

Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program (MPPEP)

Fiscal Year 2022 Request for Applications - Phase I

Funding Opportunity Number: RD-RBS-22-01-MPPEP

Publication Date: February 24, 2022

Application Due Date: 11:59 PM Eastern Time April 11, 2022

PROGRAM SOLICITATION INFORMATION

Funding Opportunity Title: Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program (MPPEP)

Funding Opportunity Number: RD-RBS-22-01-MPPEP

Announcement Type: Initial

Assistance Listing Number: 10.381

Submission Deadline: Applications must be received by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on April 11, 2022, through www.Grants.gov. Applications received after this deadline will not be considered for evaluation or funding.

Executive Summary: The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Rural Development (RD) Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBCS or Agency), requests applications for the Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program (MPPEP). MPPEP is authorized under Section 1001(b)(4) of the American Rescue Plan Act, which provides funding for “loans and grants and other assistance to maintain and improve food and agricultural supply chain resiliency.” Pursuant to this authority, USDA is making grant funding available to meat and poultry processors for start-up and expansion. This will promote competition and give more and better options to producers by increasing meat and poultry processing capacity. Separately, USDA is using the same authority to increase available capital through loan guarantees and intermediary relending. The grants in MPPEP can finance no more than \$25M or 20% of the project costs and requires the grantee to demonstrate committed project financing. USDA is also making available funding for technical assistance through providers who are experts in the fields of meat and poultry processing, and business planning. Information on technical assistance providers will be included, as available, on the MPPEP website.

Eligible applicants for the MPPEP grants include an individual, sole proprietor business or other business entities (regardless of legal structure) engaged or proposing to engage in meat and poultry processing, including federally recognized Tribes and tribal entities, for-profit entities, non-profit entities, and State or local government entities. Applicants must engage or propose to engage in slaughter and/or further processing with plans to operate under USDA, tribal or state-equivalent inspection. Private entities must be independently owned and operated, and all entities must be domestically owned. Additionally, applicants' meat and poultry processing facilities must be physically located and operated in the United States (U.S.) or its territories.

Applicants that are nationally dominant in beef, pork, chicken, or turkey processing are ineligible; for the purpose of this RFA, nationally dominant is characterized as holding a market share greater than or equal to the entity that holds the fourth largest share of the market for any of the listed species.

Approximately \$150 million will be available to fund projects under this solicitation.

The maximum award is \$25 million or 20% of total project costs, whatever is less; there is no minimum award. There is no matching fund requirement; however, applicants will be required to provide information on other financing secured to complete the project described in the application.

This announcement provides information about the eligibility criteria for applicants and projects, the application forms, evaluation criteria and other documents and associated instructions needed to apply for an award.

This program is also aligned with efforts to:

1. Assist rural communities to recover economically from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly disadvantaged communities.
2. Reduce climate pollution and increase resilience to the impacts of climate change through economic support to rural communities and support the policies of Executive Order 14008 (Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad).
3. Ensure equitable access to RD programs and benefits from RD funded projects and support the policies of Executive Order 13985 (Executive Order on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce).
4. Contribute to the resilience of the food and agricultural supply chains and support the policies of Executive Order 14017 (Executive Order on America's Supply Chains).
5. Promote competition in the meat and poultry processing sector and support the policies of Executive Order 14036 (Promoting Competition in the American Economy).

Additionally, during application, the Agency will consider geography, project size, operation size, species, ownership structure, and business model to maximize diversity among awards.

RBCS also encourages applications that benefit smaller farms and ranches, new and beginning farmers and ranchers, Tribes and tribal producers, socially disadvantaged producers, veteran producers, and/or underserved communities. For projects intending to support these entities, applicants should engage and involve those beneficiaries when developing projects and applications.

Stakeholder Input: RD seeks your comments about this Request for Applications (RFA). We will consider the comments in the event that USDA develops an RFA for a future funding round for this program. Submit written stakeholder comments by the deadline set forth in the Submission Date and Time portion of this RFA by going to <https://www.rd.usda.gov/mppep> and selecting the contacts tab. In your comments, please select "RFA Comment" in the topic drop down to submit your comment.

