USDA DFAP Online Application User Guide

This document is intended to guide you through the process of using the DFAP Online Application system.

Table of Contents

Use the links below to jump to the appropriate section of the document:

1: Logging into Your Account

If you do not have an account, learn how to Create a DFAP Online Account.

If you already created your account, go to the DFAP Online Application Sign In page to login to your account. Please see Logging into your DFAP Online Account for detailed instructions.

2: Application Dashboard

After you login to your account, the Application Dashboard opens.
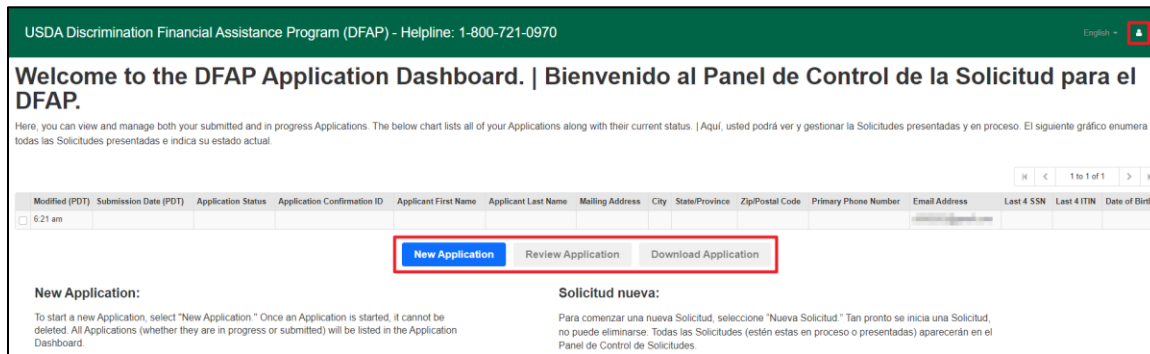
The Application Dashboard provides the ability to start a New Application, as well as an overview of any Applications that are in progress or submitted.

- **In progress** Applications will not have a Submission Date, Application Status or Application Confirmation ID.
- **Submitted Applications** will have a Submission Date, Application Status and Application Confirmation ID.

There are **Action Buttons** contained in the Application Dashboard, their functionality is as follows:

- **New Application:** select to start a new Application. Once an Application is started, it cannot be deleted. All Applications (whether they are in progress or submitted) are listed in the Applications Dashboard. If you wish to start a new Application, you must click New Application.
- **Review Application:** allows you to view an in progress or submitted Application. Select the checkbox of the desired Application, then select Review Application to access a read-only version of the Application and review the content. You will be unable to edit or modify the content in the Review Application mode.
- **Download Application:** allows you to download a copy of your Application. Select the checkbox of the desired Application, then select Download Application to initiate the download. Once downloaded, you can save the file to a desired location on your device.

To **edit** an Application that is currently in progress, you may proceed in one of two ways:
- Select the Modified date or time for any row <u>without</u> an Application Confirmation ID or a Submission Date to continue an in progress Application where you left off. You can make any necessary edits or additions prior to submission.
  - o You **cannot** edit or modify an Application once it has been submitted.

- Alternatively, you can select the checkbox of the desired in progress Application, then Review Application. You can now review your previously input information. To edit, select the Edit button within the Review Application screen.
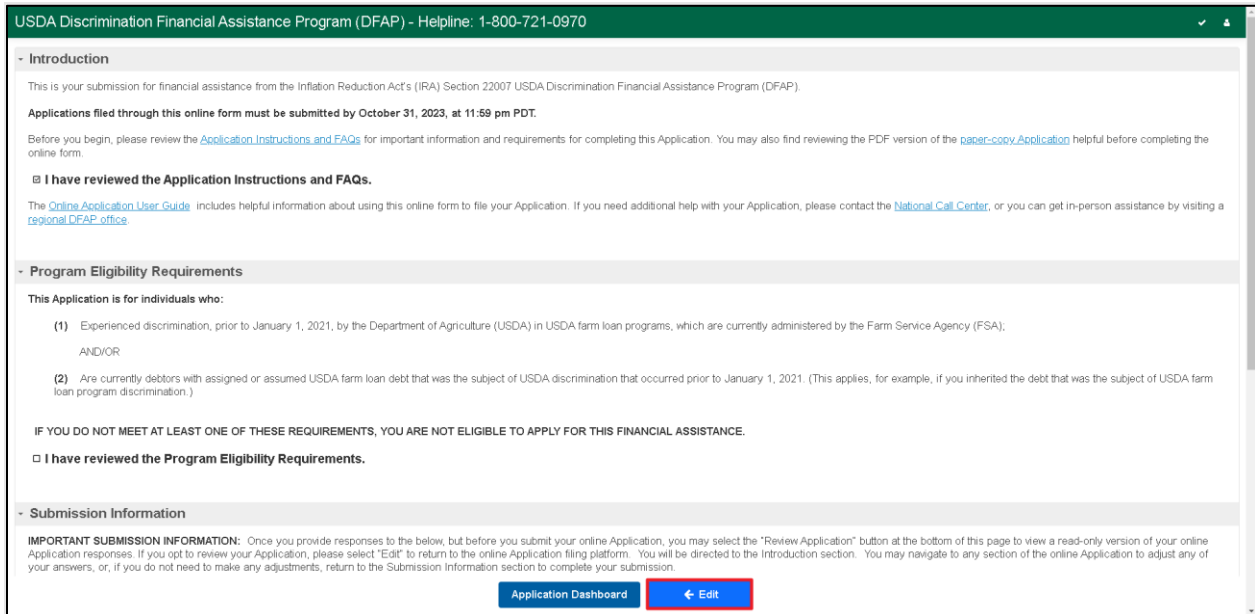

