SOLAR UNITED NEIGHBORS

Your Rural Business Can Go Solar

A GUIDE TO APPLYING FOR A RURAL ENERGY FOR AMERICA PROGRAM GRANT

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Cover image: David Manly and Amy Petersen of Virginia next to their ground-mount install.

Introduction

Students participate in a solar tour in Butler County, Pennsylvania.

This guide will help you apply for and receive a REAP grant.

Solar energy expands energy choice and freedom. That's why the federal government provides grants to help rural small businesses like yours go solar. It does so through the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP). REAP grants have given thousands of farmers and business owners in rural areas across the country the opportunity to power their businesses with solar energy projects. These businesses are reducing and controlling energy costs, increasing energy security, and freeing up resources to re-invest in the local community.

So, what's in the guide?

In this guide you will learn:

- If you are eligible to receive a REAP grant,
- The information you'll need to apply, and
- How to make your application successful.

We recommend you have the application next to you as you read through our guide.

Who wrote this guide?

Thank you to Fritz Ebinger, Emma Searson, and Glen Brand for their work to develop this guide. Visit solarunitedneighbors.org to learn more about solar and how we help people go solar, join together, and fight for their energy rights.

REAP, a brief history

REAP started in 2002 as part of the federal Farm Bill. The purpose of REAP is to help farmers and rural small businesses access renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Office of Rural Development administers this grant and loan program.

The REAP program has been so popular that the funding budget for the grants has not been able to meet the demand. But, the good news is that the Inflation Reduction Act solved this problem.

The Inflation Reducation Act:

- Quadrupled REAP funding over the next ten years.
- Lifted the maximum grant size from 25% to 50% of total costs (up to $1 million) for certain projects, including all REAP-eligible solar projects.
- Led to an increase in annual application windows from 2 to 4.

Solar United Neighbors has been hearing from farms and rural businesses asking about the program. We have put together this guide to help farmers and rural business owners like you successfully apply for a REAP solar grant.

A tour of a solar-powered farm in Ohio.

Thomas Palmer hosts a tour of his Ohio solar installation.

How this guide can help

Cows graze aside a ground mount solar installation.

This guide will:

1. **Focus on solar projects.**
REAP grants fund a wide range of clean energy technologies. However, this guide will focus specifically on solar project applications to the REAP program.

2. **Break down the application for projects that cost $80,000 or less.**
This guide will help you understand the REAP grant application and scoring for projects that cost $80,000 or less. This will help you to make a successful application. USDA Rural Development awards the majority of available funding to projects that meet this $80,000 threshold.

3. **Increase your chances of receiving a grant.**
Despite the significant support that REAP grants can provide, many potential applicants do not apply because they are confused by the paperwork and requirements. Because the grant program is highly competitive, this guide aims to help applicants maximize their point score to increase their chance of receiving a grant.

Eligibility

Are you eligible to apply for REAP?

The REAP program applies to:

- Farmers who earn at least 50% of their gross income from agricultural operations, and
- Any small businesses located in rural areas.

How do I qualify as an agricultural producer?

The USDA defines an agricultural producer as a person engaged in the production of agricultural products through labor management and operations. These activities include: cultivating, growing and harvesting of plants and crops; breeding, raising, feeding or housing livestock; forestry products, hydroponics; nursery stock; or aquaculture. An agricultural producer can be located in a rural or non-rural area. Urban farmers may apply.

What qualifies as "agricultural operations"?

Half or more of the applicant's gross income must originate from agricultural operations. These include product sales, production contracts, crop insurance, commodity payments, and similar matters. Total gross income includes W-2 wages, schedule C income, and other income not related to the agricultural operation. In other words, REAP program applicants can have off-farm income, but it cannot make up more than 50% of gross income.

PRO TIP

Look at Schedule F -

Profit or Loss from Farming of your federal income taxes for the last three years to determine whether you are eligible to apply as an agricultural producer. Dividing each year's gross agricultural operations income from Schedule F by your total gross income will show whether your farm income is at least 50% for a given year. The Office of Rural Development averages the last three years to determine eligibility.

Eligibility (continued)

How is "small business" defined?

The small business must meet the size standards of the Small Business Administration. Generally, this means the business has a tangible net worth of less than $15 million and net average income of less than $5 million for the two previous years.

