

Solid Waste Management Grant Program Fiscal Year 2026 Application Guide

Instructions and notice to applicants:

- This guide is intended to help you, but you don't have to use it to apply.
- Using the application guide will not favorably impact your application.
- Regardless of whether you use the guide, you must complete and submit all required federal forms and registrations and include documentation that supports applicant and project eligibility claims, priority points, and verifications of reserved and matching funds.
- You also must ensure you provide complete responses to all questions in the application.
- Incomplete applications **will not** be considered for funding.
- Certifications, statements, and other standard terms used in this guide (examples include "you," "I," "we," "it," "applicant," "entity," and "grantee," among others) refer to the **legal entity** applying for the Solid Waste Management Grant program. By checking, signing, or otherwise acknowledging these elements, you confirm they are true and correct.
- To be considered for Solid Waste Management Grant program funding, you must submit your complete, signed application and all required documents no later than **11:59 p.m. eastern time on December 31, 2025**.

A note about website links: For ease of reference, this guide provides links to relevant, useful information hosted outside the USDA domain. Please be aware that, when you access information through a link provided in this document, you are subject to the copyright and licensing restrictions of those sites. All links in this document were active as of September 2025.

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Section 1: Solid Waste Management Grant

1.1 Introduction

The USDA Rural Development Solid Waste Management Grant (SWMG) program assists communities through technical assistance and training provided by grant recipients to qualified nonprofit organizations. SWMG program funds can be used to help reduce or eliminate pollution of water resources in rural areas, and to improve planning and management of solid waste sites in rural areas.

In this guide, you will find information to help you with the:

- Application process and deadlines
- Components of a completed application
- Scoring criteria and application review process

1.2 Authorization

SWMG authorization falls under the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act (CONACT) Section 310B(b); 7 USC 1932(b) – available at this link: [go.usa.gov/xMvak](https://www.go.usa.gov/xMvak)).

If differences in interpretation arise between this guide and the federal regulation that governs the SWMG program (7 CFR Part 1775 – Technical Assistance Grants – available at this link: [go.usa.gov/xMva8](https://www.go.usa.gov/xMva8)), the regulation always takes precedence.

1.3 Fiscal Year 2026 Funding Availability

The funding amount available for Fiscal Year 2026 will be determined when the budget is approved by Congress.

1.4 Contact

USDA Rural Development's Rural Utilities Service (RUS) Water and Environmental Programs (WEP) staff administers the SWMG program. If you have questions, contact the WEP staff early in your application process.

Email: Water-RD@usda.gov

Phone: (202) 568-1119

1.5 Online Resources

Additional information about the SWMG program is available at this link: tinyurl.com/WEPSWMG. Additional application guidance is available in the Fiscal Year 2026 Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), available at this link: [grants.gov/](https://www.grants.gov/).

Section 2: Requirements for a Complete Grant Application

2.1 Preparing Your Application

To be considered for funding, you must be eligible to apply and must submit a complete application by the deadline date. To prepare the budget and complete other parts of the application, consult the cost principles and general administrative requirements for grants pertaining to their organizational type. You also must demonstrate compliance or intent to comply – through certification or other means – with several public policy requirements.

2.2 Required Forms

You must complete and submit the following forms to apply for a SWMG. All forms are required regardless of how you submit your application. **Note:** forms are available at these links: sam.gov and grants.gov.

- Standard Form 424: Application for Federal Assistance
- Standard Form 424A: Budget Information, Non-Construction Programs
- Standard Form LLL: Disclosure of Lobbying Activities
- Other required supporting forms and information listed in 7 CFR Part 1775.10 (c) and (d) – available at this link: go.usa.gov/xMfVz.

2.3 Project Proposal

The project proposal must outline your project in sufficient detail to provide a complete understanding of how the proposed project will work. Explain what your project will accomplish by using SWMG funds. Demonstrate the proposed project's feasibility in meeting the objectives of the SWMG program. **NOTE: Proposals must be no more than 20 pages, single-sided, using a 12-point font size. The Times New Roman font is preferred.**

Your proposal must cover the following elements:

2.3.1 Project Summary

Present a brief project overview. Explain the purpose of the project, how it relates to USDA Rural Development's purposes, how you will carry out the project, what the project will produce, and who will direct it.

