Rural and Tribal Assistance Pilot Program Frequently Asked Questions

Prospective applicants will find answers below to frequently asked questions about the Rural and Tribal Assistance Pilot Program.

This Frequently Asked Questions page will be updated on an ongoing basis with answers and clarifications from the Department.

Program Design and Structure

1. **What is the Rural and Tribal Assistance Pilot Program?**

The Rural and Tribal Assistance Pilot Program is a no-match grant program with the goal of funding early-stage development assistance for rural and tribal infrastructure projects.

2. **How many grants will be awarded?**

Depending on the amount of funding requested, the Bureau anticipates that it will award between five and 10 grants from each fiscal years' (FY 2022 and FY 2023) funds to eligible entities.

3. **How much funding is available in this Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)?**

This NOFO is for two fiscal years of funding: FY 2022 and FY 2023. $1.6 million of FY 2022 funds, and $1.8 million of FY 2023 is available.

4. **What are minimum and maximum grant award sizes?**

There is no set minimum on the amount of grant funding that can be requested. The NOFO references $150,000, which is an estimate of the cost of some of the example tasks that could be funded with this grant. The maximum award amount from FY 2022 funds is $320,000 and is $360,000 from FY 2023 funds.

5. Is there a matching funds requirement?

There is no cost sharing or a local funding match required for this program.

6. Can an entity apply for a Rural and Tribal Assistance Pilot Program grant while applying for other USDOT and federal grant funding opportunities?

Generally, yes. We encourage applicants to leverage all available grant programs. Applicants must clearly state in their application that a similar proposal has been submitted for a separate Federal grant program. If an applicant receives multiple sources of funding for the same project, they should clearly delineate which sources fund which components or phases.

7. Will there be another opportunity to apply for this grant?

Yes. USDOT anticipates an annual NOFO for grants through the remaining three years of the five-year program authorization. The Build America Bureau anticipates releasing the next Rural and Tribal Assistance Pilot Program NOFO in federal FY 2024 which will be for FY 2024 funds ($2 million).

8. Can I reapply next year if my application is not selected this year?

Yes. We encourage interested applicants to reapply, developing and updating applications as appropriate.

9. What is the timing for applications?

The Rural and Tribal Assistance Pilot Program grant application window will open at 2 p.m. EST on **August 14, 2023**. Applications will be accepted through September 28, 2023, but please note: **this program is first-come, first-served**.

10. Can I use these funds for construction?

No, construction phase activities are not eligible for this program.

11. Are there any restrictions on funding?

No more than 20 percent of the funds for each fiscal year of the program may go to any one state. This means that for FY 2022, the maximum award amount to any one state, and by extension any one project, is $320,000. The same is true for FY 2023, with a maximum award amount of $360,000.

Eligible Applicants

1. Who is eligible to apply for a Rural and Tribal Assistance Pilot Program grant?

Eligible applicants include:

   a. a unit of local government or political subdivision that is located outside of an urban area that has a population of more than 150,000 residents as determined by the Bureau of the Census. (These instructions show how to use TIGERweb to verify eligibility, using the project location to determine if location is in an urbanized area. This linked mapping tool can also be used to determine applicant eligibility, and this tutorial provides step-by-step instructions on using the tool);
   b. a State seeking to advance a project in an area located outside of an urban area with a population of more than 150,000 residents as determined by the Bureau of the Census;
   c. a federally recognized Indian Tribe; or
   d. the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands.

2. I don't see my type of organization listed here. Am I eligible to apply for a grant under this program?

Only the entities listed above are eligible to apply to the Program.

Eligible Projects

1. What are eligible projects?

In general, eligible projects include those that are *reasonably expected to be eligible* for certain DOT funding and financing programs. This eligibility expectation is beneficial to applicants because work completed using funding from this Program may be referenced in applications for other DOT funding and financing programs which, if awarded, may continue to advance infrastructure projects.

- These programs are: [TIFIA](#), [RRIF](#), [INFRA](#), [Mega](#), [RAISE](#), and the [National Culvert program.](#)

2. **What if we don't know what the specific project will be? What if the request for funding is for a consulting firm to analyze current conditions and suggest projects?**

Applicants will need to have identified a problem that is project and location specific. The solution to that problem does not need to be identified to be considered for funding. What cannot be funded through this program is a larger study, the outcome of which is multiple projects.

3. **Can funds be used for multiple projects?**

Only one project can be submitted on an application, and the maximum number of applications an applicant can submit is three. If an applicant chooses to submit multiple applications, they should keep in mind that a single state can only be awarded up to $320,000 of FY 2022 funds and up to $360,000 of FY 2023 funds.

4. **If an applicant has an SS4A action plan, could this assistance program could be used to hire technical consultants for an implementation grant?**

If the implementation grant is for a single project, then yes - provided that the project is one that would reasonably be expected to be eligible for funding from one of the DOT funding programs listed in the answer to Question 1 of this section.

Submitting the Application

1. **How can I apply for the program?**

Visit the Program [webpage](#) for information regarding applying. There is a link to the application questions interested applicants should download/review/answer using a word processing app or software before the online web-based application portal opens at 2pm EST on August 14, 2023. Applications will not be able to be saved in progress, so applicants should be prepared to type and/or cut and paste responses in the webform. Attachments to the application will not be allowed.

2. **When is the application deadline?**

The application window closes September 28, 2023; however, applicants are advised to submit their applications as soon as possible after the window opens at 2 p.m. EST on August 14, 2023 as funding will be awarded on a **first-come, first-served basis.**

3. **Will projects be reviewed as they come in, prior to the closing of the application window?**

Applications will be reviewed in batches as they are received. The review process is detailed in the [NOFO](#).

4. **How will you determine "first-come"?**

Submitted applications will be timestamped so we will know the order that they were submitted.

5. **Who must sign/e-sign the application?**

Applicants should obtain approval of the application contents from senior leadership and comply with internal rules of delegation of signature authority. The signer should be indicated as the individual who has completed the form on the day of submission.

Grant Administration

1. **If an eligible entity uses a consultant to help develop their application to this program, is that consultant still eligible to be awarded a contract for engineering services paid under this grant program using the competitive advertisement process?**
Refer to [CFR 200.319 (b)- Rule on competition](#).

2. **How will funds be distributed to a successful applicant? Will it be done via FMIS? or DELPHI?**

USDOT will use DELPHI for reimbursing grant awardees for eligible project-related expenses incurred.