

## Navigate VAPG FY2009

This tool is intended as a program aid only. Applicants and staff should read and follow the complete instructions provided in the Notice of Funds Available (NOFA), and in 7 CFR 4284 subparts A and J.

<b>Federal Agency</b>	USDA Rural Development
<b>Funding Title</b>	Value-Added Producer Grants
<b>Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance</b>	10.352 for General Program Funds; and Reserved Program Funds for <i>-Beginning/Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher</i> <i>- Mid Tier Value Chain Projects</i>
<b>Administrative and National Policy Requirements</b>	7 CFR 4284, Subparts A and J 7 CFR 3015 and 3019 7 CFR 1901, Subpart E Civil Rights 7 CFR 1940-G Environmental (most TA exempt 1940.333) <a href="http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/cfr-table-search.html">http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/cfr-table-search.html</a>
<b>Primary Objective</b>  A VAPG NOFA was published in the Federal Register on September 1, 2009. That NOFA replaced a May 6, 2009 notice (74 FR 20900) that was withdrawn on July 1, 2009. A date correction announcement later appeared in the Federal Register on <b>9/XX/2009</b> .  The VAPG NOFA provides priority scoring incentives for Beginning Farmers or Ranchers, Socially Disadvantaged Farmers or Ranchers, and operators of Small-Medium Sized Family Farms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To help producers of agricultural commodities enter into value-added activities related to the processing and marketing of bio-based value-added products developed from those agricultural commodities.</li> <li>• The desired outcomes of this program are to expand markets for, and increase financial returns to, the agricultural producer-owners of the value-added venture.</li> <li>• Purpose Eligibility: Fund P or WC activities related to the processing and/or marketing of a value-added product.</li> </ul>
<b>Total Funds Available</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approximately \$18 million in General Funds</li> <li>• 10% of General Funds are reserved for applications submitted by Beginning Farmers or Ranchers, and Socially Disadvantaged Farmers or Ranchers</li> <li>• 10% of General Funds are reserved to fund Mid-Tier Value Chain projects</li> <li>• Applicants must clearly state whether they wish to compete in the <u>General Funds Competition</u>, the <u>Beginning or Socially Disadvantaged Reserved Funds Competition</u>, or the <u>Mid-Tier Value Chain Reserved Funds Competition</u>; and meet all applicable eligibility requirements.</li> </ul>
<b>Maximum Grant Amount</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$300,000 Working Capital Grants</li> <li>• \$100,000 Planning Grants</li> <li>• Nationally Competitive</li> <li>• Only one application per applicant and it must designate whether it will compete in the General Funds Program, or in one of the two reserved funding options.</li> <li>• Applicants who have received a Planning (P) or Working Capital (WC) grant for the proposed project cannot receive a second P or WC grant for the same project. Only one P and/or WC grant per <i>project</i> is allowed.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Grant Period Eligibility</b></p> <p>Due to a project’s scale, some project grant periods may reasonably exceed one year by design. If a project grant period is longer than one year, the applicant must identify a separate and unique task for the first year, and for any subsequent years of the project’s duration.</p> <p>See UL for Grant Period Extension information.</p>	<p><b>Maximum Budget and Project Period Length</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximum 36 months</li> <li>• Start Date Range: 6/1/2010 – 11/30/2010</li> <li>• Project periods must conclude not later than 11/30/2013</li> <li>• Extensions post-award at Agency’s discretion and only if extenuating circumstances prevented the grantee from completing the project within the approved original grant period. Grant periods are limited to a maximum of three years, with or without an extension.</li> <li>• If an applicant currently has a VAPG, it must be completed prior to 11/30/2009 in order to apply for FY2009 funds.</li> <li>• Eligible but unfunded Reserved Funds applications will roll to the General Funds competition.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Overall Applicant Eligibility</b></p> <p>Applicants must meet all applicant eligibility criteria for one of the four eligible applicant types in the General Funds program; meet additional applicant eligibility criteria for the Beginning or Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher Reserved Funds option; or meet additional requirements for the Mid-Tier Value Chain Reserved Funds option. See 7 CFR part 4284, subparts A and J, and NOFA Sections I (Definitions), III (A) and IV (B)(7)(i) (Eligible Applicants), and IV(B)(7)(iv)(Reserved Funds Eligibility). RD staff may view the Eligibility Checklists on the VAPG Sharepoint website at <a href="https://rd.sc.egov.usda.gov/teamrd/BP/CP/GAP/default.aspx">https://rd.sc.egov.usda.gov/teamrd/BP/CP/GAP/default.aspx</a>.