Logging Out

The person **icon** in the right corner of the screen allows you to Log Out of the DFAP Online Application.
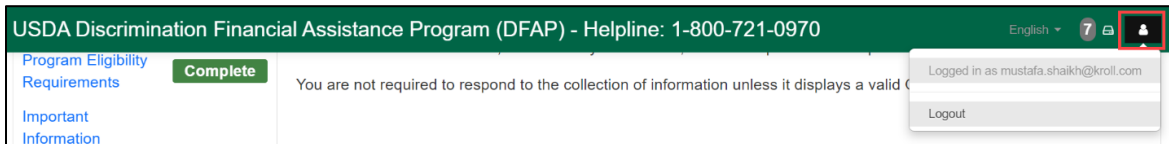
3. Application Introduction

Once you have selected **New Application** from the Application Dashboard, you are directed to the Introduction section of the online Application form.

This section of the Application provides important information regarding the Application and provides links to, amongst other things, the Application Instructions and FAQs. The document containing this important information must be reviewed to continue with the online Application filing process. Once reviewed check the confirmation statement.
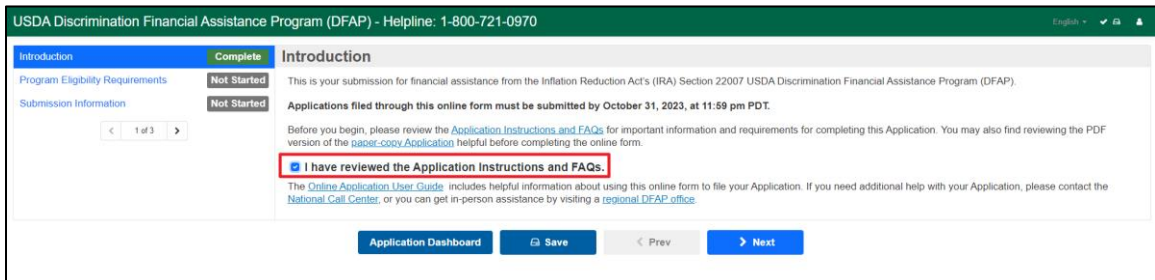
4. Program Eligibility Requirements

This section of the online Application is designed to help you determine if you are eligible to submit an Application. Review the eligibility statements, then check the box to confirm you have reviewed the Program Eligibility Requirements to continue. You can see the detailed eligibility requirements on the 'Am I Eligible?' page of the program website.
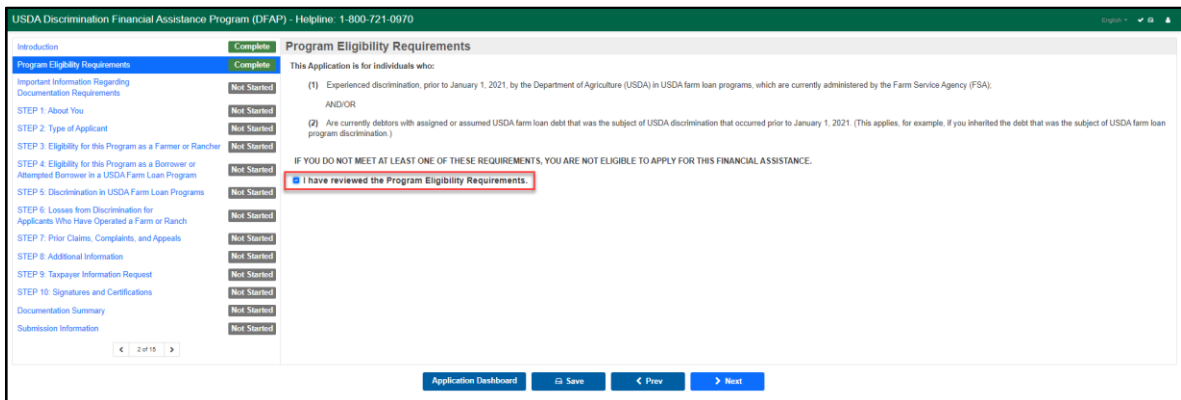
5. Important Information Regarding Documentation Requirements

