



Grant Proposal Guidelines

Program description

The Uplift America Fund (UAF) is designed to provide equity and operating grant support to community-based lenders, particularly community development financial institutions (CDFIs), that fund community facilities in distressed rural communities. The Uplift America Fund grants will strengthen the balance sheets and increase the capacity of community-based lenders working in high-poverty and persistently poor communities so these lenders can better access the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Community Facilities Relending Program (CFRP).

Deadline

Complete proposals must be submitted by noon on Monday, July 25. Decisions will be made by noon on Friday, August 5. This compressed timeline is required to ensure decisions can be made and factored into USDA's consideration for Community Facility loans. UAF will provide a conditional grant award letter for inclusion in your USDA application by August 8.

Eligibility

All of the following characteristics must be met to be eligible for Uplift America grant funds:

- Current 501c3 public charity status.
- Approval for USDA Community Facilities Relending Program loan:
<https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2016/07/06/2016-16005/community-facility-loans>.
- Irrevocable letter of credit from an eligible lender.
- The applicant must pursue community development as its primary mission and lending must be a core business. The applicant must have made a minimum of \$1 million in community development loans in each of the three consecutive prior years.

Letter of Credit/Guarantee

Bank of America is one participating lender willing to work with CDFIs to meet this requirement of the USDA CFRP program.

Contact Susan Greene: susan.v.greene@bankofamerica.com, 415-913-3752
or Dan Letendre: dan.letendre@bankofamerica.com, 212-236-8049

Application submission instructions

Please submit your proposal materials to applications@upliftamerica.org in one email with all required files attached. All submission emails should be submitted with the subject line convention: [Uplift America Grant Proposal – Organization Name]. You will receive an email acknowledging your submission within 24 hours.

Application materials

Overview and Narrative forms: Download and complete the attached Word proposal template. Please be as concise as possible and adhere to word count limitations wherever noted. You can enter directly into the template or attach a Word document with your answers. Please include all attachments.

Financial Info template (Excel spreadsheet): Download and complete the attached Excel spreadsheet to the best of your ability.

A complete application includes:

- Information Overview form
- Narrative form

Attachments:

- Financials Info template (in Excel format as provided)
- Three years of financial audits, with any management letters
- Internally prepared financial statements for most recent quarter end, showing comparison of budget to actual
- Budget for current fiscal year and projections for next three fiscal years
- Organization chart with start date of each employee
- Lending manual, including parameters for approving/declining loans, approval authorities, risk rating system and procedures for servicing of loans (collections)
- Management team bios, board and loan committee lists

Grant uses and amounts

There are two primary purposes allowable for grant funds. The applicant should propose in the Information Overview form a request that includes either or both of these grant types.

- Contribution to unrestricted net assets: The applicant may request that a portion or all of the grant request be used to build unrestricted net assets. This means a grant may sit on the balance sheet.
- Operational expenses toward the implementation of the community facilities business plan: The applicant may request that a portion or all of the grant support operational

expenses necessary to deploy USDA loan capital. This can include staff, professional services and consultants, travel, marketing, equipment, supplies, training and administrative expenses.

Please consider the following broad guidelines when planning for potential grants. Note these are only guidelines meant to inform applicants of potential award amounts. These guidelines will inform grant decisions, but not dictate them.

1. **High grant percentage range:** UAF grant to CDFI = 20-25% of USDA CFRP loan request.

Attributes of CDFIs in this category may include:

- Primary service to very high-poverty and economically distressed areas
- Lower pre-grant unrestricted net assets/total assets position (generally 13-20%) with unrestricted net assets/total assets ratio increasing post-grant
- Smaller USDA CFRP loan requests expected – less than \$5MM
- Smaller total asset size – less than \$15MM
- Use of grant funds: both equity and capacity building

2. **Mid grant percentage range:** UAF grant to CDFI = 10-15% of USDA CFRP loan request.

Attributes of CDFIs in this category will likely include:

- Significant service to very high-poverty and economically distressed areas
- Lower pre-grant unrestricted net assets/total assets position (generally 13-20%) with unrestricted net assets/total assets ratio increasing post-grant
- Medium-sized USDA CFRP loan requests expected – \$5-\$25MM
- Medium total asset size – \$15-75MM (loan funds and depositories)
- Use of grant funds: both equity and capacity building

3. **Low grant percentage range:** UAF grant to CDFI = 5% or less of USDA CFRP loan request.

Attributes of CDFIs in this category will likely include:

- Balanced service to very high-poverty and economically distressed areas
- Strong pre-grant unrestricted net assets/total assets position (generally +20%) with unrestricted net assets/total assets ratio increasing post-grant
- Large USDA CFRP loan requests expected – \$25MM and higher
- Large total asset size – 75MM and higher (large loan funds and strong depositories)
- Use of grant funds: limited equity, primarily capacity building

Please note grant awards will be capped at \$2 million.

Grant duration

Operational grants may be paid out annually over up to five years, which will be communicated at the time of announcement and outlined in the final grant agreement. Equity grants may be

paid out on a schedule related to capital draws from the USDA CF program or in full at the time of the award and must be held as unrestricted equity (or net worth) on the balance sheet for at least five years unless otherwise stipulated.

Decision making

The Uplift America Fund will make grant decisions based on a review of submitted application materials and follow up with applicant organizations as needed. UAF will consider the following factors when reviewing grant proposals.

- **Proposed outcomes:** Applicant must clearly articulate how the organization's lending, specifically the Community Facilities lending to result from this grant, improves the lives of those living in the rural, high-poverty and persistent poverty communities served by the applicant.
- **Successful track record:** Applicant must demonstrate a proven history of solid mission, operational and financial management, as well as strong historical loan deployment into high-poverty and persistent poverty communities. Prior experience as a rural and Community Facilities lender will also be considered.
- **Strength of strategies to achieve those outcomes:** Applicant must provide a thoughtful and executable approach to achieving the proposed outcomes that identifies key performance indicators, recognizes potential hurdles, and pinpoints major customer segments and key partnerships.
- **Effective use of proposed grant funds:** Applicant must communicate an effective use of grant funds that leverages the organization's existing resources and clearly supports goals and outcomes that improve the lives of those living in rural, high-poverty and persistent poverty communities through expanded Community Facilities lending.
- **Degree of poverty/economic distress in target market:** Applicant must effectively communicate the community facilities, community development and economic development needs of its target market(s).
- **Relative financial strength and need:** Applicant must demonstrate how operational and/or equity grant will extend the reach of lending into high-poverty and persistent poverty areas while driving additional Community Facilities projects.

UAF will also seek to achieve some geographical diversity and reserves the right to partially fund requests.

Questions

Please review the guidelines and the Frequently Asked Questions section of this site carefully for answers to your questions. If you cannot find an answer, email info@upliftamerica.org.