

Questions and Answers

Questions:

- 1) Is this statement correct: If we are helping, or in the past have helped, a producer group through a CCCD awarded SDG Grant that group is not eligible for assistance through this program?

No, this statement is not correct. If an applicant is proposing an activity in conjunction with a current or past activity, the activity needs to be different and complementary in nature, but it cannot repeat the same activities under the previous or current project.

- 2) RFA—Beyond the 3-page concept paper, can you share any specific expectations on detail, and what needs to be addressed?

Concept papers should follow the guidelines in the RFA. But applicants should make sure that they are clearly conveying the nature of the program with specifics. Concept papers cannot be simply restating an organization's mission and vision. We are looking to fund focused projects with concrete, demonstrable results.

- 3) Can projects include designing a program to educate specific under-served producer groups on USDA programs, then helping them with applications?
 - This would require some unknown components (which grants, which groups would be assisted....).

Yes, this is one element of the small grants program.

- 4) We are working with some groups who could benefit from a VAPG planning grant, and another that could benefit from a VAPG implementation grant. Are there any sources of match for them to use?

These grants can only be used for the specific manner mentioned in the RFA. Under 2CFR200.306.B.5 this is not allowable.

- 5) Can a nonprofit submit an RFA and an RFQ? It is clear that the RFA limit is 1 per organization but can a nonprofit submitting an RFA *also* submit an RFQ?

Yes. A nonprofit can apply under both the RFA and the RFQ. The RFA is for projects that the applicant would like to implement. The RFQ is a preferred vendor list for future consideration and collaboration with cooperatives that need technical assistance such as our grantees under the RFA who may request training.

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- 6) Do awardees of the RFQ serve their own stakeholders or do they only serve the target audience selected by NCBA? If the latter, will there be a mechanism for RFQ awardees to refer underserved farmers, ranchers, and private forest landowners to NCBA so they can benefit from the RFQ awardees' TA services?

The RFQ recipients will serve historically underserved farmers, ranchers, foresters, and the cooperatives that are historically underserved. This could be your own stakeholders and organizations that reach out to NCBA for technical assistance in your area. Yes, these organizations will be able to visit the NCBA website and submit a request for services and we will connect them with the Preferred Vendors for service.

- 7) What is the expected caseload of RFQ awardees? Will awardees have flexibility in declining projects given their other commitments / obligations if the timing of the project is not ideal for the TA provider's schedule?

Absolutely. NCBA follows cooperatives principles. Preferred Vendors are not REQUIRED to work with organizations, especially if they know that they do not have the capacity. We hope that by strengthening the cooperative ecosystem, organizations will model P6.

- 8) What are the reporting requirements for the RFA?

Please refer to question #2 above. Reporting requirements will depend on the activity proposed. But all activities will need to submit documentation that the activity was completed as proposed (e.g., training report, customer satisfaction, materials developed).

- 9) Are RFA project terms limited to 1 year? If awarded, when should RFA projects start?

RFA projects are limited to 1 year and we plan to release the Small Grants Program, annually. If awarded, projects should plan to begin February 2023.

- 10) Is the RFA a reimbursement-based grant or will the funds be paid out up front / at a certain interval / via invoice or purchase order / some other cadence?

- a. Disbursement will depend on the type of grant mechanism, the proposed activities, and the capacity of the organization to fund activities.
 - i. Cost reimbursable grants are just that. Applicants would submit receipts accompanied by NCBA's financial reporting template. Advances may be issued under this type of award.
 - ii. Fixed Amount Award grants will be reimbursed upon milestones or deliverables as outlined in final negotiations between the successful applicant and NCBA. Advances may be issued under this type of award.

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- iii. In Kind grants are not paid out directly to an applicant. Rather NCBA will pay for costs on behalf of the applicant and ensure delivery of the technical assistance (e.g., training in cooperative governance, grant writing consultant). This is the purpose of the RFQ to develop our preferred vendor list.

11) May a nonprofit apply for an RFA to support the administrative tasks of a defined set of RFQ applicants in its network given the administrative requirements detailed in Section C.4 of the offeror solicitation document (i.e., reporting, invoicing, and procedure documents) given that BPA management costs are not a billable expense (per Section A.5)?