</p> <p>Producers must produce and own the (majority) agricultural commodity to which value is being added. Producers who produce the agricultural commodity under contract for another entity but do not own the commodity produced are not independent producers.</p> <p>If a <u>cooperative</u> is 100% owned and controlled by agricultural harvesters (fishermen, loggers), it is eligible to apply only as an IP and not as a Coop.</p> <p>Businesses selected for award must document that they are in good standing with the state of incorporation.</p> <p>For <b><u>General Funds</u></b> and <b><u>Reserved Funds for Beginning or Socially Disadvantaged Farmers or Ranchers</u></b>, applicants must meet all definitional requirements, including, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicants must currently own and produce more than 50% of the agricultural commodity that will be used for the value-added product, and that product must be owned by the producers from its raw commodity state through the marketing of the final product.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Notes on Applicant Definitions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><u>Independent Producers (IPs)</u></b>: Agricultural producers, individuals or entities (for-profit and not-for-profit corps., LLCs, partnerships or LLPs) where the entities are <i>solely</i> owned or controlled by Agricultural Producers who own a majority ownership interest in the agricultural product produced. Also, Steering Committees of IPs in the process of forming an association of IPs to operate a VA venture. SC must form a legal entity before the grant agreement can be approved by the Agency.</li> <li>• <b><u>Agriculture Producer Groups</u></b>: An organization that represents IPs, with a mission to work on behalf of IPs, with a majority membership and BODs that are IPs. Important that the APG has an identified subset of IP members on whose behalf the project will be completed. Trade associations, commodity groups, Farm Bureaus.</li> <li>• <b><u>Farmer and Rancher Cooperatives</u></b>: A farmer or rancher-owned and controlled business from which benefits are derived and distributed equitably on the basis of use by each of the farmer or rancher owners, in good standing and incorporated as a cooperative in its state of incorporation. Ag Harvester coops must apply as IPs.</li> <li>• <b><u>Majority-Controlled Producer-Based Business Venture</u></b>: An entity where more than 50% of the ownership and control is held by IPs, or by Partnerships, LLCs, LLPs, corporations, or cooperatives that are themselves 100% owned and controlled by IPs. No more than 10% of program funds go to these applicants.</li> </ul> <p><b>For Reserved Funds Competition/Additional Eligibility Requirements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><u>Beginning Farmer or Rancher, or Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher</u></b> – Applicants must meet <i>one</i> of these NOFA definitions and provide additional documentation for eligibility. See <b>Eligibility Checklists and the Reserved Funding Options link on the program’s main website for documentation options.</b></li> </ul>

<p>For <b>Reserved Funds for Mid-Tier Value Chain Projects</b>, the <i>applicant</i> must meet one of the four eligible applicant definitions, and the <i>project</i> must meet definitional requirements for Mid-Tier Value Chain, and for Local or Regional Supply Network. For MTVC projects, it is the Agency’s position that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicants must currently own and produce more than 50% of the raw commodity that will be used for the value-added product that is the subject of the proposal.</li> <li>• Because the Agency recognizes that, in a supply chain network, a variety of raw agricultural commodity and value-added product ownership and transfer arrangements may be necessary, applicant ownership of the raw agricultural commodity and value-added product from raw through value-added is not necessarily required, as long as . . .</li> <li>• The proposal can demonstrate an increase in customer base and an increase in revenue returns to the applicant producers supplying the majority of the raw agricultural commodity for the project.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mid-Tier Value Chain / Local or Regional Supply Network</b>–The <i>project</i> must meet <i>both</i> of these NOFA definitions, and the Applicant must be one of the four eligible applicant types. See <b>Eligibility Checklists and the Reserved Funding Options link on the program’s main website for documentation options.</b></li> <li>• <b>Possible advantages to MTVC projects:</b> (1) Allows transfer and sale of raw agricultural product to other players in the chain, as long as the project demonstrates an expansion of customer base and an increase in revenue returns to the applicant producers supplying the majority of the agricultural commodity for the project, and (2) may allow for some supply network costs not otherwise eligible—provides incentive for these networks to develop.</li> </ul>