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1.0 FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

1.1 LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program (MPPEP) is authorized by Section 1001(b)(4) of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) ([Pub. L. No. 117–2](#)). This section provides funding for “loans and grants and other assistance to maintain and improve food and agricultural supply chain resiliency.”

The MPPEP grants are administered by the Rural Development’s Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBCS). RBCS is also administering related loan guarantees and will be making available capital for intermediary relending to the sector. Technical assistance to applicants will be coordinated through the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS). Further technical assistance is being provided by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS).

1.2 PURPOSE

The primary goal of the MPPEP is to provide more and better processing options to producers as soon as possible. The secondary goals relate to the strategies to fulfill the primary goal and make lasting impacts, and include:

- to increase shackle space available to producers;
- to support development of value-added products available to consumers;
- to support proposals that provide fair prices, fair wages and new and safe job opportunities that keep profits circulating in the rural community; and
- to increase diversity in processing options in terms of business model approaches, geography, and availability to underserved communities.

MPPEP is part of the broader \$4 billion USDA Build Back Better Initiative to transform the food supply chain. Given that the meat and poultry processing sector is particularly vulnerable to disruption, increasing capacity and promoting competition in this sector is a high priority for USDA. Grants to meat and poultry processors for start-up and expansion will be delivered in two phases. Grants to meat and poultry processors for start-up and expansion will be delivered in two phases. This RFA is for Phase I, which is referred to as MPPEP. A separate RFA will be issued for Phase II.

For MPPEP, USDA is particularly interested in supporting projects that are in the late stage of development, technically feasible, financially viable, and have already identified other sources of funding (e.g., Federal, State, tribal, local funding, or private funding).

1.3 ACTIVITIES ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

An applicant selected for this grant must use funds for the purpose of expanding processing capacity in the applicant’s market to accommodate additional species, increased volumes, or otherwise expand capacity. Within such a project, eligible activities include, but are not limited to:

- Construction of a new facility;

- Modernizing or expanding an existing facility (including expansion and modifications to existing buildings and/or construction of new buildings at existing facilities, construction of holding pens, construction of wastewater management structures, etc.);
- Modernizing processing and manufacturing equipment (including cutting equipment, mixers, grinders, sausage stuffers, smokers, curing equipment, pipes, motors, pumps, and valves);
- Developing, customizing, and installing equipment, devices, and technology that automates processing functions to improve worker conditions and safety;
- Developing, customizing, and installing climate-smart equipment that reduces greenhouse gas emissions, increases efficiency in water use, improves air and/or water quality, and/or meets one or more of USDA's climate action goals;
- Ensuring compliance with packaging and labeling requirements under applicable law (including sealing, bagging, boxing, labeling, conveying, and product moving equipment);
- Ensuring compliance with occupational and other safety requirements under applicable law;
- Modernizing equipment or facilities to ensure food safety;
- Paying for voluntary grading services to offer value-added processed products;
- Accounting for costs associated with becoming an inspected facility (including Hazard, Analysis, and Critical Control Points (HACCP) consultation, employee training or technical assistance related to inspection, etc.); and
- Workforce recruitment, training, apprenticeships, and retention to ensure expansion projects will be adequately staffed and crewed and offer opportunities to workers.

1.4 NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT

All activities funded under this RFA must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and related applicable agency regulations and instructions, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, other laws and regulations as outlined in, and any applicable state, local, or tribal laws. A review for NEPA compliance is required prior to the award of grant funds. RBCS may request additional information for the purposes of completing the environmental review.

2.0 AWARD INFORMATION

2.1 TYPE OF FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

RBCS will use a Financial Assistance Agreement (Form RD 4280-2) to provide a Federal award to successful applicants.

2.2 AVAILABLE FUNDING

Approximately \$150 million is available to fund projects.

2.3 FEDERAL AWARD PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE AND AWARD SIZE

The maximum period of performance for this grant is 48 months. The period of performance should be based upon the complexity of the project. When developing the workplan and budget whether it is for

purchase of equipment or real estate improvements, please ensure that adequate time is provided to complete the project. This timeframe will be used as an indicator for the start and end dates and the availability of funding for projects.

The maximum award amount is \$25 million or 20% of the total project costs, whichever is less. There is no minimum award amount.

