



1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 2055-S, STOP 0201
Washington, D.C. 20250-0201

TO: Elyse Greenwald
Desk Officer
Office of Management and Budget

THROUGH: Levi S. Harrell
Departmental Clearance Officer
Office of the Chief Information Officer

FROM: Bruce Summers
Administrator
Agricultural Marketing Service

SUBJECT: Request for Emergency Review and Approval for a New Information Collection Request

We are requesting emergency review and approval of an information collection package for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) to administer a new competitive grant program, titled the Pandemic Response and Safety (PRS) Grant Program, authorized and funded under section 751 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 (CAA) (Pub. L. 116-260) in response to the ongoing 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The agency cannot reasonably comply with the normal clearance procedures under the PRA due to the immediate need to provide financial assistance to domestic agriculture companies and organizations impacted by COVID-19. PRS is intended to provide Federal financial assistance to food processors or distributors, seafood processing facilities and processing vessels, farmers markets, and agricultural producers for efforts to respond to coronavirus, including for measures to protect workers against COVID-19.

The CAA directs the Secretary of Agriculture to make available \$1.5 billion beginning in fiscal year 2021, until expended. Of this \$1.5 billion, USDA is allocating \$650 million for this new Pandemic Response and Safety Grant Program. It directs the Secretary of Agriculture to provide “grants and loans to small or midsized food processors or distributors, seafood processing facilities and processing vessels, farmers markets, producers, or other organizations to respond to coronavirus, including for measures to protect workers against the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).” In accordance with the CAA, PRS funds may be use for:

- Workplace safety measures, including, but not limited to, personal protective equipment, sanitizer, hand washing stations, air filters, thermometers, cleaning supplies, etc.
- Market pivots such as transition to virtual/online sales costs (online platform development and fees, online marketing, credit card processing fees), supplies, new signage.

- Retrofitting facilities for worker and consumer safety (plexiglass, walk up windows, heat lamps, fans, tents, propane, weights, tables, chairs).
- Additional transportation costs incurred to maintain social distancing.
- Additional worker housing costs incurred to maintain social distancing or to allow for quarantining of new or exposed employees.
- Unreimbursed costs associated with providing or enabling vaccinations, testing, or healthcare treatment of infected employees, including any paid leave.

Grants will be awarded in amounts ranging from 1,500 to 20,000 dollars, and award recipients are not required to provide a match. AMS would allow reimbursement for costs incurred from the start of the Public Health Emergency Period (01/27/20) declared by the Secretary of Health and Human Services along with anticipated expenses for the remainder of 2021 to support entities who experienced significant expenses over the course of the entire pandemic.

PRS is voluntary and respondents will apply for this specific competitive grant program. In doing so, they provide information, and AMS is the primary user of the information. The information collected is needed to certify that grant participants are complying with applicable program regulations in section 751 of the CAA and in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Guidance on Grants and Agreements (2 C.F.R. Part 200). The data collected is the minimum information necessary for AMS to effectively carry out the program requirements and to provide the respondents the support they request to address the financial costs for their pandemic response efforts.

Due to the targeted applicant population, we are anticipating a high volume of potential applicants and 32,500-433,333 potential recipients. This scale has presented technical challenges to existing grants management and financial systems. In an effort to reduce the burden on applicants and recipients, we have been working in close coordination with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Grants.gov, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the Grants Management Quality Service Management Office (QSMO), and GrantSolutions. This coordination has resulted in a recommendation that a custom system to manage the entire award life cycle including pre-award, award, post-award, and closeout for PRS be developed. PRS applicants, AMS staff, and award recipients will utilize a customized GrantSolutions system and website to access all necessary application, financial, and reporting forms.

In compliance with OMB regulations (5 C.F.R. Part 1320) which implement the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13), the information collection and recordkeeping requirements that may be imposed by this action are submitted to OMB for emergency review and approval. The additional reporting requirements would not become effective prior to OMB review. Once approved the collection will be merged with OMB No. 0581-0240, AMS Grant Programs.

Attached are the OMB 83-I, the Supporting Statement, and AMS-71 spreadsheet.