<p><b>New Key Definitions in NOFA – Including Reserved Funds Categories</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See NOFA section I for references to complete definitions.</li> <li>• Supply Network participants could include agricultural producers, processors, marketers, distributors, wholesalers, retailers, consumers, and TA providers</li> <li>• See <b>Eligibility Checklists and Reserved Funding Options link</b> on the program’s main website for <i>documentation options</i> for Mid-Tier Value Chain/Local or Regional Supply Network, Beginning Farmer or Rancher, or Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher.</li> <li>• A self-certification statement is available on the program’s main website for <b>Socially Disadvantaged Farmers or Ranchers</b>.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Abridged Definitions for reference only</b></p> <p><b><u>New General Terms</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Family Farm:</b> Produces agricultural commodities for sale in sufficient quantity to be recognized as a farm and not a rural residence, owners are primarily responsible for daily physical labor and management, hired help only supplements family labor, owners are related by blood or marriage. Based on 7 CFR 761.2.</li> <li>• <b>Local and Regional Supply Network:</b> Interconnected food-related business enterprises through which food products move from production through consumption in a local or regional area of the USA.</li> <li>• <b>Medium-Sized Farm:</b> Three year average of between \$250,001 and \$700,000 in annual gross sales of agricultural products.</li> <li>• <b>Small Farm:</b> Three year average of \$250k or less in annual gross sales of agricultural product</li> </ul> <p><b><u>New Reserved Funds Categories</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Beginning Farmer or Rancher:</b> An entity in which <i>all</i> (100%) owners (1) have operated a farm or a ranch for not more than 10 years; (2) materially and substantially participate in the operation of a farm or a ranch; and (3) provide substantial day-to-day labor and management of a farm or a ranch. Applicants must currently own and produce more than 50 percent of the agricultural commodity to which value will be added. Based on 7 USC 1991(a).</li> <li>• <b>Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher:</b> (1) A <i>person</i> that is directly engaged in farming or ranching, or an <i>entity</i> solely owned by individuals who are directly engaged in farming or ranching that; (2) as a farmer or rancher person</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For <u>MTVC projects</u>, the Agency recognizes that a variety of raw agricultural commodity and value-added product ownership and transfer arrangements may be necessary. Consequently, applicant ownership of the raw agricultural commodity through development of the VA product is not necessarily required, as long as the mid-tier value chain proposal can demonstrate an increase in customer base and an increase in revenue returns to the applicant producers supplying the majority of the raw agricultural commodity for the project.</li> <li>• As part of the <u>Value-Added Agricultural Product</u> definition to the right, also see the “Product Eligibility” section below. See NOFA section I and III (C) for complete details.</li> </ul>	<p>or entity, is a member of a socially disadvantaged group, whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of a group, w/o regard to their individual qualities; and (3) in the event that there are multiple farmer or rancher owners of the applicant organization, at least 51% of the owners are members of said socially disadvantaged group. Based on 7 USC 2003(e).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Mid-Tier Value Chain</u>: Local and Regional supply networks that link (mid tier) <i>independent producers</i> with businesses and coops that market the VA agricultural product in a manner that (1) targets and strengthens the profitability and competitiveness of small and medium-sized farms and ranches that are structured as a family farm; and (2) obtains agreement from an eligible <i>APG, Coop</i> or <i>MCPBBV</i> engaged in the value chain on a marketing strategy.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>New Product Eligibility</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Value-Added Agricultural Product</u>: Any agricultural commodity or product that (1) has undergone one of the 5 methodologies for change (see “Product Eligibility” section below); AND (2) as a result of the change. . .(i)the customer base for the agricultural commodity or product is expanded; and (ii) a greater portion of the revenue derived from the marketing, processing, or physical segregation of the agricultural commodity or product is available to the producer of the commodity or product.</li> <li>• Non-Standard Production Manner – see below</li> <li>• Renewable Energy Generated On-Farm – see below</li> <li>• Aggregation and Marketing of Locally-Produced Agricultural Food Commodities or Products – see below</li> </ul>