2.4 ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants, which include an individual sole proprietor business and other business entities, must engage or propose to engage in meat and poultry processing which will expand capacity in the sector. Entities are eligible regardless of legal structure and may include, but are not limited to, federally recognized tribes, tribal entities, for-profit entities, corporations, non-profit entities, producer-owned cooperatives and corporations, certified benefit corporations, and State or local government entities.

Private entities must be independently owned and operated. All entities must be domestically owned, and their meat and poultry processing facilities (existing or planned) must be physically located and operated within the U.S. or its territories.

Eligible applicants must process or plan to process one or more species subject to the Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA) or the Poultry Product Inspection Act (PPIA) and possess or plan to obtain a Federal Grant of Inspection, a grant of inspection under a Cooperative Interstate Shipment Program, or a tribal or state meat and poultry inspection program with standards at least equal to Federal inspection at the time of application. Plants processing non-amenable species under voluntary Food Safety and Inspection Service inspection are also eligible to apply for funding.

Eligible applicants, including affiliates of the eligible applicant, must not hold a market share greater than or equal to the entity that holds the fourth largest share of that market for any of the following species: beef, pork, chicken, or turkey processing. All applicants must list and certify their market share for beef, pork, chicken, and turkey processing at the time of the application and indicate whether or not they are in the top four processors in those species.

Applicants that engage or propose to engage in further processing may be eligible provided that the project increases demand for animals; increases opportunities for producers to access value-added markets; or improves the viability of an existing processing operation. Additionally, for applicants that engage or plan to engage in further processing, inputs must be the products of primary processing.

A resolution of support is required for projects on tribal lands, from the governing body of the Tribe with jurisdiction over that land, if the applicant is not the Tribe nor an entity owned or operated by that Tribe.

Eligible applicants must be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) at time of application and must maintain annual SAM registration while an application is active and through the term of an award. Please refer to Section 3.7.1 for instructions on how to register your entity in the SAM.

Multiple applications from separate applicant entities with identical or greater than 75 percent common ownership, or from a parent, subsidiary or affiliated organization (with “affiliation” defined by Small Business Administration regulation 13 CFR 121.103, or successor regulation) are not permitted.

2.5 FACILITIES NOT ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

Ineligible meat and poultry processing entities (existing or planned) include but are not limited to facilities that:

- Are for exclusive non-commercial use
- Are custom-exempt or otherwise uninspected with no plans to operate under Federal inspection or tribal or state equivalent.

2.6 COST SHARING AND MATCHING

Matching funds are not required under this funding opportunity. However, the applicant must have other funding secured to complete the project as described in the application before an award can be made.

3.0 APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

3.1 ELECTRONIC APPLICATION PACKAGE

Only electronic applications may be submitted via Grants.gov in response to this RFA. We urge applicants to submit applications early to the Grants.gov system. For an overview of the Grants.gov application process, see Grants.gov’s [Apply for Grants webpage](#). This RFA contains the information needed to obtain and complete required application forms and RD-specific attachments. More information about applying through Grants.gov can be found in this document.

Applicants can find the opportunity under either the Assistance Listing number 10.381, or the Funding Opportunity Number “RD-RBS-22-01-MPPEP.”

3.2 APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Complete applications must be submitted in Grants.gov and include the following:

1. **Forms.**
 - a. Form SF-424, “Application for Federal Assistance”.
 - b. Form SF 424-C, “Budget Information- Construction Programs”. Program income should be reported on SF-424-C. If program income is earned during the period of performance because of the project activities, it is subject to the requirements in 2 CFR 200.80, and must be managed and reported accordingly.
 - c. Form SF 424-D, “Assurances-Construction Programs”.
 - d. Form AD-2106, “Form to Assist in Assessment of USDA Compliance with Civil Rights Laws”
 - e. Form SF-LLL “Disclosure of Lobbying Activities”
2. **Application template.** All application template sections must be addressed.