2.3.2 Needs Assessment

Describe why the project or service is necessary. Demonstrate why grant funds are needed. Quantify the number of prospective communities or provide statistical or narrative evidence that enough communities exist to justify the grant award. Describe the service area, including the names of communities to be served, their population, and median household incomes (MHI). Address the specific needs of the proposed service area.

2.3.3 Project Goals and Objectives

State your project goals. Your objectives must clearly describe these goals and be concrete and specific enough to be quantitative or observable. They must also be feasible and relate to the purpose of the project.

2.3.4 Project Narrative

The narrative must cover in more detail the items briefly described in your project summary. It also must support claims that you have substantial expertise in providing effective technical assistance and training. In describing what the project will achieve, explain if it also will have a broader influence. Your narrative must address the following points:

A. Work Plan

The work plan must describe the tasks and activities that will be accomplished with available resources during the grant period. It must show the work you plan to do to achieve the anticipated outcomes, goals, and objectives set forth by the SWMG program. The plan must include:

- The benefits of the technical assistance or training
- A brief description of how the service will be provided, and whether currently employed personnel or contracted personnel will be used

B. Budget and Budget Justification

The written justification for projected costs must explain how you determined budget figures for each category. It also must indicate which costs are to be covered by grant funds, and which costs will be met by your organization or others involved. The justification must account for all expenditures discussed in the narrative. It must also reflect appropriate cost-sharing contributions and explain the proposed or already-in-place budget and accounting system.

Administrative costs for operating the budget must be expressed as a percentage of the overall budget. The budget justification must provide specific budget figures, rounding-off figures to the nearest dollar. See 2 CFR Part 200, Subpart E (available at this link: [go.usa.gov/xMvaQ](https://www.go.usa.gov/xMvaQ)) for information about appropriate costs for each budget category.

C. Areas to be Served

Describe the areas to be served, including population, nonmetropolitan median household income (MHI) information, and the name and state or type of associations that will be served as defined by 7 CFR Part 1775.2 (available at this link: [go.usa.gov/xMfdz](https://www.go.usa.gov/xMfdz)). Also describe the method used to select the associations that will receive the service.

D. Summary of Experience

Write a concise summary of your organization's experience in providing the proposed service. Additional details, including the level of experience of key staff members, resumes, and people providing the technical assistance and training, can be included in an appendix.

E. Evaluation Methods

Describe the evaluation methods you will use to determine whether your objectives for the proposed activity are being accomplished.

F. Duration of Project or Service

Briefly describe the duration of the project or service – including the estimated time from grant approval to beginning of project or service – not to exceed 12 months. The grant period generally begins on October 1 of each year and ends September 30 of the following year.

G. Sustainability

Briefly describe the plans for increased self-sustainability for the project or service in future years, demonstrating how the project will continue after the grant performance period ends without federal award, using a financial analysis, to include cash on hand, projected revenues, outside source contributions, and shows a steady increase to sustainability, without federal funds, within five years.

H. Administrative Points

Only necessary if you would like to be considered for administrative points on the factors listed in Section 4.3.

I. Contracting with Affiliated Organizations

If you contract with an affiliated organization, explain the affiliation between the contractor and your organization.

WEP's definition of an affiliated organization is as follows: In corporate law and taxes, an affiliate is a company that is related to another company, usually by being in the position of a member or a subordinate role (must be verified by organizational documentation). Two companies may be affiliated if one company has control over the other, or if both are controlled by a third company. One corporation can be affiliated with another corporation by shareholdings, by holding a minority interest, or one corporation might be a subsidiary of another.

2.4 Required Information Not Found on Standard Application Forms

In addition to completing the standard application forms, you must submit the following supplementary materials:

1. **Evidence of Legal Existence:** Demonstrate that your organization is legally recognized under state and federal law. Examples of satisfactory documentation include certificates from the Secretary of State, or copies of state statutes or laws establishing your organization. Letters from the IRS awarding tax-exempt status are **not** considered adequate evidence.
2. **List of Directors and Officers:** Submit a current, certified list of directors and officers with their respective terms.
3. **A list of Entity Principals and their respective terms.** Refer to below chart for the minimum principals to be included listed by entity type.