<p><b>Value-Added Product Eligibility</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See NOFA sections I (definitions), III (C) and IV (B)(7)(ii)</li> <li>• All projects must involve at least one of the five methodologies defined in the NOFA to develop Value-Added products; AND result in</li> <li>• An expansion of customer base AND an increase in revenue returns to the applicant agricultural producers supplying the majority of the agricultural commodity to the project.</li> <li>• Applications that propose ONLY branding, packaging or other similar means of differentiation are not eligible in any category. However, applications may propose branding, packaging, or other product differentiation as a component of an otherwise eligible project in any category.</li> </ul>	<p><b>5 Methodologies to Achieve Value-Added Products from an Agricultural Commodity or Product</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Change in Physical State</u>, such that the agricultural commodity cannot be returned to its original state (i.e. fish fillets, diced tomatoes, ethanol, biodiesel, wool rugs are eligible). Common production or harvesting methods do not qualify (i.e. bottled milk, raw fiber, cut flowers, dehydrated corn, Christmas trees are not eligible).</li> <li>• <u>(Nonstandard) Production in a Manner that Enhances the Value of the Commodity or Product</u> as demonstrated in a business plan (i.e. organic carrots, eggs produced from free-range chickens, beef produced from cattle fed a “natural” diet are eligible). <u>Restricted to working capital applications only</u>, because the enhanced value must be demonstrated from an existing venture-specific BP that shows a quantifiable comparison with products produced in a standard manner. Simply “branded” products alone will not qualify.</li> <li>• <u>Physical Segregation</u> that results in the enhancement of the value of the agricultural commodity or product (physical barrier such as distance or structure) of one commodity from other varieties of the same commodity</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>On-farm generation of energy</u> through wind, solar, geothermal and hydro are eligible only when they are used in the production of another eligible VA product, and they are not eligible if they are simply converted to energy/electricity and sold off the farm.</li> <li>• <u>Locally-Produced Ag Food Products</u> can be a raw, cooked, or processed edible substance, beverage, or ingredient intended for human consumption. Not eligible: animal feed, live animals, non-harvested plants, fiber, medicinal products, cosmetics, tobacco products, narcotics.</li> </ul>	<p>on the same farm during production, through harvesting, processing, and marketing (i.e. genetically modified corn separated from non-genetically modified corn on the same farm is eligible).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><u>Renewable Energy Generated on-farm from an Agricultural Commodity.</u></b> An agricultural commodity or product used to generate energy on a farm or ranch, including E-85 fuel (i.e. anaerobic digester or algae is eligible).</li> <li>• <b><u>Aggregation and Marketing of Locally Produced Agricultural Food Commodities or Products:</u></b> Any agricultural food product that is raised, produced, and distributed in (1) the locality or region in which the final product is marketed so that the total distance the product is transported is less than 400 miles from the origin of the product; or (2) the State in which the product is produced. To be eligible, 100% of the product must be marketed and distributed within this geographic limit. Applications should document and quantify how local sales and marketing of an agricultural commodity or product will result in added value to the product. Examples include specific local grapes with characteristics attributable to the growing area and sold to a processor that will produce a select/vintage local wine; or local corn advertised and sold at a premium as a fresher locally-produced alternative to non-local produce.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Purpose Eligibility</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See NOFA sections IV (B)(7)(iii) and IV (E)(1-3, Eligible Use of Funds)</li> <li>• The budget and work plan must detail eligible use of funds.</li> <li>• Applicants other than IPs applying for Working Capital must demonstrate that the <i>Venture has been in operation for not more than two years at time of application submission</i> in order to show the applicant is entering an emerging market.</li> <li>• To confirm viability of WC applications, State Offices will review FS and BP after the application deadline but prior to the selection of grantees.</li> </ul>	<p><b>All applications must state whether the project seeks funding for</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eligible Planning Activities with \$100k or less in grant funds; <i>OR</i></li> <li>• Eligible Working Capital Activities with \$300k or less in grant funds. At time of application, applicants seeking working capital grants must certify that a third-party venture-specific feasibility study and business plan exists, and demonstrate that they are <i>currently in a position to market the subject value-added product</i> and carry out the WC activities in accord with the work plan and budget timeline.