- a. **Executive summary.** Provide a summary detailing project goals and objectives in 500 words or less.
 - b. **Applicant information.** Please refer to Section 2.4 and address all information specified in the section to allow the Agency to determine the eligibility of the applicant.
 - c. **Project information.** Provide a work plan and budget to include all activities by task, associated dollars, and proposed timeframe for completion. Please ensure sufficient detail is provided to allow the Agency to determine project eligibility including all other funding that is needed to complete the project. Refer to Section 1.3 for a list of activities eligible for funding. Unallowable costs and activities are listed in Section 3.6.1.
 - d. **Land ownership and access.** Describe how you own and control or have access to the land where the project is located.
 - e. **Performance Metrics.** State what metrics you plan to achieve for increasing capacity. You will report on these metrics one year after project completion.
 - f. **Proposal evaluation criteria.** Please refer to Section 4.1 and address all the evaluation criteria. Discussion is required for each criterion to show how the project has merit and why it is likely to be successful. Include summarizations of any feasibility studies, business, and marketing plans.
3. **Environmental Review.** Please review the environmental checklist available on grants.gov to ensure you are providing all relevant environmental documentation so that a NEPA environmental review can be completed. Please contact the Agency to assist in determining what documentation is required to be provided. Please refer to Section 1.4 and the MPPEP website at rd.usda.gov for additional information.
 4. **Financial viability.** Provide the following to assist the Agency in determining financial viability of the project.
 - a. Business plan
 - b. Three years of historical balance sheet and income statements. Applicants with fewer than three years of data should submit what is available, which may include but is not limited to balance sheets, income statements, and other related documentation to demonstrate the financial viability of the venture.
 - c. Current balance sheet and income statements (within 90 days);
 - d. Two years of proforma and projected financial analysis including but not limited to balance sheet, income statement, cash flow analysis. Include financial projections with assumptions used in development of projections.
 5. **Technical feasibility.** Provide a feasibility study completed by a qualified consultant.
 6. **Source documentation** (including resumes) to support key personnel, construction labor, and operational workforce under scoring criterion 4 in Section 4.1.
 7. **Applicant certifications.** Applicants must certify in writing to the following as part of a complete application.
 - a. The applicant must identify whether or not the applicant has a known relationship or association with an Agency employee. If there is a known relationship, the applicant must identify each Agency employee with whom the applicant has a known relationship.
 - b. Certification that the applicant is a legal entity in good standing and operating in accordance with the laws of the State(s) or Tribe(s) where the applicant has a place of business.

- c. Certification that the applicant has not been found, or may be found to be unfit to obtain a grant of Federal or state or tribal equivalent inspection because of convictions, in a Federal or State court, of a felony, or multiple misdemeanors involving the acquisition, handling, or distribution of adulterated or misbranded meat or poultry products or fraud in connection with transactions in food, or other factors.
 - d. Certification that the applicant is not the subject of a pending administrative, civil, or criminal enforcement action.
 - e. Certification that the applicant is or plans to be operating under a current grant of federal or equivalent state or tribal inspection. In addition, if inspection services have been suspended in the past five years, disclose the reasons for the suspension and how the action was resolved.
 - f. Certification by the applicant that any equipment required for the project is available, can be procured and delivered within the proposed project development schedule, and will be installed in conformance with manufacturer's specifications and design requirements. This would not be applicable when equipment is not part of the project.
 - g. Certification by the applicant that the project will be constructed in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, agreements, permits, codes, and standards.
 - h. Certification by the applicant that the applicant is not one of the top four processors of beef, pork, chicken, or turkey processing.
 - i. Certification by applicant that other funding needed to complete the project as proposed in the application has been secured.
 - j. Applicant certifies and acknowledges that:
 - i. The Agency will check the Do Not Pay System to verify that the applicant entity: has an active entity registration in the System for Award Management; has not been debarred or suspended; is not listed on Credit Alert Verification Reporting System; is not listed on the Treasury Offset Program; and does not appear on the Social Security Death Records; and
 - ii. The applicant is responsible for resolving any issues that are reported in the Do Not Pay System. If issues are not resolved by the time the Agency makes program awards, the Agency may proceed to award funds to other eligible applicants.
8. **Existing facilities.** Existing facilities must provide, as applicable, evidence that they have a Federal Grant of Inspection, a grant of inspection under a Cooperative Interstate Shipment Program, or a tribal or state meat and poultry inspection program with standards at least equal to Federal inspection.
9. **Design and construction documents.** For projects involving construction, include any design and construction documents. If selected for funding, the Agency will follow the construction planning and performing development regulation at 7 CFR. 4280.125.