Principals Table.

Entity Type	Minimum Principals to be Screened
Institutions of Higher Education	President/Dean and any person accepting/distributing the federal funds; plus, Chairman/President and Treasurer of the governing board
Federal tribes	Tribal Chairman or equivalent, plus Treasurer or any person who will be accepting and distributing the Federal funds
Non-profits	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)/Director/Executive Director, Chief Financial Officer (CFO), and any person who will be accepting/distributing the Federal funds; plus, Chairman/President and Treasurer of the governing board
Private Entities (other than those listed elsewhere)	Director/Executive Director and person who will be accepting/distributing the federal funds
Public bodies such as towns, counties, or districts	Mayor/Town Manager/Executive Director and Person accepting and distributing the Federal funds; plus, Chair of the city, town or county council and Treasurer

4. **IRS Tax Exempt Status:** Submit evidence of tax-exempt status from the IRS.
5. **Audit:** Submit a copy of the most recent audit of your organization. **NOTE:** A link to website access to an audit is **not** acceptable.
6. **Financial Statements:** Submit the following financial statements:
 - Balance sheets for the last three years.
 - Income and cash flow statements for the last three years.
 - If the applicant organization was formed fewer than three years ago, financial statements must be submitted for the periods from inception to the present, including the pro forma balance sheet at start-up and for at least three additional years.
7. **Other Organizational Documents:** If you are contracting with an affiliated organization, provide the contract or legal documents that illustrate the affiliation between the contractor and your organization. For additional information, contact the WEP staff by email at Water-RD@usda.gov.

2.5 Additional Information Not Found on Standard Application Forms

You can use appendices to provide additional information to support and describe your plan for achieving SWMG objectives. This information – which can include such things as letters of support, resolutions, and policies – are considered essential to understanding and evaluating your proposed project. Such supplements can be presented in appendices to your proposal.

Section 3: Application Submission Process

3.1 Electronic Filing

Applications must be filed electronically using Grants.gov (available at this link: [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov)). The SWMG program application package can be found by searching for the grant opportunity number located on the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) at this link: tinyurl.com/WEPSWMG.

NOTE: USDA Rural Development will not accept applications by email or fax. If you have questions, see Section 1.4 for contact information.

3.2 Actions Required Prior to Submitting Your Application

You are required to get a Unique Entity ID (UEI) and maintain active registration in the U.S. Government's System for Award Management (SAM) database, available at this

link: sam.gov. Your registration must be renewed and revalidated every 12 months for as long as you have an active loan, guaranteed loan, or grant with USDA Rural Development's Rural Utilities Service.

To ensure your information is current, accurate, and complete, and to prevent SAM account expiration, reviews and updates must be performed within one year of the initial account activation date. The registration process can take up to 10 business days to complete. Additional information about the SAM is available in 2 CFR Part 25, "Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management," at this link: go.usa.gov/xJbS4. You can also check the "Help" section at SAM.gov.

3.3 Application Window

The FY 2026 application window opens October 1, 2025. To be considered for FY 2026 funding, your application must be time-stamped electronically on grants.gov no later than **11:59 p.m. Eastern Standard Time** on the filing deadline, **December 31, 2025**.

NOTE: If a receipt date falls on a weekend or a federal holiday, the deadline is extended to the next business day.

Section 4: The Application Review Process

4.1 Acknowledging Receipt of your Application

USDA Rural Development will acknowledge by email receipt of your application. It will then be reviewed for completeness to confirm you included all required items.

4.2 Evaluating your Application

A review team composed of at least two WEP staff members will independently evaluate all applications and proposals. This team will make overall recommendations based on factors such as eligibility, clarity, detailed information, application completeness, and conformity to application requirements. They will score the applications based on the criteria in the next section.

4.3 Scoring Criteria

All applications will be reviewed and scored for funding priority following the instructions in this application guide. **IMPORTANT: Points will be given only for factors that are well documented in your application package** and that, in the opinion of the reviewers, meet the objective outlined under each factor, as guided by 7 CFR Part 1775.11, (available at this link: go.usa.gov/xMf2w) and outlined below.