</li> <li>• All activities must directly relate to the processing and/or marketing of the value-added product.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Eligible Use of Funds</b> The Purpose Eligibility assessment will be based on NOFA sections IV (B)(7)(iii) and IV (E)(1-3), including an evaluation of the budget and work plan.</p> <p>Besides 3015 and 3019, also see the Cost Principles: 48 CFR 31.2 Commercial (For-Profit) Organizations (<a href="http://www.arnet.gov/far">http://www.arnet.gov/far</a>) 2 CFR 230 Nonprofit Organizations (A-122) (<a href="http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars">http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars</a>)</p> <p>As a reference, the RBS Feasibility Study Guide can be accessed online at</p>	<p>The project work plan and budget must detail eligible activities, and identify eligible source and use of all grant and matching funds.</p> <p><b>Eligible Planning Grant Activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• obtain legal advice and assistance related to the proposed venture</li> <li>• conduct a feasibility study of the proposed venture to determine its potential marketing success</li> <li>• develop a business plan that provides comprehensive details of the management, planning, and other operational aspects of the proposed venture</li> </ul>

<p><a href="http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/pub/sr58.pdf">http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/pub/sr58.pdf</a></p> <p><b>Working Capital</b> applications must reference a completed independent feasibility study specific to the VA venture, and a business operations plan that demonstrates viability. For APG, Coop, and MCPBBV applicants, the <i>venture</i> must have been in operation not more than two years at time of application submission to meet the emerging market criteria for a market not previously served by the applicant.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develop a marketing plan for the venture, including identification of a market window, potential buyers, a description of the distribution system, and possible promotional campaigns</li> </ul> <p><b>Eligible Working Capital Grant Activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>design or purchase an accounting system for the venture</li> <li>pay for salaries, utilities and rental of office space</li> <li>purchase inventory, office equipment and supplies</li> <li>conduct a marketing campaign for the VA product</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ineligible Use of Funds</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See NOFA section IV (E)(3)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Examples of Ineligible Activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>plan, repair, rehab, acquire or construct a building/facility</li> <li>purchase, rent or install fixed equipment</li> <li>purchase vehicles, including boats</li> <li>pay costs for preparation of grant application</li> <li>pay costs not directly related to the funded venture</li> <li>pay for services from any private business enterprise that does not have at least 51% ownership by US Citizens or legal permanent residents</li> <li>pay costs for project activities outside the grant period</li> <li>fund political or lobbying activities</li> <li>fund architectural or engineering design work for a specific physical facility</li> <li>fund activities prohibited by 7 CFR 3015 or 3019</li> <li>fund expenses related to the production of any commodity or product to which value will be added, including seed, rootstock, labor for harvesting the crop, and delivery of the commodity to a processing facility</li> <li>fund research and development</li> <li>purchase land</li> <li>duplicate current services or replace or substitute support previously provided</li> <li>pay judgments or debts owed to the United States</li> <li>conduct industry-level feasibility studies and business plans that are not specific to an identified group of IPs</li> <li>receive match contributions or pay for goods or services provided by a person or entity who has a conflict of interest in the project</li> </ul>
<p><b>Required Match Contribution</b></p> <p>Applicants must both <i>certify</i> and <i>verify</i> their match sources and uses at time of application, and may not change the source, type, or amount of matching funds without prior written approval from the Agency. See NOFA sections III (B) and IV (B)(9-10).</p> <p><b>Templates for verification of matching funds are available online at</b>  <a href="http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/verifymatch031407.htm">http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/verifymatch031407.htm</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applicant Cash</li> <li>Applicant Loan or Line of Credit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Match funds must equal or exceed the amount of the grant funds requested, and combined match and grant funds must equal 100% of the total project costs.</li> <li>Eligible applicant and third-party cash or in-kind contributions may contribute to match requirements, as long as they are from eligible sources without a conflict of interest in the project, and are for eligible purposes.