This section of the Application provides information on Documentation Requirements, How to Provide Documentation, and Documentation Templates.

- **Documentation Requirements:** outlines the difference between documentation which **must** be provided and documentation which **may** be provided. It also provides links to the Documentation Checklist and Documentation Templates.

- **How to Provide Documentation:** provides information on how supporting documentation can be submitted, either uploaded to the online Application in PDF format or delivered to a DFAP Regional Office. Links for help with converting files to PDF and to the Documentation Cover Letter can be found here.

- **Documentation Templates:** provides a link to Documentation Templates and information on the Application steps where they are needed.

Once all of the Important Information Regarding Documentation Requirements has been reviewed, check the confirmation box to continue.
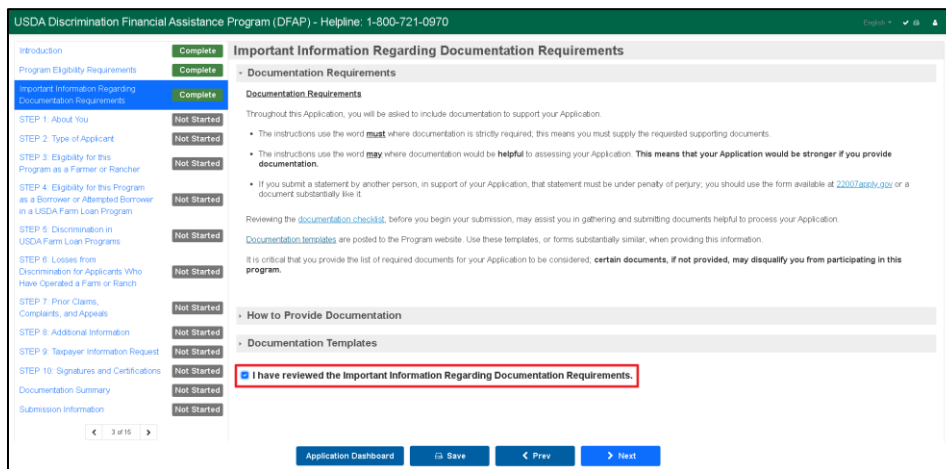
6. Application Menus and Navigation

Before you begin, review the screen and familiarize yourself with the Application menus and navigational tools.

Contents List

Once you confirm your eligibility to apply, the full contents of the Application are visible in the left navigation bar. Titles are highlighted in blue text and can be used for navigation. Alternatively, you can use the pagination arrows to toggle through each section of the Application. Only when the current section is marked 'Complete', can you move to the next section. You can return to a previously completed section at any time.
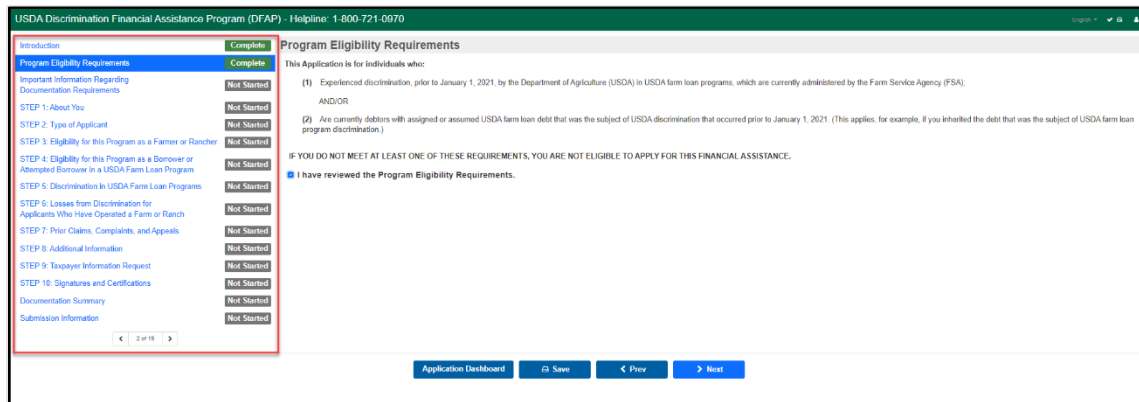

Form Action Buttons

The online Application has a set of action buttons on the bottom of each page of the online Application.