What if I think my area is rural, but it not considered rural by the USDA?

If you think your area is rural, despite its characterization by the USDA, you should still apply.

You may apply to the Office of Rural Development for a determination that your area is "rural in character" and should be deemed eligible.

What business entities qualify?

The following entities can qualify as a "small business":

- A private for-profit entity,
- A cooperative,
- An electric utility that serves rural customers independently of government control, or
- A Section 17 tribal corporation or a business of that tribal corporation.

Is my small business "rural"?

A rural small business is a small business that:

- is not in a town with a population of more than 50,000 people, and
- is not in an urbanized contiguous area of a town with a population of greater than 50,000 inhabitants.

PRO TIP

Not sure if you're in a rural area?
Put your address in the USDA's Rural Eligibility Map to see if you are eligible. Many agricultural producers also operate rural small businesses (e.g. an apple farm that also operates as an events venue) and are able to qualify as one or the other.

About the application

REAP application scoring system

The REAP grant application is based on a total possible score of 100 points across seven categories. This guide highlights the sections where those points are calculated. As a bright line rule: always submit your REAP application before building a project. **REAP does not issue grants retroactively.**

Estimating your project's score

The REAP grant application is scored on a 100-point scale. It has several different categories. A score of 75 points or more will be competitive, though the Office of Rural Development has awarded projects with point scores as low as the high 50s.

If this is your first time applying for REAP funds and your solar project produces energy, you will automatically earn at least 35 points. Everyone who is eligible should apply. Your likelihood of success depends on the specific applicant pool.

The scoring categories are as follows on the next page.

Installer puts panels into place on Rafe Pomerance's West Virginia farm.

Richard Cunningham, right, leads attendees on a tour of his solar array.

About the application (continued)

Maximum points	Short description
10 points	The project will have a positive effect on resource conservation, public health, and the environment
15 points	Applicant has not received a REAP grant or loan previously
15 points	Quantity of energy: • If the percentage of energy replaced is greater than 50% of annual average consumption, 15 points • If greater than 25%, but equal to or less than 50%, 10 points • If equal to or less than 25%, 5 points
10 points	Grant dollar requested per quantity of energy: • If the energy replaced per grant dollar requested is 50,000 Btus (14.564 kWh) or more, 10 points • If the energy replaced is less than 50,000 Btus (14,564 kWh) per grant dollar requested, take the amount of Btus replaced per grant dollar requested, divide by 50,000 (or 14.564), and then multiply that figure by 10 points
15 points	Simple energy savings payback in years: • If less than 10 years, 15 points • If greater than 10 years, but less than 15 years, 10 points • If greater than 15 years, 5 points
10 points	Commitment of funds: • If the percentage of funds committed is 100% of the project cost, 15 points • If the percentage of funds committed is less than 100% of the project cost, but more than 50%, follow this formula: ((Percentage of written commitments -50 percent)/(50 percent)) × 15 points, where points awarded are rounded to the nearest hundredth of a point. • If the percentage of funds committed is less than 50%, no points
15 points	The project will be located in a disadvantaged or distressed community, as determined by **USDA's Distressed and Disadvantaged Communities map**.
10 points	Presidential or Department of Agriculture Priority Points: These points are discretionary. They may be awarded to projects owned by veterans or socially-disadvantaged applicants as well as projects in disaster areas, in high poverty U.S. Census blocks, in areas experiencing population decline or employment loss, or that add geographic diversity.
100 total	

About the application (continued)

Deadlines

REAP applicants may apply at any time. There are four application windows per year. Applications will be scored relative to others submitted during the same application window following the deadlines below. For each deadline, applications must be received no later than 4:30 pm local time.

Application window opens	Application window closes
January 1	March 31
April 1	June 30*
July 1	September 30
October 1	December 31

*20% of annual REAP funding is set aside for grant requests of $20,000 or less. To compete for this set aside, you can apply during any of the above windows except for the window ending June 30.

Before starting the application

We strongly encourage reaching out to your USDA Rural Development State Energy Coordinator before starting your REAP application. This will ensure that you have the current and correct application forms and get any questions answered up front. You can find contact information for your Energy Coordinator via **rd.usda.gov/REAP**.