1. **Project Area** (5 points possible)

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|--|------------|
| Multi-State and National Organizations | (5 points) |
| Single State Organization | (3 points) |
2. **Applicant experience at developing and implementing successful technical assistance or training programs** (10 points max earned or deducted)

More than ten years of experience	(10 points)
One to ten years of experience	(5 points)
Any previous SWMG awards within the past 3 years that received a no-cost time extension or were not fully expended within the period of performance.	(-5 points deducted)
Any previous SWMG awards within the past 3 years that failed to meet the approved scope of work or had other performance-related issues.	(-10 points deducted)
 3. **Applicant resources: Use of grant funds for grantee's staff or affiliated staff versus contract personnel to carry out the proposed project** (10 points max)

At least 75 percent staff	(10 points)
Between 50 percent and 74.99 percent staff	(5 points)
Less than 50 percent staff*	(ineligible)
 4. **Population of the proposed area(s) to be served - based on the 2020 U.S. Decennial Census data**, available at this link: tinyurl.com/Census-P1 (20 points max)

Less than 2,500	(up to 20 points)
Less than 5,500	(up to 10 points)
5,500 or more	(0 points)
 5. **State Nonmetropolitan Median Household Income (SNMHI) of the proposed area(s) to be served based on American Community Survey data from the 2017-2021 5-year period**, at either of these links: <https://data.census.gov/> or tinyurl.com/Census-B19013 (up to 10 points)

Less than 80 percent of the SNMHI	(up to 10 points)
80 percent to 100 percent of the SNMHI	(up to 5 points)
More than 100 percent of the SNMHI	(0 points)
 6. **Project Duration** (up to 5 points)

Projects meeting the objective within a 12-month timeframe	(5 points)
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Projects that last more than 12 months (0 points)

7. **Needs assessment: The problems or issues being addressed are clearly defined, supported by data, and justify the need.** Up to 5 points may be awarded for projects that: (1) improve financial and operational sustainability; (2) support the remediation of emerging contaminants, such as PFAS; and (3) promote the collection of hazardous materials, such as electronics, pharmaceuticals, and other hazardous household waste. (up to 15 points)
8. **Goals and objectives are clearly defined, tied to the need as defined in the work plan, and are measurable.** Up to 5 points may be awarded for projects that: (1) improve financial and operational sustainability; (2) support the remediation of emerging contaminants, such as PFAS; and (3) promote the collection of hazardous materials, such as electronics, pharmaceuticals, and other hazardous household waste. (up to 15 points)
9. **Work plan: Clearly articulates a well-thought-out approach to accomplishing objectives and clearly identifies who will be served by the project.** Up to 10 minutes may be awarded for projects that: (1) improve financial and operational sustainability; (2) support the remediation of emerging contaminants, such as PFAS; and (3) promote the collection of hazardous materials, such as electronics, pharmaceuticals, and other hazardous household waste. (up to 30 points)
10. **Actual assistance provided:** (Projects using multiple methods may receive a maximum total score of up to 30 points.)

Applicant provides:

- Hands-on or on-site technical assistance and training primarily to solid waste management systems managers and operators to improve operation, maintenance, and sustainability. This includes support applications for capital financing. (15 points)
 - Technical assistance to solid waste sites to address the contamination of drinking water and surface water supplies by emerging contaminants, including per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), and hazardous materials. (10 points)
 - Technical assistance primarily through the distribution of educational materials and other outreach methods (5 points)
11. **Evaluation methods are specific to the activity, clearly defined, measurable, and with expected project outcomes:** (up to 20 points)
12. **Matching Funds and In-kind support:** (15 points max)

- Demonstrated commitment of non-federal resources of **more** than 25 percent of total budget (15 points)
- Demonstrated commitment of non-federal resources of 10 – 25 percent of total budget (10 points)
- Between 1-10% of non-federal resources (5 points)
- No matching funds or in-kind support (0 points)

13. Sustainability: The applicant demonstrates ability to sustain the project without Federal awards using a thorough financial analysis, including such things as cash on hand, projected revenues, outside source contributions, and shows a steady increase to sustainability, without federal funds, within 5 years. (up to 5 points)

