

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE INVESTMENT (ARPTAI) COMPETITIVE GRANT PROGRAM

1. WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY TO THE ARPTAI PROGRAM?

Eligible entities include domestic nonprofit entities (2 CFR § 200.70) and domestic institutions of higher education (20 U.S.C. § 1001(a)).

Examples of eligible entities that may apply for ARPTAI funding include, but are not limited to:

- Nonprofit organizations focused serving targeted audiences
- 1862 Land-grant institutions (7 U.S.C., section 7601)
- 1890 Land-grant Institutions (7 U.S.C., section 7601)
- 1994 Tribal Land-grant Institutions (7 U.S.C., section 7601)
- Alaska Native serving institutions and Native Hawaiian serving institutions (7 U.S.C. 3156)
- Hispanic-serving post-secondary educational institutions
- Insular area institutions of higher education located in the territories of the United States
- Domestic private institutions of higher education
- Domestic private and/or public community colleges
- Other accredited post-secondary ag-related educational institutions

Nonprofit organizations should provide a supporting documentation of 501(c)(3) or other nonprofit certification from the IRS (if applicable) in their application.

Please note only the lead applicant must meet the eligibility requirement. Project partners and collaborators do not need to meet the eligibility requirement, but their involvement should be justified as necessary for the successful completion of the project.

2. HOW MANY SUBMISSIONS ARE ALLOWED PER ELIGIBLE ORGANIZATION?

Only one submission is allowed per eligible organization. NIFA will disqualify both applications if an organization submits duplicate or multiple submissions.

3. WHAT IS THE DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS?

The deadline is June 1, 2022 at 5:00 pm Eastern Time.

4. HOW DOES THE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE INVESTMENT PROGRAM DIFFER FROM THE OUTREACH AND ASSISTANCE FOR SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED AND VETERAN FARMERS AND RANCHERS PROGRAM OR “THE 2501 PROGRAM”?

- a) The legislative funding authorities are different. ARPTAI is authorized under Section 1006 of American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (Pub. L 117-2). The “2501 Program” is authorized under Section 2501 of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C. 2279).
- b) The funding mechanisms are different. ARPTAI awards funding through cooperative agreements, which is a funding mechanism that reflects a relationship between the U.S. Government and a recipient and is used when the government's purpose is to assist the intermediary in providing goods or services to the authorized recipient. Substantial involvement is expected between the executive agency and the State, local government, or other recipient when carrying out the activity outlined in the agreement. The 2501 Program awards funding through grants.
- c) The target audience to be served under ARPTAI program includes socially disadvantaged and veteran producers as does the 2501 Program, but is also broader to include economically distressed, underserved, limited resource producers, and other key targeted individuals and communities.

5. UNDER THE COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS AWARDED, WHAT WILL BE THE NATURE OF USDA’S INVOLVEMENT WITH COOPERATORS AND THE COLLABORATION WITH OTHER COOPERATORS?

USDA will substantially engage with the Cooperators in planning and delivery of their activities with the targeted audience. Examples of substantial involvement include, but are not limited to:

- collaborating on project development, implementation and evaluation;
- actively participating in planning and progress meetings;
- providing technical direction to the overall projects, as well as the individual project elements as it is determined to be necessary and appropriate by USDA;
- facilitating strategic connections to USDA staff representing relevant programs and resources; and
- reviewing technical progress reports to evaluate the progress toward cooperative agreements deliverables and providing input to these reports and the projects as deemed necessary.

The Cooperator is also required to coordinate with all other recipients of Section 1006 technical assistance resources in a manner as determined by USDA, which may include sharing Cooperator expertise and experiences with other cooperators and engaging in ongoing collaborative activities with USDA and other cooperators.

6. HOW DOES USDA DEFINE SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED PRODUCERS?

Based on the 1990 Farm Bill (7 U.S.C. § 2279), a socially disadvantaged farmer, rancher, or forest landowner” means a farmer, rancher, or owner or operator of nonindustrial private forest land who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group.

A socially disadvantaged group is defined as a farmer or rancher who is a member of one or more of the following groups whose members have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities.

The target audience to be served under ARPTAI program includes socially disadvantaged and veteran producers, but is also broader to include economically distressed, underserved, limited resource producers, and other key targeted individuals and communities.

7. HOW DOES USDA DEFINE UNDERSERVED OR ECONOMICALLY DISTRESSED PRODUCERS?

For the purpose of this funding opportunity, there is no statutory definition for these terms. Rather, the applicant is expected to provide sufficient rationale and evidence the target audience is economically distressed, underserved or a member of other similarly situated groups that could benefit from technical assistance and outreach.

8. WHAT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND OUTREACH ACTIVITIES ARE ACCEPTABLE UNDER THE ARPTAI PROGRAM?

Acceptable technical assistance and outreach activities should focus on effectively accessing USDA programs and personnel, in the areas of agricultural production skills, agriculture credit, rural development, financial literacy, risk management, mediation, cooperative development, market planning, land access, financial planning, business planning, and tax planning. Additional topics, activities, and methods may include, but are not limited to:

- Research-informed strategies to identify unique needs and gaps among the target audience regarding access, knowledge, and services through methods such as needs assessments, interviews, focus groups and/or network analysis;
- specialized consultation, training, coaching and demonstrations on relevant topics;
- capacity building training efforts, such as grant writing, resource development, peer navigation training;
- mentoring;
- creating awareness and connecting producers to other agricultural resources, which could include topics such as producer wellness; and
- language translation for materials and communications.

All activities must directly benefit the project participants as opposed to the organization itself.

9. DOES THE PROJECT HAVE TO BE DESIGNED AND OPERATED FOR FIVE YEARS?

Yes, the proposal and budget must be designed for a 5-year project.

10. IS BUILDING OR PURCHASING A FACILITY AN ALLOWABLE COST?

No, the building or purchasing of a facility or 'real property' is not an allowable cost under this program. Renting or leasing facilities may be allowable and subject to certain limitations outlined in 2 CFR § 200.465.

11. ARE INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPANTS AN ALLOWABLE COST?

No. Incentives to encourage program participation are not allowable costs. However, participant support costs, which includes stipends, are allowable under ARPTAI projects. Participant support costs may include direct costs for items such as subsistence allowances, travel allowances, and registration fees paid to or on behalf of participants or trainees (but not employees) in connection with the proposed project.

Participant support costs include expenditures for items such as the following:

- Stipend. A stipend is a set amount of money to be paid directly to the participant in connection with a short-term training activity. If proposed, stipends must reflect the time and effort of participation, and be directly related to the costs of participation.
- Travel. Travel includes the costs of transportation and associated costs and must follow sponsor guidelines (e.g., US flag carrier, coach class, most direct route). The sole purpose of the trip must be to participate in the project activity. If a training activity involves field trips, the cost of transportation for participants may be allowable.
- Subsistence allowance. The cost of a participant's housing and per diem expenses necessary for the individual to participate in the project are generally allowed, provided these expenses are reasonable and limited to the days of attendance. Although they may participate in meals and snacks provided at the meeting or conference, participants who live in the local area are not entitled to subsistence payments.
- Fees. The fees paid by a participant in connection with meetings, conferences, symposia, or training projects are generally allowable costs.
- Other. Certain other costs paid on behalf of or to the participant as required for their involvement may be allowable, including training materials.

It is advisable to check with NIFA Awards Management Division (AMD) as you develop your budget as there are always nuances and grey areas with allowable and unallowable costs.

The AMD contacts include:

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