</li> <li>All eligible cash and in-kind contributions must be spent on eligible expenses during the grant period, and are subject to the same use restrictions as grant funds.</li> <li>Match funds must be spent at a rate equal to or greater than the rate at which grant funds are expended, and if matching funds are provided in an amount exceeding the minimum requirement, those matching funds must be</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant In-Kind Contribution</li> <li>• Third-Party Cash</li> <li>• Third-Party In-Kind Contribution</li> </ul> <p>Examples of third-party in-kind match contributions for Planning Grants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultant time on eligible tasks</li> <li>• 3<sup>rd</sup> party technical assistance on eligible tasks</li> </ul> <p>Examples of third-party in-kind match contributions for Working Capital Grants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Owner or Employee of applicant organization donating eligible goods or services</li> </ul> <p>Examples of Applicant Cash contributions for Planning Grants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paying consultant costs on eligible tasks</li> <li>• Paying legal costs on eligible tasks</li> </ul> <p>Examples of Applicant Cash contributions for Working Capital Grants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant organization purchases necessary inventory for processing or marketing the VA product</li> <li>• Paying salaries to process or market the VA product</li> <li>• Paying marketing or distribution expenses for the VA product</li> </ul>	<p>spent at a proportional rate equaling the match-to-grant ratio identified in the approved budget.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most other Federal grant funds cannot be used as match, although loan proceeds from Federal sources are acceptable.</li> <li>• Expected program income may not be used to fulfill the matching funds requirement at time of application. If program income is earned during the time period of the grant, it is subject to the requirements of 7 CFR part 3015, subpart F; and 7 CFR 3019.24; and any provisions in the grant agreement.</li> <li>• Contributions donated outside the proposed grant period will not be accepted.</li> <li>• In-kind contributions that are over-valued will not be accepted. The valuation process does not need to be included at time of application, but the applicant must be able to demonstrate how the valuation was achieved <i>at time of notification of tentative selection for the grant award</i>. See RD Instruction 4284-A / Exhibit A Guidelines for Verifying In-Kind Contributions.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Preliminary Reviews</b></p> <p>Optional, but encouraged. State Offices will assess the eligibility of the application and its completeness only, not the quality of the application. The results of this preliminary review are not binding on the Agency.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicants are encouraged to contact their Rural Development State Office well in advance of the submission deadline to consult with staff about eligibility and application preparation. Although not required, this step is highly recommended to improve the quality of the applicant’s final submission.</li> <li>• The preliminary review deadline is <b>11/02/2009</b>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Final Submission Deadlines</b></p> <p><b>Submission Address</b></p> <p><b>Paper applications</b> must be submitted to the Rural Development State Office for the State in which the Project will primarily take place. Applicants should submit one original and one copy of the application. Each application submission must contain all required documents in one submission envelope if by mail or courier delivery service.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p><b>Electronic Applications</b></p> <p>Visit <a href="http://grants.gov">grants.gov</a> early to ensure proper authentication and adequate computer</p>	<p><b>General Funds Deadline:</b>  Paper <i>Postmark and Ship Overnight</i> Deadline: 11/30/2009  Electronic <i>Receipt</i> Deadline: 11/30/2009</p> <p><b>Reserved Funds Deadline:</b>  Paper <i>Postmark and Ship Overnight</i> Deadline 11/30/2009  Electronic <i>Receipt</i> Deadline: 11/30/2009</p> <p>State Office addresses may be found at:  Telephone dial 1-800-670-6553 and then press “1”, or go online at <a href="http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/recd_map.html">http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/recd_map.html</a> or <a href="http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/scrty/sdirs.html">http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/scrty/sdirs.html</a>.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p><a href="http://www.grants.gov">http://www.grants.gov</a></p>

<p>resources. Other electronic submission formats are <i>not acceptable</i>, including electronic mail and facsimile.</p>	