Applicants should note that while a letter from a community leader is not required for a complete application, it is required for the application to receive a score in the Community Support section (15 points).

3.3 SUBMITTED APPLICATION QUALIFICATION

Your application **will not be considered for funding** if it is:

- Received by Grants.gov after the submission deadline.
- Submitted via any method other than through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov).

- Submitted to the wrong grant program.
- Not responsive to the requirements of this RFA (eligibility, incomplete application, not providing all required documents, etc. as required in Sec. 3.2).

3.4 SUBMISSION DATE AND TIME

Applications must be submitted electronically through Grants.gov. Ensure that all components of the application are complete before submission. Allow enough time for the application process, as it may take more than one attempt before your application is successfully submitted. RBCS encourages you to submit your application at least two weeks prior to the application deadline to ensure all certifications and registrations are met.

Only applications submitted and validated by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on April 11, 2022, on [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) will be accepted.

3.5 INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW

This program is not subject to [Executive Order 12372](#), which requires intergovernmental consultation with state and local officials.

3.6 FUNDING RESTRICTIONS

All RBCS awards are subject to the terms and conditions, cost principles, and other considerations described in the Financial Assistance Agreement.

Grant funds may not be used for the following:

- Pay costs that have been or will be reimbursed by a third party.
- Pay costs incurred prior to the date the Financial Assistance Agreement is executed. Reimbursement for expenses incurred 90 days prior to award may be allowed with Agency approval.
- Pay for indirect project costs.
- Pay costs that support or oppose union organizing.
- Pay costs associated with conducting research and development.
- Support an application (project) that has a proposed period of performance longer than 48 months.
- Support an application (project) that has a grant request exceeding \$25 million or exceeding 20% of project costs, whichever is less.

Applicants that have questions concerning the allowability of costs after reviewing this section should contact RD staff using the contact information listed under **6.0 Agency Contact**.

3.7 GRANTS.GOV APPLICATION SUBMISSION AND RECEIPT PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS

3.7.1 HOW TO REGISTER TO APPLY THROUGH GRANTS.GOV

The registration process can take **up to four weeks** to complete. Therefore, complete your registration allowing sufficient time to ensure it does not impact your ability to meet required application submission deadlines.

Instructions for organizations interested in applying for this grant funding opportunity can be found here: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html>

- 1) *Obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)*: All entities applying for funding, including renewal funding, must have a UEI. Instructions for obtaining the UEI are available at <https://sam.gov/content/entity-registration>. Applicants must enter the UEI number in the data entry field labeled "UEI" on the SF-424 form.
- 2) *Register with SAM*: In addition to having a UEI number, organizations applying online through Grants.gov must register with the [System for Award Management \(SAM\)](#). All organizations must register with SAM to apply online. Failure to register with SAM will prevent your organization from applying through Grants.gov. **SAM.gov accounts must be updated annually, and your organization must have an active SAM.gov account to submit your application to Grants.gov.**
- 3) *Create a Grants.gov Account*: The next step in the registration process is to [create an account with Grants.gov](#). Applicants must know their organization's UEI number to complete this process. Completing this process automatically triggers an email request for applicant roles to the organization's E-Business Point of Contact (EBiz POC) for review. The EBiz POC is a representative from your organization who is the contact listed for SAM. To apply for grants on behalf of your organization, you will need the Authorized Organization Role, as described in SAM.gov.
- 4) *Authorize Grants.gov Roles*: After creating an account on Grants.gov, the EBiz POC receives an email notifying him or her of your registration and request for roles. The EBiz POC will then log in to Grants.gov and [authorize the appropriate roles](#), which may include the Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) role, thereby giving you permission to complete and submit applications on behalf of the organization. You will be able to submit your application online any time after you have been approved as an AOR.
- 5) *Track Role Status*: After registering with Grants.gov and authorizing the applicant AOR, Grants.gov allows you [to track your status](#).
- 6) *Electronic Signature*: When applications are submitted through Grants.gov, the name of the organization's AOR that submitted the application is inserted into the signature line of the application, serving as the electronic signature. The EBiz POC **must** authorize individuals who are able to make legally binding commitments on behalf of the organization to act as an AOR; **this step is often missed, and it is crucial for valid and timely submissions.**

3.7.2 HOW TO SUBMIT AN APPLICATION TO RBCS VIA GRANTS.GOV

Applicants may use the Grants.gov Workspace, a shared, online environment where members of a grant team may simultaneously access and edit different webforms within an application. For each funding opportunity announcement, an applicant creates individual instances of a workspace.