Take a moment to gather the following documents to help the application process go smoothly:

- Three years of tax returns (or at least one full year of tax returns if your business is new)
- Employee payroll if applying as a rural small business
- Electric bills for the last 12 months
- A project quote from your solar installer
- Bank or financial documents showing the committed funds you will use to pay for the solar project
- Your federal Unique Entity ID, if you already have one (If not, see below)

How to apply

Starting the application: Form RD-4280-3A

The heart of the REAP grant application is Form RD-4280-3A "Application for Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Improvement Projects - Total Project Costs of $80,000 or Less". Please confirm you have the right form. There are separate forms for larger projects. The majority of folks apply for the smaller tier "$80,000 and under project size" or mid-tier "$80,000 to $200,000 project size".

The mid-tier project size application is very similar to the small tier project size application. It does have additional components. One component is a technical feasibility study. Your solar project company should assist you with this.

You can download the PDF version of Form RD-4280-3A "Application for Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Improvement Projects - Total Project Costs of $80,000 or Less" here. (under "To Apply").

Or, you can contact your state Office of Rural Development's Rural Energy Coordinator. Open the PDF outside of a web browser. This will allow you to save your work and use the self-calculating features built into the PDF form. Do not fill in the application inside a web browser. The inputs will be erased if you close or change something in the browser.

Block I. A. Application legal name

Use your farm or small business entity's legal name. Folks who apply as sole proprietors or single member limited liability companies rely on their social security number later in the application when they register in the System for Award Management (SAM). This is common practice but it is important that the farm or small business legal name match the tax identification number.

How to apply

Blocks I.B. – I.F. are self explanatory.

POINTS TIP

Up to 10 discretionary points may be awarded by the Office of Rural Development's State Director for any of these criteria:

- Achieves geographic diversity
- Owned by a veteran
- Owned by a socially-disadvantaged group (members of which have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice because of their identity without regard to their individual qualities. Note: The application must include a statement indicating the applicants are socially-disadvantaged).
- The project advances a Presidential Initiative or a Secretary of Agriculture priority
- Project location is in a federally-declared disaster area (within the last two years)
- Project location is in an area where 20 percent or more of the population is living in poverty, as defined by the U.S. Census, or has experienced long-term population decline, or loss of employment.

Block II: Project Title

Folks typically title their project with a short description. For example, "14.5 KW Solar Array for Sally Smith's Apple Farm".

Block III: System for Awards Management (SAM) Commercial and Unique Entity ID

Each applicant to the REAP grant program must have a Unique Entity ID corresponding to the tax identification number or social security number provided on all components of the REAP grant application.

In order to obtain a Unique Entity ID, you must register your business in SAM and request a Unique Entity ID. This ID code is necessary to complete the REAP application.

How to apply

Block III: System for Awards Management (SAM) Commercial and Unique Entity ID (continued)

Getting a Unique Entity ID:

1. Go to www.sam.gov. Click on the "Register Your Entity or Get a Unique Entity ID" on the right side.
2. On the next page, click "Create an Account"
3. Next, enter your preferred business email. Then, go to that email account and confirm the email address is valid.
4. Select your password and preferred dual-factor security features.
5. Once your account is set up, you will reach a page that says "Workspace". Click on the "Get Started" tab under "Register Your Entity or Get a Unique Entity ID".
6. The next page will show you several options. Click "Register for Financial Assistance Awards Only".
7. The following page will ask if you are registering a government entity. Select "No".
8. Follow the prompts on the next several pages.
9. Register your legal business name (the same name on the REAP application), the farm or business' physical address, and start year (year the farm or business registered as a business).
10. SAM will request you to upload proof of your name and address using one of these documents: Articles of Incorporation (or Organization or Formation), bank statements, certificate of formation, Dept. of Treasury IRS Letter assigning your EIN, secretary of state certificate of business filing, screenshot or PDF file of your business profile on the secretary of state's website, or utility bills in the farm or business name (water, gas or electric).
11. Upon review, SAM will issue a Unique Entity ID and email the Unique Entity ID to the email address you provided.

How to apply

Block IV: Type of Applicant – Rural Small Business or Agricultural Producer

Select whether you are applying as a rural small business or agricultural producer. You cannot select both. List the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code for your business type. You can find this by visiting **census.gov/naics** and searching a keyword or two (e.g. apple orchard).

Block V: Application Description

A Describe how the project will relate to your business operations. For example, "The new solar array will be part of Sally's Apple Farm LLC's operations, providing electricity for an existing on-site processing shed."

