https://www.sba.gov/category/lender-navigation/sba-loan-programs/sbic-program/general-information>.

Who is eligible to apply for funding?

Pursuant to the Trade Act of 1974, as amended, eligible applicants³ for and eligible recipients of EDA investment assistance under this FFO include:

1. Universities or affiliated organizations;
2. States or local governments; or
3. Non-profit organizations.

Under the Trade Act of 1974, EDA is not authorized to provide grants to individuals or for-profit entities, and such requests will not be considered for funding.

How much funding is available for the TAAF competition?

Under the Continuing Appropriations Resolution, 2015 (P.L. 113-203), funding in the amount of \$12.5 million was appropriated for the TAAF program in FY 2015. The TAAF program has not yet received appropriations for FY 2016. EDA expects investments in TAACs for the first year of the five year period of performance to range from \$1 million to \$1.5 million, depending on the total number of TAACs selected through this FFO, the service area of each TAAC that is selected, and the availability of appropriations. The funding periods and amounts referenced in the TAAF FFO are subject to the availability of funds, as well as to DOC and EDA priorities at the time of award. Neither DOC nor EDA will be held responsible for application preparation costs. Publication of this announcement does not obligate DOC or EDA to award any specific grant or cooperative agreement or to obligate all or any part of available funds.

What is the minimum match required?

There is no required match for the TAAF program. Applicants may submit proposals with matching shares to further leverage Federal funds and help ensure additional project impact.

³ See 13 C.F.R. § 315.4 for a description of entities eligible to serve as TAACs.

What is the anticipated duration for each project period?

The applicants selected to serve as a TAAC will work closely with both EDA and import impacted firms. EDA will work closely with the TAACs in administering both the administrative and substantive aspects of TAAF. As a result of this close working relationship, EDA may, subject to the availability of funds, award cooperative agreements to selected TAACs under this competitive solicitation. EDA anticipates providing a five-year period of performance for each applicant selected for funding, with an initial funding period of one year. The selected TAACs will not have to compete for subsequent years of funding during the five year period of performance. Funding beyond the initial year will be dependent upon the availability of funds and satisfactory TAAC performance (as determined by EDA and described in Appendix B, subsection D. - Program Performance Assessment) in achieving the scope of work of the cooperative agreement.

How do I obtain an application package?

An applicant may obtain the appropriate application package electronically at www.grants.gov (Grants.gov). Applicants may search for this funding opportunity on Grants.gov using Funding Opportunity Number: EDA-HDQ-TAAF-2016-2004559.

When is the deadline for submission and where do I submit the application package?

The closing date for receipt of applications for this program is November 24, 2015. Applications must be submitted electronically via www.grants.gov (Grants.gov) and must be received by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on Tuesday, November 24, 2014. EDA will not accept paper, facsimile or email transmissions of applications for this program. Applications received after the closing date and time will not be considered for funding.

What are the evaluation criteria for the TAAF competition?

For the TAAF FFO, the review panel will evaluate and rank applications using the following equally weighted criteria: Ability to develop a service delivery model and manage an organization; Demonstrated competence in administering business assistance programs; Background and experience of staff; Proposed scope of work; and Feasibility of the proposed project budget. Each factor will be weighted as indicated for a total possible score of 100 points.

Can projects contain construction activity?

There is no funding available for construction projects under this program, including projects related to the design or renovation of buildings.

Can previous TAAC recipients be eligible for this competition?

Previous TAAC recipients are eligible to apply for this competition.

Will there be an informational webinar?

EDA will hold an initial informational webinar for prospective applicants on October 19, 2015 at 2:00 p.m. ET. This webinar will provide general program information and information regarding the preparation of applications for funding under this competitive solicitation. To ensure that enough incoming lines are available for each participant, EDA requires interested parties planning to participate on the webinar to register no later than October 15, 2015. To register, please send an email with "TAAF FFO Webinar Registration" in the subject line to TAAF2015@eda.gov.

Where can I find additional information about the TAAF program?

TAAF Annual Reports may be viewed at <http://eda.gov/annual-reports/>