- 1) *Create a Workspace*: This allows you to complete your Workspace online and route it through your organization for review before submitting.

- 2) *Complete a Workspace*: Add participants to the workspace, complete all the required forms, and check for errors before submission.
 - a. *Adobe Reader*: If you decide not to apply by filling out the webforms you can download individual PDF forms in Workspace so that they will appear similar to other Standard or RD forms. The individual PDF forms can be downloaded and saved to your local storage device, network drive(s), or external drives, then accessed through Adobe Reader.

NOTE: You may need to visit the Adobe Software Compatibility page on Grants.gov at <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility.html> to download the appropriate version of the software. There is no cost for Adobe Reader Software.

- b. *Mandatory Fields in Forms*: Fields marked with an asterisk and a different background color are mandatory fields you must complete to successfully submit your application.
 - c. *Complete SF-424 Fields First*: The forms are designed to fill in common required fields across other forms, such as the applicant name, address, and UEI number. To trigger this feature, an applicant must complete the SF-424 information first. Once it is completed, the information will transfer to the other forms.
- 3) *Submit a Workspace*: Submit your application through Workspace by clicking the Sign and Submit button on the Manage Workspace page, under the Forms tab. Grants.gov recommends submitting your application package **at least 24-48 hours prior to the application deadline** to provide you with time to correct any potential technical issues that may prevent application submission.

SPECIAL NOTE: Grants.gov **does not** check for RBCS's required attachments. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all required attachments listed in Section 4 3.2 are included.

- 4) *Track a Workspace*: After successfully submitting a workspace package, Grants.gov automatically assigns a Tracking Number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) to the package, which will be listed on the Confirmation page generated after submission.

Applicant Support: Grants.gov provides additional [training resources, including video tutorials](#). Applicants may also call the 24/7 toll-free support number 1-800-518-4726, or email support@grants.gov. Grants.gov will issue a ticket number to which you and Grants.gov can refer to if the issue is not resolved. For questions related to the specific grant opportunity, contact the individuals mentioned in section [6.0 Agency Contacts](#).

3.7.3 TIMELY RECEIPT REQUIREMENTS AND PROOF OF TIMELY SUBMISSION

All applications must be received by the due date established in section 3.4. Proof of timely submission is automatically recorded by Grants.gov using an electronic date/time stamp generated when the application is successfully received by Grants.gov. The applicant AOR will then receive an acknowledgement of receipt and a tracking number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) from Grants.gov. Applicant AORs will also receive the official date/time stamp and Grants.gov tracking number in an email serving as proof of their timely submission.

When RBCS successfully retrieves the application from Grants.gov, and acknowledges the download of submissions, Grants.gov will electronically acknowledge receipt of the application to the applicant AOR's

email address. Applications will be deemed to have been received at the date and time that Grants.gov receives your application.

RBCS will not accept application packages by fax, email, or postal mail. Applications received by Grants.gov after the established due date for the program will be considered late and will not be considered for funding by RBCS.

Special Note for Applicants with Slow Internet Connections. Applicants using slow internet, such as dial-up connections, may experience significantly longer transmission times when submitting applications via Grants.gov, especially if there are large attachments contained in the upload. Again, Grants.gov will provide either an error message or a successfully received transmission notification via email to the applicant AOR.