B Explain how long the business has been in operation, i.e. how long it has been generating income and/or incurring expenses.

C Describe your ownership and control of the project and project site. Provide specific details on any relevant leases.

D Self explanatory.

Block VI: Project Information

A **Check "Renewable Energy System" since you are applying for a solar energy project.** Also check "with storage component" if you are installing both solar and storage.

B Then check "Solar: Electric (PV)" since you are installing solar panels.

How to apply

Block VI: Project Information (continued)

C

Project Description: Include the kilowatt size, estimated energy generation, and intended purpose of your solar project, including whether it will be an energy replacement or energy generation project.

- The project is an "Energy Replacement Project" if the amount of energy produced will be less than 150% of your annual average electrical consumption.
- It is an "Energy Generation Project" if the amount of energy produced will be more than 150% of your annual consumption.

State the brand and model of the solar panels and inverters. You should be able to easily find this information on the project quote from your solar installer.

Also include the physical address of the solar installation and a description of the site (e.g. farmland, small business district, open lot). The description should include where on the property the solar will be installed.

Finally, describe if and how you will be compensated by your utility for power that your project feeds into the grid, i.e. your net metering rate.

For example:

- Sally's Apple Farm will install a 14.5 kilowatt DC solar array for the purpose of energy replacement. 48 Acme Solar brand 305-Watt panels with optimizers, and 2 SolarEdge 7.6 HD Wave inverters will be installed to offset the farm's electrical consumption by producing 22,690 kWh/ year.
- Sally's Apple Farm is located at 2345 Honey Crisp Lane, Smallville, Kansas 67524. The 14.5kW solar array will be installed on the raised seam rooftop of our apple processing shed located on the southwest corner of the property. Smallville Electric Utility will interconnect the array and credit the farm's electricity bill at the net metering rate of 6 cents per kWh.

How to apply

Block VI: Project Information (continued)

D **Project Economic Assessment.** This section of the grant application is critically important. It largely determines whether your solar project is competitive against other projects.

D1 **Project Cost Breakdown.** List the itemized costs provided on the project quote from your solar installer. Include a copy of the solar project bid with your application. "Total Project Costs" are the sum of all costs associated with your solar project.

Eligible Project Costs	Ineligible Project Costs
• the purchase of new equipment (i.e. solar panels, inverters, and racking) • construction • retrofitting and improvements • permit and licensing fees • professional service fees for: contractors, consultants, installers, and other third-party service providers • the installation and costs of a second meter to separate a residence from the solar project that benefits the rural small business or agricultural operation	• vehicles • agricultural tillage equipment • lease payments • funds used for political or lobbying activities • funds used to pay off federal debts • costs that would be incurred regardless of the proposed solar project

How to apply

Block VI: Project Information (continued)

D2

Estimated Energy Generation or Savings and Cost of Energy (a) For Renewable Energy Systems

i. Annual amount of renewable energy to be generated and unit of energy

- This should be readily available from the project quote provided by your solar installer.
- It will be provided in terms of kilowatt-hours (kWh).

ii. Documented Use

- a. indicate how much energy from the project will be sold (generation projects), metered/credited (replacement projects), and/or used directly.
- b. Select kWh
- c. Energy Metered/Credited: Enter the kilowatt-hour (kWh) rate at which your electric utility will buy back your excess solar production. You can find this rate on your electric utility's website, on their rate sheet, or by contacting the electric utility directly. Often, this rate is called the "net metering rate."

  Direct Use Energy: List the average kilowatt-hour rate you paid over the last year. This rate is exclusive of any price cost adjustments or add-ons the utility charges. Typically, you'll find it as a line item multiplier on your bill. If the rate is not obvious from the electric bills, call your electric utility and have them send you the current electric rate sheet. If your rates changed within the last 12 months, you should blend the rates and list the average you paid over the last 12 months.

