

Energy Efficiency Program Overview

Rural Energy for America Program (REAP)

**PLEASE NOTE: This overview is largely based on Rural Development's Sec. 9006 program, which the 2008 Farm Bill reauthorized, revised and renamed to "Rural Energy for America Program" (REAP). Final regulations on the new REAP program are still pending, so changes are possible.*

Grants for energy efficiency measures - lighting, heating, cooling, insulation, & pump improvements

The REAP program provides grants (& loan guarantees) to rural small businesses & agricultural producers for up to 25% of the cost of making energy efficiency improvements to their facilities. Renewable energy generation projects (which are discussed in a separate information sheet) are also eligible for assistance under this program.

Funds available

In FY2008, over \$34 million in REAP grants were awarded. Over \$50 million may be available in FY2009. Grant size: \$250,000 maximum (\$1,500 minimum) per project – cannot exceed 25% of total project cost.

Eligible applicants

- Rural small businesses – “**Rural**” means any area other than a city or metropolitan statistical area that has a population of greater than 50,000 inhabitants. “**Small**” is as defined by SBA and depends on business type – typically < 500 employees & revenue < \$7 million.
- Agricultural producers (including nurseries & dairies) – individuals or business entities receiving at least 50% of gross income from agriculture. (The SBA-“small business” limitation does not apply to ag producers.)
- The applicant must have a demonstrable financial need for the grant assistance.
- Majority ownership must be held by US citizens or permanent residents.
- Nonprofits & public projects are **not** eligible.
- Preference is given to “very small businesses” – those with < 15 employees & < \$1 million in annual receipts.

Eligible purposes

- Purchase and installation *in a rural location* of non-residential energy efficiency improvements to a building or process resulting in reduced energy consumption
- Strong preference is given for technology that is “*commercially available*” – i.e., that has a proven operating history and has an established design, installation, & service industry. “*Pre-commercial technologies*” – i.e., those that have emerged through the R&D process and have commercial potential – may qualify, but require substantially more documentation. Experimental or R&D projects are not eligible.
- The applicant must own & control the system, though a qualified third-party may be engaged to operate it.

Authorized uses

- Energy-efficient fixtures, machinery & equipment (new or refurbished) – both purchase & installation (including reimbursement for these costs only if the costs were incurred *after* submitting your application).
 - Vehicles & farm equipment are ineligible
- Energy-efficient real estate improvements – both materials & construction (including reimbursement for these costs only if the costs were incurred *after* submitting your application).
 - » New facilities are ineligible unless they exactly replace an existing inefficient facility in the same size & purpose. Furthermore, the REAP assistance is limited to costs directly attributed to energy efficiency improvements over & above conventional design and as supported by an energy audit.
- Energy audits, permits, professional fees (except application packaging), feasibility studies & business plans (including reimbursement for such costs whether incurred *before or after* application date).

Application process

- “**Simplified**” applications are allowed for projects seeking ≤ \$50,000 grant & with ≤ \$200,000 total project cost, and only for proposals using commercially-available technologies.

- Grants are awarded twice a year via a national competition. USDA only accepts applications during certain periods. **The window for submitting applications in FY2010 has not yet been announced.**

Additional requirements

- Matching funds – 75% of the project cost must come from non-Federal funds. “In-kind” contributions from third parties of up to 10% of the project cost may be counted toward the match.
- Energy audit – a report by an independent, professional, qualified party (such as a Certified Energy Manager) is required with the application. (Applications for < \$50,000 are exempt from this requirement, but receive extra priority points for meeting it.) The audit must address current energy use, recommended improvements & costs, energy savings from the improvements, dollars saved per year, and weighted-average payback in years.
- Interim financing – Grant funds are typically disbursed when the project is complete, tested, & certified operational.

Priority Point System

REAP applications are competitively chosen for funding based on the following weighted selection criteria:

Max Points	Grant selection criteria
15	Energy saved (max points for projects with ≥ 35% energy savings)
5	Professional energy audit obtained (these points are given only if total project cost is ≤ \$50,000)
10	Environmental benefits – the project helps meet state environmental goals
10	Commercial availability of the system (max points for improvements with a 5+ year warranty)
10% of 35pts	Technical merit score – qualifications of the project team
5% of 35pts	Technical merit score – agreements & permits
10% of 35pts	Technical merit score – energy savings audit/assessment
30% of 35pts	Technical merit score – design & engineering
5% of 35pts	Technical merit score – project development schedule
20% of 35pts	Technical merit score – financial feasibility
5% of 35pts	Technical merit score – equipment procurement
5% of 35pts	Technical merit score – equipment installation
5% of 35pts	Technical merit score – operations & maintenance
5% of 35pts	Technical merit score – decommissioning
15	Readiness (max points if all other funding sources have already given written commitment)
10	“Smallness” of applicant (max points if <\$1 MM gross revenue for business, <\$200,000 for farms)
5	“Small” project (i.e., ≤ \$50,000 grant & ≤ \$200,000 project) using simplified application
5	No previous REAP award to applicant within last 2 years
10	Time for project to repay cost of investment (max points if simple payback in <4 years)

Shaded points are awarded by independent technical review committees; other points awarded by USDA.

GET STARTED NOW!

1. Obtain an independent, professional energy audit. Contact your utility for suggestions.
 2. Decide which energy efficiency improvements to adopt & determine approximate cost.
 3. Line up other incentives. Most utilities have them.
 4. Apply for REAP grant. Contact USDA to obtain an easy-to-use application template.
 5. USDA announces REAP awards, usually in late summer. Once your application is submitted, you may proceed with the project. (The grant may reimburse post-application costs *only* if your application is chosen.)
- For more information, or an application template please contact the [Area Office](#) that services your county.