<p><b>An Application Guide and Materials are available on the program website.</b></p> <p>OR</p> <p><b>Locate and Contact Your Rural Development State Office:</b></p> <p>OR</p> <p><b>If you are not able to contact your Rural Development State Office, contact the Rural Business Cooperative Services National Office</b></p> <p>The <b>content and form of submission</b> requirements are specified in the <b>NOFA</b>, with guidance and materials provided online for paper or grants.gov electronic submission. The FY2009 NOFA requires answers to specific questions regarding Applicant, Product, Purpose, and Reserved Funds Eligibility. It is recommended that applicants use the online template. Each submission must include all elements and pages of the complete application.* Forms, DUNS #, comprehensive narrative including work plan and budget, performance and proposal evaluation criteria, certification and verification of match funds, and other documentation is required.</p> <p><b>*Applicants requesting less than \$50,000</b> are not required to submit the following items at time of application, but if selected for an award, will be required to submit these items as part of the conditions of the award: Form SF-424A, Form SF-424B, Title Page, Goals of the Project, and <i>Performance</i> Evaluation Criteria. All other application elements are required at time of submission of application.</p> <p><b>Performance Evaluation Criteria</b> requires at least one criterion by which the applicant’s performance can be evaluated for Planning Grants; and the identification of the projected increase in customer base, revenue, and number of jobs resulting from the project for Working Capital Grants, along with the projected increase in renewable energy capacity for projects with significant energy components.</p> <p><b>Intergovernmental review</b> applies to this funding program, and applicants are encouraged to directly submit a copy of their application to State and local</p>	<p><a href="http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/vadg.htm">http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/vadg.htm</a></p> <p>OR</p> <p>State Offices may be contacted by telephone 1-800-670-6553 and then press “1”, or go online at <a href="http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/reced_map.html">http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/reced_map.html</a> or <a href="http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/scrty/sdirs.html">http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/scrty/sdirs.html</a>.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>National Office Contact by telephone (202) 720-1227 Lyn, (202) 690-1428 Tracey, or (202) 720-8460 General; or by email at <a href="mailto:cpgrants@wdc.usda.gov">cpgrants@wdc.usda.gov</a>.</p> <p><a href="http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2009/pdf/E9-21030.pdf">http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2009/pdf/E9-21030.pdf</a> or <a href="http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2009/E9-21030.htm">http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2009/E9-21030.htm</a> or <a href="http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/vadg.htm">http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/vadg.htm</a>.</p> <p><b>All applicants are required to have a DUNS #</b>, which is a 9-digit identification number that uniquely identifies business entities. To obtain a DUNS number, visit <a href="http://www.dnb.com/us">http://www.dnb.com/us</a> or call 1-866-705-5711.</p> <p>←<b>Simplified application for applicants requesting less than \$50,000 grant amount.</b> These applications will compete with applications requesting \$50k or more on an equal basis. See NOFA section IV(B) for details.</p> <p><b>Visit the State Point of Contact website</b>, or contact your Rural Development State Office for more information: <a href="http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/spoc.html">http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/spoc.html</a>. If your State does not have a State Point of Contact (SPOC)</p>

<p>government entities to facilitate this consultation. Any comments obtained through this process must be submitted to USDA Rural Development as part of the VAPG application, or when available.</p>	<p>identified, contact your Rural Development State Office for further instructions.</p>
<p><b>Summary of Proposal Evaluation Criteria</b></p> <p>Applications for Planning Grants have different criteria to address than applications for Working Capital Grants. A total of 85 points is possible in each type of application, before Administrator points are applied.</p> <p>All eligible and complete proposals will be evaluated by three independent reviewers based on criteria 1 – 5. These three scores will be <i>averaged</i> to obtain the <i>Independent Reviewer Score</i>.</p> <p>The application will also receive <i>one score from the Rural Development State Office</i> based on criteria 6 – 10. This score will be added to the Independent Reviewer Score.