How to apply

Block VI: Project Information (continued)

D2

Estimated Energy Generation or Savings and Cost of Energy (a) For Renewable Energy Systems (continued)

ii. Documented Use (continued)

- d. Energy Value: If you downloaded the PDF application form and opened it independent of a browser, each d. field will self-calculate from the inputs you provided.
- If you are applying for a replacement project, you must attach at least the last 12 months of your electric bills. If your project will be part of new construction or off-grid, you can attach documentation of conventional energy prices instead, but your application will be scored as a generation project.

iii. By-product/Other Revenue Quantity

- If your project will generate revenue other than what you've already documented above, describe the additional revenue source, fill in details, and attach documentation.
- Do not include any incentives or credits that will not be received annually for the life of the project. Most applicants should leave this section blank.

iv. Historical annual average energy used and unit of measure:

- Rely on at least the last twelve months of your electric bills to provide the annual energy used in kilowatthours.
- Be sure to attach the electric bills to your application.

How to apply

Block VI: Project Information (continued)

D2

Estimated Energy Generation or Savings and Cost of Energy (a) For Renewable Energy Systems (continued)

v. Residential use:

- Leave this section blank If the system will not be connected to a meter that also serves a residence.
- If the system will be connected to a meter that also serves a residence, you must demonstrate that at least 50% of the energy from the proposed solar project will be used in your agricultural operation or rural small business. List the historical annual average residential energy use amount and unit of measurement. Also, attach a summary of annual residential energy use with detailed assumptions. Project costs and grant amount will be prorated accordingly. For example, if 60% of the energy produced will benefit the business, 60% of the total project cost will be considered REAP eligible. Alternatively, you can install a second meter to separate residential and business consumption. Indicate your intent to do so on the form.

PRO TIP

Applicants who do not separate residential use from farm or business use with an additional electric meter will score lower on the application. This is because the grant formula subtracts the residential use portion of energy from the solar project from its total annual energy generated. This reduces the applicant's point score on the application by affecting the energy replaced per grant dollar requested point score and the percentage of energy replaced point score.

How to apply

Block VI: Project Information (continued)

vi. Annual percentage of energy being replaced:
This field will self-calculate from the inputs you provided above.

vii. Generation Value:
This field will self-calculate from the inputs you provided above.

viii. Replacement Value:
This field will self-calculate from the inputs you provided above.

The scoring is as follows:

If the annual amount of energy generated or replaced is 50,000 Btus (or 14.564 kWh) or more per grant dollar requested, the full 10 points are awarded.

If the annual amount of energy generated or replaced is less than 50,000 Btus (or 14.564 kWh) per grant dollar requested, take the energy generated or replaced per grant dollar requested, divide by 50,000 (or 14.564), and then multiply by 10.

POINTS TIP

The "Eligible Project Costs" identified in the Project Economic Assessment combined with Form SF-424C Budget Information - Construction determines the federal grant dollars requested.

"Eligible Project Costs" are multiplied by up to 50%. This is because the REAP grant will fund up to 50% of a project. **This section is worth up to 10 total points**.

The score is determined by dividing the total annual energy generated or replaced by the solar project (minus any energy for residential use) by the total grant dollars requested. The ratio is expressed in Btus (British Thermal Units) per dollar, where 3412 Btus equals 14.654 kWh. Please note some applicants purposely reduce the percent of funding they are requesting (e.g. 25% instead of the maximum 50%). They do so to boost their ratio and, thus, their point score.

How to apply

Block VI: Project Information (continued)

ix. Estimated Simple Payback. This section will self-calculate based on the inputs you have provided in the previous sections.

POINTS TIP

This Estimate Simple Payback section of the grant is worth up to 15 points, based on the following:

Less than 10 years – 15 points

Over 10 years but less than 15 years – 10 points

Over 15 years but less than 25 years – 5 points

Over 25 years – 0 points

E

Qualifications of Service Providers. Provide detailed information about the professionals and/or company who will be installing your solar project. You may find this information on the solar project quote or by contacting the solar company. Be sure to include important information like state licensure for electricians and general contractors, as well as solar-specific certifications like NABCEP certificates.

How to apply

Block VII. Renewable Energy System Projects – Technical Requirements

This section enables the Office of Rural Development to verify the solar resource available at the proposed solar project location.

1. Provide a vendor/installer certification: Your solar installer company should provide a solar energy site assessment with your project quote. Ensure that it includes the requirements listed in a – d. Their solar energy site assessment may rely on an approved estimating tool such as PV Watts by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, a SolarPathfinder, or similar method. The "Energy Assessor" who provides the Energy Site Assessment must have at least three years of experience and completed at least five solar energy assessments. Provide adequate and appropriate data to demonstrate the amount of renewable resource available. The solar site assessment your solar installer company provides should satisfy this requirement by way of physical description, aerial photographs, and a solar power estimating tool (e.g. PV Watts).

