

Community Prosperity Funding Opportunity

Frequently Asked Questions

COMMUNITY PROSPERITY FUNDS AND DETERMINATION QUESTIONS

Q. What is the Community Prosperity Funding Opportunity?

The Community Prosperity Funding Opportunity delivers grant funds to eligible entities that focus on assisting socially disadvantaged farmers, ranchers and agriculture producers in persistent poverty counties foster hope and opportunity, wealth creation, and asset building.

Q. Why does the Community Prosperity Funding Opportunity specifically target socially disadvantaged and veteran farmers, ranchers and agriculture producers in persistent poverty counties?

These funds have been announced to deliver targeted holistic opportunities and resources to address self-identified issues and challenges of socially disadvantaged and veteran farmers, ranchers and agriculture producers in the most rural, underserved, and persistent poverty counties across the nation. Persistent poverty counties are counties that have a poverty rate of 20 percent or greater for more than 40 consecutive years. The United States has more than 350 persistent poverty counties that have experienced decades of economic and community decline. This grant proposal is an effort to reach socially disadvantaged and veteran farmers and ranchers and agriculture producers in persistent poverty counties with an organized, focused strategy to identify key challenges and match them with appropriate agriculture and other resources, both public and private. It requires a bottom up, locally driven approach that brings together key community leaders to focus on the issues and challenges of socially disadvantaged and veteran farmers, ranchers and agriculture producers and to work together with the public, private, and other sectors to address those challenges and provide technical assistance.

Q. Is Community Prosperity being funded by the 2501 Program?

The Community Prosperity Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) is a 2501 FOA. Two million of funding comes directly from discretionary funds authorized by the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2020 for the 2501 Program and an additional \$2 million of funding comes from USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service Conservation Technical Assistance.

The statutory authority for this action is 7 U.S.C. 2279(c), which authorizes award funding for projects designed to provide outreach, education and technical assistance to socially disadvantaged and/or veteran farmers or ranchers. Funds are also being awarded under the Conservation Technical Assistance, Soil and Water Conservation (CTA): Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act, Public Law 74-76, N/A, 16. U.S.C. 590a-590f, 590q. Once the funds were combined, the authority to award lies under 7 U.S.C. 2279(c), and therefore, all requirements for the 2501 Program must also be met in the Community Prosperity award funding.

Q. How much of the 2501 funding is being reallocated?

None of the 2501 funding is being reallocated. The Community Prosperity FOA is directed to provide outreach, education and technical assistance to socially disadvantaged and/or veteran farmers or ranchers. The statutory authority for this action is 7 U.S.C. 2279(c).

Q. Why is 2501 the source of funding for this second program?

This is not a second program. This is an additional FOA that adds more funds toward socially disadvantaged and veteran farmers and ranchers in the most distressed and depressed areas of our country, persistent poverty counties.

Q. What is the fundamental difference between the two programs?

The fundamental difference between the two funding opportunity announcements are:

- a. Community Prosperity requires the recipient to be in a persistent poverty county.
- b. Community Prosperity requires eligible entities to work with socially disadvantaged and veteran farmers and ranchers and the community to establish a Local Prosperity Council that consists of community leaders in order to conduct outreach, training and education for socially disadvantaged and veteran farmers, ranchers, and agriculture producers in persistent poverty counties.

Q. Are you funding Centers of Community Prosperity?

No, the Community Prosperity grants will not fund Centers of Community Prosperity. The funds are being used to provide outreach, education and technical assistance to socially disadvantaged and/or veteran farmers or ranchers and agricultural producers.

Q. What/Who makes up a Local Prosperity Council?

A Local Prosperity Council may consist of, but is not limited to: the mayor, county planning committee, board of supervisors, superintendents and Board of Education, farmers, ranchers, agriculture producers, faith-based organizations and others to focus on locally driven, bottom up solutions to address self-identified challenges and issues.

Q. Where can you find the Persistent Poverty counties under Community Prosperity 2501 Funding Opportunity Announcements.

Persistent Poverty Counties have been identified by the United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service. Please click the following link:
<https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/county-typology-codes.aspx>

ELIGIBILITY QUESTIONS

Q. Who is eligible to apply for Community Prosperity and 2501 funding?

Higher education institutions, eligible conservation districts, eligible economic development corporations, nonprofit organizations, and non-governmental community-based associations or organizations that provide agricultural education or agriculturally related services to socially disadvantaged or veteran farmers and ranchers in their region are eligible and may apply for a grant under the Community Prosperity and 2501 Program funding opportunity announcements, as defined in 7 U.S.C. 2279. Individuals are not eligible.