No, RFA's must convey how the organization plans to create online and in-person trainings to assist members in understanding basic accounting and business plan development; create webinars to assist members in understanding basic accounting and business plan development; provide cooperative development training and assistance to newly emerging and existing cooperatives, through board governance, marketing, and other business-related activities; and provide training for farmers to develop bank-ready business plans for their farms and ranches prior to submitting applications for capital funding.

12) (for RFA) What should be contained in the 3pg concept paper? Is a budget required?

Please see Concept Note Guidance Attachment

13) (for RFA) Are there any unallowable expenses?

As a federal awardee, NCBA follows the Cost Principles as outlined in 2 CFR 200. Subpart E. Typical unallowable expenses include but are not limited to advertising, alcoholic beverages, bad debt, certain travel costs (e.g. flying first class), entertainment costs, fines and penalties, fundraising costs, interest and/or lobbying costs. NCBA will review all costs with the successful applicants to avoid the potential for unallowable costs.

14) (for RFQ) How are hourly or project-specific rates set?

This is up to the applicant; however, it is assumed that the applicants are using the same method to set their rates as they would with any other client.

15) When will applicants find out whether NCBA will move forward with making awards under the RFQ? When will RFA applicants find out whether their applications have been successful? In both cases, will unsuccessful applicants receive feedback on their submissions?

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- a. Awards (call orders) under the RFQ depend on specific needs or activities (e.g., grantee awards, direction from USDA) which will not follow a set timeline.
- b. Applicants for the RFA will be notified as soon as possible. It will depend on the number of applications that the award committee will need to review. But our goal is to ensure that we are giving all applicants the same consideration for funding.
- c. Yes, the review committee will provide feedback to those organizations who request it.

16) Can an unincorporated organization or cooperative with a 501c3 fiscal sponsor apply for the grant?

We will accept proposals from projects that are fiscally sponsored by a 501c3 organization.

17) Is the scope of the grant restricted to rural communities? Are activities in urban areas eligible?

Activities in urban areas are eligible. This grant is not restricted to rural communities.

18) Are food manufacturing activities eligible for support?

No, food manufacturing activities are not eligible for funding.

19) If after the first RFQ process we are selected to be on the preferred vendor list, what are the steps after that? When a call order goes out, does it go to multiple possible vendors, or everyone on the list? Are we required to respond to all call orders? For example, can we not respond to call orders if the timing or other factors don't work for us for that particular work? Also, do you have a sense of approximately when you would be asking for the first work to be done?

- a. Preferred vendors will be notified when a request for services is submitted. We anticipate vendors will focus on their geographic region of service. The requesting organization has the option to choose the vendor that they consult with.
- b. Preferred vendors can decline to respond to any or all call orders. There is no obligation to respond.
- c. Awards (call orders) under the RFQ depend on specific needs or activities. Timing will depend on specific needs or activities (e.g., grantee awards, direction from USDA, request for services, etc.).

20. The **RFQ** is to build a preferred vendor list of cooperative developers who are interested in working with us to provide technical assistance for our partners or grantees.

- a. You are working with a group who is interested in forming a cooperative. You are providing some assistance to them, but maybe they need more assistance such as on governance or business planning for the cooperative. You could apply for a grant through the **RFA** to support training/coaching for the cooperative. If selected, we would contract an appropriate TA provider (who we know through our **RFQ** process) and we contract with them to provide the training.
- b. Your team is experienced trainers and you have developed great materials for cooperatives that address issues and challenges faced by historically underserved producers. You could send in your organizational qualifications in response to the **RFQ**. We may then contract with you in the future to provide training to another group who needs such assistance. You would be in our preferred list of vendors to provide training and we would be giving that group priority in contracting.

We do not have a lot of funding for grants (RFA), and they are capped at \$20K so we can reach a larger audience. So, they are really for focused activities. But that is not to say that we wouldn't award follow on grants to an organization for other focused activities through the life of our project (2022-2027).