   Be sure to attach the site assessment and check the box to indicate that you have done so.

2. Feasibility Study: Most solar projects do not require a feasibility study, so you can leave the box unchecked. If you are unsure, your State Energy Coordinator can help determine whether this is necessary.

PRO TIP

Choose a certified solar installer.
Solar consultants with your solar installer company should meet these criteria and be able to provide a solar site assessment using a commonly accepted tool in the industry like NREL's PV Watts. Standards to look for include NABCEP certification as a Solar PV Associate, Solar PV Technical Sales, or Solar PV Design Specialist, among others.

How to apply

Block VIII. Energy Efficiency Projects

Leave this block blank. It is only for energy efficiency projects. Skip ahead to Block VIII.

Block IX. Environmental Benefits

Describe how the proposed project will have a positive affect on:

Resource Conservation. Check “Yes”.

Public Health. Check “Yes”.

Environment. Check “Yes”.

POINTS TIP

This “environmental benefits” section is worth a total of 5 points. All solar projects will receive these points because they reduce reliance on fossil fuels. This conserves finite resources and reduces pollution for the benefit of public health and the environment.

Block X. Commitment of Funds

This section indicates to USDA Rural Development how “shovel ready” your solar project is. You must attach bank, loan, or letter of commitment documents. These must state the dollar amounts, rates, and terms that will serve the project. Letters of intent, pre-qualification, and subject to bank approval documents are not sufficient.

How to apply

POINTS TIP

This section is worth up to 10 points.
The percentage of written commitment is equal to the total amount of funds for which written commitments have been submitted, divided by the total amount of matching funds (read: requested grant funding).

If the percentage of written commitments is 100% of the matching funds you will receive 10 points.

If the percentage of written commitments is less than 100%, but more than 50%, then apply this formula, rounding to the nearest hundredth of a point:

(Percentage of written commitments - 50%)

(50%) x 10 points = Point score

The more committed funds a person can show for their solar project, the higher the point score in this category.

Block XI. Relationship

Check the appropriate box.

Block XII. Previous Funding

Check the appropriate box.

POINTS TIP

Applicants who have not received REAP grant monies previously will be awarded 15 points.

How to apply

Block XIII. Good Standing

Check the appropriate box.

Block XIV. Certifications

Assuming you and your solar project meet all of these criteria, check all of the boxes except for "N.", which is for bioenergy projects only.

Block XV. Standard Form Documentation

Be sure to attach the standard form series, includingSF-424, SF-424C, SF-424D, and Form RD-1940-20 (environmental documentation). Also attach:

- the solar site assessment provided by your solar installer company,
- electric bills from the last 12 months, any other necessary documentation of net metering or crediting policies from your utility,
- matching funds documentation, and, if applicable, a feasibility study, and,
- if applicable, attach any "Priority Points" documentation (i.e. if a veteran or member of a socially disadvantaged group will own the project).

Block XVI. Certification of Documentation and Acceptance

Review your application in full for accuracy. Then sign and date the original application in **BLUE ink**.

Additional application materials

Girl Scouts learn about solar in Dubois County, Indiana.

Overview of forms required forms

The REAP grant application also requires several “standard form” documents. These documents are available through the Rural Energy Coordinator in your state office of USDA Rural Development. The forms are also available for download through the USDA Office of Rural Development’s website. We advise contacting your state’s Rural Energy Coordinator to be sure the forms are current.

In the next section, we’ll walk you through how to fill out these additional forms.

The forms that accompany the REAP application are:

- Form SF-424 - Application for Federal Assistance
- Form SF-424C - Budget Information - Construction
- Form SF-424D - Assurances for Construction Programs
- Form RD-1940-20 Request for Environmental Information

Additional application materials

Standard Form 424 (SF-424) for a REAP Grant Application

Type of Submission: Check "Preapplication"

Type of Application: Check "New"

Date: Leave blank

Applicant Identifier: Leave blank

a. Federal Entity Identifier: Use your federal tax ID (EIN or SSN)

b. Federal Award Identifier:
Write in your CAGE Code or federal Unique Entity ID

Date received by State: Leave blank

State Application Identifier: Leave blank

(a-d) Applicant Information: Please ensure these match the same information on your REAP Form RD-4280-3A "Application for Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Improvement Projects - Total Project Costs of $80,000 or Less".

e. Organizational Unit: Write in "USDA Office of Rural Development" and then in Division Name, write in "Business and Coop. Services".

f. Name and Contact Information: Write in your name and contact information.