Examples of eligible entities that may apply for a Community Prosperity 2501 grant are:

- 1890 Land-Grant Institutions, as defined in 7 U.S.C., section 7601
- 1994 American Indian Tribal Community Colleges
- Alaska Native Cooperative Colleges
- Hispanic-serving post-secondary educational institutions
- Other accredited post-secondary ag-related educational institutions
- Community-based and nonprofit organizations (including tribal organizations)
- Indian tribes providing agricultural education or other agricultural-related services to socially disadvantaged or veteran farmers and ranchers in their region.

Q. What groups are defined as *socially disadvantaged* under the Community Prosperity funding opportunity announcement ?

Under Section 2501 of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990 (FACT Act), also known as the 1990 Farm Bill, P.L. 101-624, 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, 7 U.S.C. § 2279(e).* Groups include, but are not limited to:

- African Americans
- American Indians
- Alaskan Natives
- Asians
- Hispanics
- Pacific Islanders

The Secretary of Agriculture will determine on a case-by-case basis whether additional groups qualify under this definition, either at the Secretary's initiative or in response to a written request with supporting explanation.

Organizations may either work with or have worked with socially disadvantaged or veteran groups for at least 3 years. Applications need not address both groups in order to receive Community Prosperity 2501 grant funding.

Q. What is the definition of veterans?

The term veteran farmer or rancher (VFR) means a person who served in the United States Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard, including the reserve components thereof, and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable and who also meets the definition of beginning farmer or rancher (BFR). The VFR must: a) not have operated a farm or ranch; or b) not have operated a farm or ranch for more than 10 consecutive years. For a legal entity or joint operation to be considered a VFR entity, all members must meet the definition of VFR.

Q. What qualifications/credentials/documentation must eligible entities possess to be considered eligible to apply for grants under the Community Prosperity funding opportunity announcement?

Applicants must have the financial, legal, administrative, and operational capacity to carry out the objectives of the federal grant. They must have at least 3 years of documented evidence in providing agriculturally related education, training, or services to socially disadvantaged or veteran farmers and ranchers.

Nonprofit organizations should provide a current 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 certification, Articles of Incorporation dated at least three years prior to application, and must not engage in activities prohibited under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986. Applicants awaiting certification of nonprofit status by the IRS must submit documentation in their application.

Documentary evidence examples may include:

- Dated Articles of Incorporation showing the purpose for which an organization is organized
- Dated Business Plan (condensed version)
- Dated Letters of Intent and Partnership Agreements
- Dated Grant awarding documents from state or federal agencies
- Organizational Historical Documents or Performance Records
- Curricula and/or brochures stating organizational Mission, Vision, and Value Statements in combination with organizational documents.
- Curricula used in the past

GRANT APPLICATION PROCESS QUESTIONS

Q. Can existing grantees apply for a subsequent Community Prosperity grant year after year?

Yes, however, beginning with the implementation of the 2018 Farm Bill, organizations that have been selected to receive a grant must be in the final year of their existing project, make every effort to complete their current project, expend all funding, and be ready to close their existing grant before being eligible to reapply.

Q. Can current recipients on a no-cost extension reapply for additional funding in upcoming grant cycles?

Yes, however, recipients must be in their final year of their existing grant and should make every effort to complete their current projects, expend all funding, and be ready to close the existing grant prior to the applying for the upcoming grant cycle.

Q. How are Community Prosperity applications evaluated and how many discretionary points may be given to applicants?

All applications received are reviewed and scored by at least two members of an external Independent Peer Review Panel. The panel members are not associated with USDA staff members. The panel members award discretionary points for Secretarial initiatives as stated in the Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) currently posted.

GRANT MANAGEMENT QUESTIONS:

All applicants that receive Community Prosperity 2501 funding should familiarize themselves with the ezFedGrants system, USDA's system for managing grants/awards. [Learn more at ezFedGrants.](#)

Q. In terms of meeting the requirement to provide agricultural education or agriculturally related services to socially disadvantaged or veteran farmers and ranchers, what types of education or services are considered acceptable activities?