</p> <p>Finally, the Administrator of USDA Rural Development Business &amp; Cooperative Programs may selectively award <i>Administrator points</i> based on Scoring Criterion 11. At the discretion of the Administrator, these points may be awarded to recognize renewable energy technologies, innovation, insure geographic distribution of grants, or encourage projects in under-served areas or groups. These points will be added to the cumulative score for criteria 1– 10.</p> <p>A <i>final ranking</i> will be obtained based solely on the scores received for criteria 1 – 11.</p> <p><b>**Applicant Type Priority Points</b> will be awarded to a Beginning Farmer or Rancher, a Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher, or an operator of a Small or Medium-Sized Farm or Ranch that is structured as a Family Farm.</p> <p>Regardless of scoring, a project determined to be unlikely feasible by the State Office with concurrence by the National Office will not be funded.</p>	<p><b>Nationally Competitive Grants</b> – see NOFA section V (A)(1-2). Points are awarded on a graduated scale in 8 of 10 categories and for Administrator Points. Lump sum points are awarded for Grant Amount Requested and for Applicant Type Priority.</p> <p><b>Planning Grant Criteria:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Nature of Proposed Venture (0-8)</li> <li>2. Qualifications of Those Doing the Work (0-8)</li> <li>3. Commitments and Support (0-5)</li> <li>4. Project Leadership (0-8)</li> <li>5. Work Plan and Budget (0-8)</li> <li>6. Grant Amount Requested (0 or 5)</li> <li>7. Project Cost Per Owner-Producer (0-3)</li> <li>8. Business Management Capabilities (0-10)</li> <li>9. Sustainability and Economic Impact (0-15)</li> <li>10. Applicant Type Priority** (0 or 15)</li> <li>11. Administrator Points (up to 5, not to exceed 10% of 1-10)</li> </ol> <p><b>Working Capital Criteria:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Business Viability (0-8)</li> <li>2. Expanded Customer Base/Increased Returns (0-8)</li> <li>3. Commitments and Support (0-5)</li> <li>4. Management Team &amp; Work Force (0-8)</li> <li>5. Work Plan and Budget (0-8)</li> <li>6. Grant Amount Requested (0 or 5)</li> <li>7. Project Cost Per Owner-Producer (0-3)</li> <li>8. Business Management Capabilities (0-10)</li> <li>9. Sustainability and Economic Impact (0-15)</li> <li>10. Applicant Type Priority** (0 or 15)</li> <li>11. Administrator Points (up to 5, not to exceed 10% of 1-10)</li> </ol> <p>IRs = 37 points  SO = 48 points  Administrator Discretion = up to 5, not to exceed 10% of 1-10</p>
<p><b>Review and Selection</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Agency will conduct an initial screening of all applications for eligibility and to determine whether the application is complete and sufficiently responsive to the requirements set forth in the NOFA for an informed review.</li> <li>• As part of this review, the State Office will require Working Capital applicants to submit their completed third-party Feasibility Studies and Business Plans for the value-added venture after the application deadline, but prior to the selection of grantees.</li> <li>• All projects will be evaluated by the servicing State Office prior to finalizing the award to ensure that funded projects</li> </ul>

	<p>are likely to be feasible. Regardless of scoring, a project determined to be unlikely feasible by the State Office with concurrence by the National Office will not be funded.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After the award selections are made, both successful and unsuccessful applicants will receive notice of award status via mail.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Anticipated Award Date</b></p> <p>RD staff note likely new TOA codes for Reserved Funds:  BFR/SDFR 584 Mandatory, 586 Discretionary  MTVC 585 Mandatory, 587 Discretionary</p> <p>General Funds 389 Discretionary, 135 Discretionary</p>	<p>Reserved Funds: 5/03/2010  General Funds: 5/03/2010</p>
<p><b>Highlights of Grantee Responsibilities Post-Award or Selection</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Execute Grant Agreement, Intent to Meet Letter of Conditions, and other documentation to obligate funds.</li> <li>• Complete the project per terms and conditions.</li> <li>• Maintain a financial management system, and property and procurement standards in accordance with requirements.</li> <li>• Document for grant disbursement requests.</li> <li>• Provide semi-annual narrative and financial reports (due 30 days post 3/31 and 9/30) in prescribed format.</li> <li>• Provide final narrative and financial report (due within 90 days of project completion) in prescribed format.</li> <li>• Provide supporting documentation and deliverables for completed tasks such as feasibility studies, marketing plans, business plans, quality success stories, certification for Director Training for Cooperatives, etc.</li> <li>• Other, as applicable</li> </ul>
<p><b>USDA is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer.</b></p> <p>The USDA prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program; though not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.</p>	<p>Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).</p> <p>To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410; or call (866) 632-9992 (voice) or (202) 401-0216 (TDD).</p>