Type of Applicant:
Write in "Agricultural Producer" or "Rural Small Business"

Name of Federal Agency:
Write in "USDA Office of Rural Development".

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: Write in "10.868" and for CFDA Title, write in "Rural Energy for America Program".

Funding Opportunity Number:
Write in "RDBCP-REAP-RES-EEI-2023" (the last four digits should match the year you are making your application).

Competition Identification Number: Leave blank.

Areas Affected by Project: Leave blank.

Additional application materials

Standard Form 424 (SF-424) for a REAP Grant Application

- Descriptive Title of Applicant's Project: Write in the same description you used in Block II of the REAP application form.
- Congressional Districts: Write in the congressional district of your residence and the congressional district of the project location. These are usually the same.
- Proposed Project: Write in your estimate of when project construction will start and end. Give yourself an ample time frame to accommodate any logistical challenges.
- Estimated Funding:

    a. Federal: Write in the dollar amount requested for this project. This would be the "eligible project costs" multiplied by the percent of funding you are requesting from Budget Information - Construction Form SF-424C (see below). For example, if the project is $70,000 and you are asking for 35% funding, the actual dollar grant requested would be $70,000 x .35 = $24,500.

    b. Applicant: Write in the dollar amount you are providing as demonstrated in the Block IX. Commitment of Funds section (written commitments) on the REAP grant application.
- Application Subject to Review..?: Check "c. Program is not covered by E.O. 12372."
- Is the Applicant Delinquent on any Federal Debt? Check "No" or do not apply for REAP grant funding if you are delinquent on federal debt.
- By Signing this Application...: Carefully review Form SF-424 for any errors. Then sign and date the application in **BLUE ink**.

Additional application materials

Form SF-424C Budget Information - Construction Forms for the REAP Grant Application

To the extent your solar installer company has provided details in their quote, align the costs of your solar project with the "a. Total Costs", "b. Costs Not Allowable for Participation" and "c. Total Allowable Costs" columns. The large majority of those costs will fall in the Construction and Equipment categories.

As a reminder, "Eligible Project Costs" include:

- the purchase of new equipment (i.e. solar panels, inverters, and racking);
- construction;
- retrofitting and improvements,;
- permit and licensing fees;
- professional service fees for:
  - contractors,
  - consultants,
  - installers, and
  - other third-party service providers; and
- the installation and costs of a second meter in order to separate a residence from the solar project that benefits the rural small business or agricultural operation.

"Line 17. Federal Assistance Requested" is the line where you make your request for federal grant funding. Multiple the "Total Project Cost of Line 16c." by the percent of funding you are requesting, with a maximum of up to 50%.

Additional application materials

PRO TIP

In order to maximize your grant application point score, evaluate the amount of federal grant funding you need in relation to the amount of match funding you can provide, and the amount of energy your system is projected to produce.

Form SF-424D Assurances Construction Programs for REAP Grant Application

This form only has a signature and title block to sign in **BLUE ink**. Carefully review the assurances before signing.

Form RD-1940-20 Request for Environmental Information

This form provides background environmental information for federally funded projects that might impact the environment. Provide a brief name of the project and location in the top right corner of the form (i.e. 14.5 kW solar array - Sally's Apple Farm" and "Smallville, KS."

Item 1a. Check "No".

Item 2. Check "No" unless the solar array involves historic building preservation directly.

Item 3. Check "No" for all the boxes except for "2. Commercial" or "4. Agricultural" depending on whether you are applying as a Rural Small Business or an Agricultural Operation.

Item 4. Check "No."

Be sure to date and sign the form in **BLUE ink**.

Additional resources

While it is possible to complete the REAP application successfully by yourself, you may find it helpful to hire a professional grant writer.

This level of support can be especially helpful for larger projects over the $80,000 cost threshold. Inclusion in the following list is not an endorsement by Solar United Neighbors. Applicants seeking grant-writing assistance are encouraged to seek out quotes from at least three grant writers and ask for references.