Instructional and hands-on and demonstration training on the farm, in classrooms, or in workshops are acceptable forms of activities. Assistance in USDA loan, grant and/or contract application processes, crop and livestock production, business and market planning, land acquisition or tenure, farmer-related legal assistance, establishment of local food systems, alternative enterprise opportunities, diversifying operations, and other value-added productions are acceptable forms of activities.

Q. Can projects include spending on farm infrastructure (i.e. incubators, buildings, irrigation and farm equipment, etc.) for educational purposes or used for construction costs?

Grant funds are to be used for non-construction costs, as stated in 7 USC 2279(c)(4)(H). Instructional processes, for example, how to build a hoop house, are acceptable. Recipients may have to request guidance on disposition of any type of equipment purchased and used for training purposes at the close of the grant. As expressed in the Cost Principles for Nonprofit Organizations (2 CFR 200.402-408), to be allowable, costs must meet the following general criteria:

Costs must be reasonable:

- Recognized as ordinary and necessary.
- Arms-length transactions.
- Individuals concerned acted with prudence.
- Not deviating from established practices of the organization.

Costs must be allocated to the grant, project, etc. in accordance with benefits received as follows:

- Incurred specifically for the award.
- Benefits both award and other work and can be reasonably distributed in proportion to benefits received.
- Necessary to overall operation - must document direct relationship to award.
- Learn more at the [Electronic 2 Code of Federal Regulations 200 \(e-CFR\)](#).

Q. Can organizations include overhead/administrative expenses in their budgets and what is the maximum indirect cost rate?

Yes. OPPE will work with all selected applicants to finalize budgets, statements of work, and project timelines prior to award issuance.

Applicants may charge their negotiated indirect cost rate or 10 percent, whichever is lower, of total direct costs. Indirect cost rates exceeding 10 percent are not be permitted.

Q. Is there a limit on the number of subawards that may be used to fund partnerships and on the number of contractors or subcontractors?

No more than three (3) subawards may be funded per project. Contractors are not subject to the same limitation. See 2 CFR 200.330 for Subrecipient (subawardee) and contractor determinations. In either case, OPPE will negotiate final statements of work, timelines, and budgets prior to award issuance to non-federal entities or recipients. At least 50 percent of grant funds must remain with the lead applicant/organization and cannot be reallocated.

Q. Can recipients from different organizations collaborate with and work together on their individual projects?

Yes, but with a qualification. Recipients may partner with subawardees from other organizations already receiving federal funding as long as grant funds are not applied or used for the same single transaction. Organizations/institutions must avoid "double dipping" as USDA cannot and will not pay twice for the same service, activity, personnel expense, etc. If applying jointly, the organization with the necessary experience must be established and will be considered the lead applicant/organization and will be held responsible for carrying out the provisions of the grant.

Q. Concerning subawards and partnerships, is it considered a subaward when recipients render payment to a partner to cover meeting/travel costs or similar expenses, for example when funding individual projects in other locations for training purposes?

Partnering means a joint effort among two or more eligible entities with the capacity to conduct projects intended and designed to accomplish the purpose of the program. Payments to partners for activities conducted under the grant, including meeting expenses, are subawards and recipients will have to limit the number of subawards to three.

Meetings and conferences generally are allowable; travel is conditionally allowable in accordance with your approved statement of work. Recipients must ensure that there is no "double-dipping" or duplication of efforts with grant funds.

Q. If recipients are conducting training, can they charge participants to attend training?

Participants are generally not charged to attend training. However, if charges are imposed, fees collected from participants are considered program income and must be deducted from the cost of training and must be included in your statement of work and reported on your quarterly Federal Financial Reports (SF-425).

Q. In budgeting for the proposal, is the leasing and/or purchase of vehicles allowed?

Yes, the leasing of vehicles is allowed. Please see 2 CFR 200.465. However, the purchase of vehicles is not permitted. Purchases are limited to \$5,000. Please see 2 CFR 200.439.

Q. Can an organization provide scholarships or stipends for growers while they are in training and can some start-up supplies be provided to them?