- **Application Dashboard**: returns you to the Application Dashboard. Any unsaved work on the current screen will be saved when proceeding to the Application Dashboard.

- **Save**: allows you to save your Application at its current progress. When pressing Save, a spinning wheel will appear, when it stops spinning the save process is complete.

- **Previous**: moves to the previous screen in the Application and saves any unsaved work on the current screen.

- **Next**: moves to the next screen in the Application only if the current page is marked complete. Any unsaved work on the current screen will be saved when proceeding to the next page.

Top Level Menu

The menu bar at the top right corner of the page allows you to quickly view your error count, log out of your Application, or toggle between English and Spanish text.
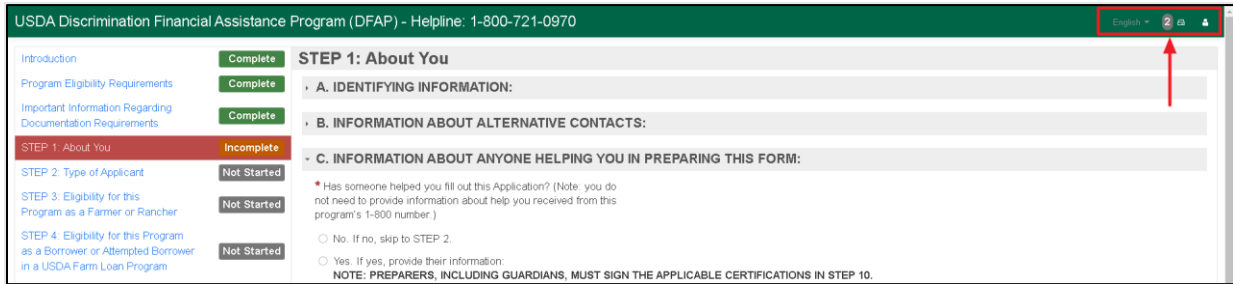
- **Total errors:** if your Application has errors, the error count will appear in an oval. If there are no errors, you will see a white checkmark instead.

- **Profile icon**: select to log out of your DFAP Online Application account.

- **Drive icon**: present if your Application has unsaved changes. This will disappear when you press <Prev, Next>, Save or Application Dashboard.

Expanding and Minimizing Sections

Some sections within the Application have additional fields or information, which may be hidden. You can minimize or expand sections in gray by selecting the triangle icon. **If you are required to provide a response in a minimized section based on a previous response, the minimized section will automatically expand so you can see the contents.**
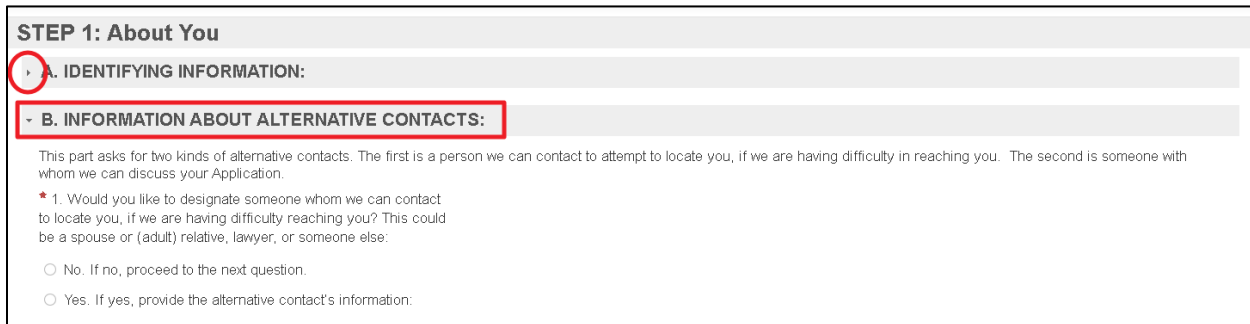
Additional Resources or Information

Additional information and useful resources can be found by following links within the form. Links will open in a new browser window and won't impact unsaved information in the form.

7. Required Information, Formats and Character Limits

One of the benefits of filing your Application online is that the online Application will help you identify the questions you are required to answer. The DFAP Online Application will not allow you to skip over information you are required to provide.