Ebenezer Management, LLC
Brad and Lori Oeltjenbruns, Owners
Office: (515) 547-2251
Email: ebenezer@LVCTA.com
Web: www.ebenezermanagement.com
2516 380th Street
Dayton, IA 50530

Prosperity Ag, LLC
Christi Southerland, Managing Partner
Phone: (317) 650-7069
Email: grants@prosperityag.com
Web: www.prosperityag.com
13277 N. Illinois Street, Suite 110
Carmel, IN 46032

Kloberdanz Consulting
Chad Kloberdanz, P.E., Owner
Phone: (515) 333-8461
Email: chad@kloberdanzconsulting.com
Web: www.kloberdanzconsulting.com
2728 46th Street
Des Moines, IA 50310

GDS Associates, Inc.
Bethany Reinholtz, Project Manager
Phone: (608) 354-6188
Email: bethany.reinholtz@gdsassociates.com
Web: www.gdsassociates.com
1600 Shawano Ave., Ste. 205
Green Bay, WI 54303

Grant Strategies, LLC
Shirley Nelson, MA, MPH, Owner
Phone: (507) 289-1526
Email: snelson@grantstrategies.com
Web: www.grantstrategies.com
5865 Sandcherry Place NW
Rochester, MN 55901

Arch Electric, Inc.
Dan Steinhardt, Business Manager
Phone: (920) 838-4108
Email: dan@archelec.com
Web: www.archelec.com
1237 Pilgrim Road, Ste. 201
Plymouth, WI 53073

Additional resources

Rural Action

Sarah Conley-Ballew, Sustainable Energy Solutions Director

Phone: (740) 677-4047 ext. 220

Email: sarah@ruralaction.org

Web: www.ruralaction.org/our-work/sustainable-energy-solutions/

9030 Hocking Hills Drive

The Plains, OH 45780

Written Impressions

Brian Buckta, Owner

Phone: (608) 625-6372 or (608) 606-2062

Email: brianb@wigrantwriting.com

Web: www.wigrantwriting.com

103 South State Street

LaFarge, WI 54639

Green Bay, WI 54303

Energy Improvement Matters, LLC

Bruce Everly, MSA & Janet Everly, Ed.D., Owners

Phone: (317) 228-0134

Email: info@midwestim.com

Web: www.EIMgrants.com

7545 Chablis Circle

Indianapolis, IN 46278

Sally H. Chai, Ph.D.

Phone: (319) 354-5642

Email: Sally.chai@gmail.com

934 Sandusky Drive

Iowa City, IA 52240

Ag Solar Solutions

Danny & Carole Korakas, Owners

Phone: (844) 771-0787

Email: Danny@coastalsolar.com

229 W. General Screven Way, Ste. N1

Hinesville, GA 31313

Note: Agricultural producer applicants with solar PV applications only.

What to expect next

Applicants who submit an application to the USDA Office of Rural Development for their state should receive a response the application has been received and is complete. Once you receive an "application complete" response, you may proceed with your solar project.

However, once the project has been built, you may not reapply if you do not receive funding. **As a bright line rule, always submit your REAP grant application before building your solar project.**

REAP applicants who are successful should receive notice of their award within 60 days after the relevant application window closes by USDA Office of Rural Development Staff.

If your application is successful, the USDA Office of Rural Development will contact you. The Office will send you a grant agreement with terms of compliance. Once you sign that agreement, the Office will deposit the grant money in the bank account that you provide.

Conclusion

Jorgen Rasumusssen, right, next to his installation in Otis Orchards, Washington

We hope that this guide helps your business go solar! We would love to hear from you about your experience applying for the grant and how to make this document more useful.

Please let us know if you get a REAP solar grant!
We would like to share your solar success story to inspire others.

You can reach Solar United Neighbors by emailing:
advocacy@solarunitedneighbors.org

Learn more about going solar at:
solarunitedneighbors.org

SOLAR UNITED NEIGHBORS

At Solar United Neighbors, we believe we should all have the right to produce - and store - our own power!

Join us:

SOLARUNITEDNEIGHBORS.ORG

Solar United Neighbors is a 501(c)3 nonprofit. We're a community of people building a new energy system with rooftop solar at the cornerstone. We help people go solar, join together, and fight for their energy rights.

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