Yes. A stipend can be provided to participants of training programs, conferences, or workshops to cover attendance costs as long as costs are reasonable, allowable, allocable, and necessary. Supplies provided to attendees may be covered as part of the costs of a training program or workshop, provided they are necessary for the conduct of the project. Purchased materials and supplies must be charged at their actual prices, net of applicable credits. See 2 CFR 200.453. Scholarships are part of programs of student aid paid to students by Institutions of higher education. See 2 CFR 200.466. Stipends may be paid as part of participant support costs. Participant support costs are direct costs for items such as stipends or subsistence allowances, travel allowances, and registration fees paid to or on behalf of participants or trainees (but not employees) in connection with conferences, or training projects. 2 CFR 200.75.

Q. Is the purchasing of livestock allowable under the Community Prosperity funding opportunity announcement?

Purchasing livestock is generally not allowable under the 2501 program unless used for demonstration purposes. Expenses for demonstration livestock cannot exceed \$4,000.

Q. In terms of outcomes, how do organizations measure how receptive farmers and ranchers are to the information or guidance provided to them?

Some examples of measurement tools that organizations may utilize are:

- Customer satisfaction surveys
- Face-to-face feedback sessions which may include:
 - questionnaires to determine training effectiveness (Is the organization worthy of recommendation to others?)
 - evaluating the effectiveness of curricula or presentations via phone, email or chat communications

- Using benchmarks and tracking models to determine if the number applications for USDA programs increased
- Using benchmarks and tracking models to determine if the number of farmers and ranchers have increased
- Using benchmarks and tracking models to determine the number of acres in production and yield increased
- Using benchmarks and tracking models to determine the increase in agribusinesses and Agri-markets accessed
- Using benchmarks and tracking models to determine a decrease in heirs property owners
- Workshop attendance increases which can be supported by sign-in sheets
- Repeat or returning farmers interested in seeking additional classroom or hands-on training from experts.

ADMINISTRATIVE QUESTIONS FOR PROPOSAL SUBMISSIONS

Q. Is there a page limit for appendices?

There is no page limit on the number of supporting documents that organizations may submit as appendices. However, please keep your application concise and submit only pertinent data.

Q. What types of supporting documents should be submitted as appendices?

Supporting documentation should include 501(c)(3) or other nonprofit certification from the IRS (if applicable), organizational documents indicating at least 3 years of experience assisting socially disadvantaged and/or veteran farmers and ranchers, letters of support, letters of partnership, resumes of key personnel, and any other supporting documents and certifications.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

Q. Does USDA or each state/county have data on current populations of socially disadvantaged and veteran farmers and ranchers presently living and working in each state?

Learn more about these populations at the following links:

- Visit the 2501 main page for lists of past and present 2501 recipients, <https://www.usda.gov/partnerships/socially-disadvantaged-farmers-and-ranchers>
- USDA National Agricultural Statistical Service, [statistics by state](#)
- USDA National Agricultural Statistical Service, [2017 Census of Agriculture](#)

Q. Since the Community Prosperity grant is specifically for organizations, where can individuals find USDA resources and information?

- [Find your local USDA service center](#)
- www.farmers.gov
- www.farmanswers.org
- [USDA New Farmers website](#)

- [USDA Veterans website](#)
- [AskUSDA](#)

Q. How does an applicant indicate that their project will serve individuals in rural areas or areas having persistent poverty?

The following hyperlinks contain information on rural and persistent poverty areas. Please refer to these links to see if your service territory qualifies:

- [rural areas](#)
- [persistent poverty areas](#)

Applicants can indicate this in their Project Narrative. It should be stated which areas and individuals you are servicing on the links provided. An applicant could also document other Census data on those areas: population density, geographic information, lack of support services and infrastructure, percentage data on reduced school lunch costs, state or community rankings on health, food access, unemployment data, household income data, lack of economic resources, etc.

Q. Do applicants have to secure bids and contracts from potential contractors prior to submitting their application for the Community Prosperity 2501 grant?

No. Bids and contracts can be obtained after an organization is awarded the Community Prosperity 2501 grant.

Q. Where can I get assistance with troubleshooting/technical difficulties in application submission?

Please visit www.grants.gov if your organization is experiencing difficulties uploading its grant application. OPPE works closely with www.grants.gov personnel to resolve issues as they occur. However, only www.grants.gov can assist you with technical issues regarding its website. Visit: www.grants.gov and click the full application package link in the announcement. The posted Funding Opportunity Announcement explains how to submit documents and attachments.

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