Mandatory Fields

Fields marked with a red asterisk are mandatory and require a response.
If you navigate away from a required field without providing a response, an error message will appear, and the field is highlighted in red.

Some questions or parts may only be mandatory or applicable based on your answer to another question (the "Top-Level Question); when questions or parts do not apply to you based on a prior answer, they will appear in gray on the online Application. You will not be able to provide an answer when they are in the read-only state, unless you adjust a corresponding prior answer.

Please note, if you change your response in the Top-Level Question, and your response to the subsequent question is no longer relevant or required, the form will permanently delete any information you may have input in the now non-relevant question

Required Format

Certain fields require information to be entered in a certain format. The required format is provided in the text below the field. If you input the information in a format that does not meet the required criteria, an error message will appear with the required format and the field is highlighted in red.

Character Limits

Text fields have a limit to the number of characters you can place in the text box. The character limit appears in a gray box next to the field. As you type your response, the box will calculate the remaining characters for the text box.

If you exceed the character limit for a given field, the character counter will display a negative number and an error message will appear.

8. Errors or Missing Information

You will not be able to complete an Application section or STEP until all errors are resolved on the page. You can see where you have errors a few different ways:

1. **Content List**: The section in the Content List will highlight in red.

2. **Error List**: You can view all your errors at the bottom of the screen; click on any item to jump to the required question to resolve the error.

3. **Error Message**: Each response with an error will show an error message and the field is highlighted in red.

4. **Top Level Menu**: You can see the total count of your errors in the top right menu of the online Application.

9. Signatures and Certifications

The applicant **must** acknowledge the applicant certifications and provide an E-Signature, certifying and swearing to the truth of the Application.

If you did not indicate in STEP 1, Part C that a preparer helped fill out the Application, you are only required to complete the Applicant's signature and certification section.

- **To Sign**: enter your **legal name** in the Applicant's Full Legal Name box. Your E-signature will appear in the field below.

- **Certifications**: the signer must also acknowledge a set of Certifications related to filing the Application. Select the field next to the statement and use your keyboard to provide your initials in the designated fields.

If you indicated in STEP 1, Part C that a preparer helped fill out the Application, the preparer must also acknowledge the preparer certifications, and provide their signature, certifying and swearing to the truth of the Application. **This is in addition to the required applicant certification and signature**.

The DFAP Online Application can only accept both E-Signatures if the applicant and preparer are in the same location.

If the applicant and preparer <u>are in the same location</u>, each party must complete their applicable certifications and E-Signatures, before proceeding to the next section.

If the applicant and preparer are not in the same location, the filer must indicate whether they are the applicant or preparer and proceed with completing their applicable certifications and E-Signature using the interface in the online Application form. The second signature can be provided by either uploading a PDF of the appropriate certification and signature page to the Application in the Documentation Summary section of the online Application or delivering it separately to their DFAP Regional Office. You can find a link to download the appropriate certification and signature page template in STEP 10 of the DFAP Online Application. Tips for certifying and signing a PDF document electronically using Adobe can be found [here](#).

10. Uploading Documentation

You can upload your documentation in the Documentation Summary section of the online Application. Review the Important Information Regarding Documentation Requirements section of the online Application before uploading your documentation.

The Documentation Summary Section will detail what, if anything, you indicated you would provide as support throughout your online Application. If you need to change or remove the document selection(s), you must go back to the related section(s) of the online Application and make the applicable modification(s).

Use these tips when uploading documents:
- Files **must** be in **PDF** format.
- There is no limit to the number of PDF files you can attach.
- The total PDF upload file size, **for all uploaded files combined**, is limited to 100MB.
- **Do not encrypt or password protect your files.**

You can upload documentation to support your Application in two ways:
1. Press Select Files, then browse for the file using the File Explorer; or
2. Drag and Drop the file directly into the designated area.

11. Submitting Your Application

The Submission Information section provides important information regarding submitting your online Application. It is essential that you review all information carefully before proceeding. Once you have reviewed and are ready to submit your Application, check the statement confirming you have reviewed.

When the confirmation statement is checked and all sections and steps are marked 'Complete' in the contents list, the Application is ready for submission. Once submitted, a confirmation email will be sent to your login email address confirming your Application Confirmation ID. If you would like the confirmation email to be sent to an additional email address you can specify the address here.

Select **Submit** to finalize your submission. After selecting Submit, you'll be navigated back to the Application Dashboard where an overview of the submission, including the Application Confirmation ID, can be found.