14. Administrator discretion: The Rural Utilities Service Administrator may provide additional points based on the following factors below** (up to 15 points)

*As directed in 7 CFR 1775.65(e)(3), Eligibility (available at this link: tinyurl.com/yr8r5xdj) applicants can contract with a nonaffiliated organization to provided proposed assistance, but for **not more than** 49 percent of the grant. Here is WEP's definition of an "affiliated organization":

- In corporate law and taxes, an affiliate is a company related to another company, usually by being in the position of a member or a subordinate role. This must be verified by organizational documentation. Two companies can be affiliated if one company has control over the other, or if both are controlled by a third company.
- One corporation can be affiliated with another corporation by shareholdings, by holding a minority interest, or by one corporation being a subsidiary of another.

****Administrator's Discretionary Points – To be considered for Administrator Points the applicant's work plan must include a separate section titled: "Administrator Points". In this section each individual Administrative Discretion Points item must include clear references to the type of technical assistance and training to be provided, content focus, measurable deliverables and outcomes, such as timeframes and the number of systems to receive support, and demonstrated subject-matter expertise. Administrator Points may be considered only for applications that address one or more of the following:**

- Support of financial and operational sustainability of solid waste facilities through the development of site planning, operation, closure, and future use plans that consider revenue enhancements, disaster recovery, and other process improvements. This includes assisting, through creation, support, or review, of capital financing applications, such as analysis of technical documentation and available project alternatives.
- Identification, remediation, or other support related to emerging contaminants, such as PFAS. Efforts should primarily focus on the impacts of emerging contaminants in solid waste sites on water supplies, and methods to reduce or remove their presence through hands-on and on-site technical assistance and training.; and
- Promoting the collection of hazardous materials, such as but not limited to electronics, pharmaceuticals, and other hazardous household waste. Efforts should primarily focus on the impacts of hazardous waste in solid waste sites, and methods to reduce or remove their presence through hands-on and on-site technical assistance and training.

The Administrator Discretionary Points are awarded solely on the aforementioned factors, with up to 5 points for each category and a cumulative total of 15 points.

4.4 Application Selection

USDA Rural Development will rank all qualifying applications by their final averaged scores. Applications are selected based on the highest scores and the availability of SWMG funding. USDA reserves the right not to award grants if all applications are determined to be incomplete or reflect low scores. Applicants will be notified of their selection status by email.

4.5 Possible Application Actions

USDA Rural Development will decide among the following:

- Eligible and selected for funding
- Eligible but offered fewer funds than requested
- Eligible but not selected for funding
- Ineligible for the grant

4.6 Appeals Process

Following the direction provided in 7 CFR Part 1900, Subpart B (available at this link: [go.usa.gov/xJDaW](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/chapter-I/subchapter-B/part-1900)), applicants generally have the right to appeal adverse decisions. However, some adverse decisions, such as denial because of the lack of available program funds, cannot be appealed.

Applicants can request review by the National Appeals Division (NAD). The appeal must be received within the proper timeframe, in writing, and filed with the appropriate NAD regional office. A list of regional offices is available at this link: tinyurl.com/USDA-NAD. You also can call NAD toll-free at (877) 487-3262.

Appendix: Rules and Regulations

- 7 CFR Part 1775 Subpart D, “Solid Waste Management” – available at this link: tinyurl.com/7CFR-1775-D
- 7 CFR Part 1900, Subpart B: Adverse Decisions and Administrative Appeals – available at this link: go.usa.gov/xJDaW
- 2 CFR Part 200: Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards – available at this link: go.usa.gov/xJjq4
- 2 CFR Part 400: Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards – available at this link: go.usa.gov/xJDrv
- Code of Federal Regulations – available at this link: ecfr.gov/

Civil Rights Information

In accordance with Federal civil rights laws and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Mission Areas, agencies, staff offices, employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the State or local Agency that administers the program or contact USDA through the Telecommunications Relay Service at 711 (voice and TTY). Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](#) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (1) Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Mail Stop 9410
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
- (2) Fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) Email: program.intake@usda.gov

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