3.7.4 TIPS FOR APPLICANTS

- Register and submit applications early. **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE DAY OF THE APPLICATION DEADLINE.**
- Thoroughly read this RFA and follow all instructions provided by RBCS.
- Make sure you have the most recent copy of Adobe Reader installed on your computer and that it is compatible with [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) software. Grants.gov supports Adobe Reader version 9.0.0 and higher.
 - o Limit Application File Size/ File Name Characters (50 or less).
 - o When uploading attachments, click the “Add Attachments” button (do NOT use the “paperclip” icon in Adobe Reader).
- Do not password-protect your documents and make sure all tracked-changes are “accepted”.
- Avoid Special Characters in File Names (\$, %, &, *, Spanish "ñ", etc.).
- Input the correct UEI number on the SF-424 cover page.
- Review the Grants.gov Applicant User and Registration Guides:
<http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-faqs.html>
<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/workspace-overview.html>.

4.0 APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

4.1 PROJECT EVALUATION CRITERIA

Each complete and eligible application will be evaluated based on the scoring criteria below.

Applications will be scored first based on the four core categories and summed for total points. The maximum number of points for the four core categories is 100 points for construction projects and 90 points for other projects. Total points scored will be divided by the number of points available for the project type (100 for construction and 90 for others) to derive a percentage. The percentage will be multiplied by 100 to determine a total score for the four core categories. Any awarded discretionary points will be added to the total score to generate the final score.

The most competitive applications will describe project objectives that align with MPPEP goals as described under section 1.2 and expected outcomes and measures of success for the project. Failure to address all or part of a criterion, or to insufficiently communicate relevant project information, will result in a lower score.

As part of a complete application, applicants are required to provide a narrative describing their project. The application narrative will be scored against the four categories of evaluation criteria described below:

- Financial Viability, Technical Feasibility, and Readiness.
- Market Impact and Opportunities.
- Community Impact and Support.
- Labor and Workforce Personnel.

More points will be awarded to applications that address how the project will support the goals of the Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program in their response to each category of criteria.

The MPPEP website will include links to any technical assistance services offered by the Agricultural Marketing Service, as available.

1. Financial Viability, Technical Feasibility and Readiness: Up to 40 points.

Applicants must describe their proposed project and how the plant will achieve financial viability, technical feasibility, and readiness. Applicants may include but are not limited to describing their project workplan, budget, financing, and other documentation that describes the feasibility study supporting the project, market analysis that describes relevant facility market concerns, description of value to be added to products from the facility, and cost and availability of inputs to be utilized at the facility. Higher points will be awarded to applicants that include related documentation. To achieve the highest possible points available under this category, applicants should thoroughly address and provide documentation in support of the following factors:

- a. Income and expense projections for at least three years after project completion.
- b. Anticipated debt service ratio as a percentage of gross anticipated income.
- c. Data to demonstrate product demand and reliability of supply for financial feasibility (including consideration of competing facilities).

- d. Data that will inform applicant's ability to achieve operational sustainability.
- e. Identification of major risks (e.g., product recall, labor risks, access to operating capital risk, and other legal risks) and appropriate risk mitigation strategies.
- f. Whether the plant is located within a state jurisdiction or a tribal jurisdiction.
- g. Strategies for managing water quality and offal and solid waste, including whether the applicant has the appropriate zoning permits and whether water supply and utility connections are in place or underway.
- h. Relative maturity of the project type including milestones completed such as acquisition of real estate, applicable permits, and/or outreach to local, state, tribal, and Federal partners.
- i. Financing, both confirmed and preliminary, committed to the project.
 - i. Whether the applicant has commitments for securing cash flow/operating capital to pay workers and ensure ongoing non-employee related operating capital access.
 - ii. How the funding requested in this application would contribute to or complete the project capital stack.
- j. Whether the applicant has existing relationships with food science and meat science professionals and/or has already contacted their respective inspection agency (FSIS or state MPI (Meat and Poultry Inspection program, as applicable).
- k. A summary of the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) plan or discussion of HACCP plan development status.
- l. Other general economic conditions relative to the project.
- m. Whether the applicant is planning an adjoining feedlot, if applicable.
- n. Whether the applicant has plans for further expansion.
- o. Any additional information the applicant wishes to provide that contributes to supporting the technical feasibility and financial viability of the project.

2. Market Impact & Opportunities: Up to 20 points.

Applicants must describe how they are planning to procure animals and provide more opportunities for producers relative to the existing processing opportunities in their area from which they are procuring animals and to relevant improvements in market access. Applicants must describe commitments from producers, end users, and potential buyers. Additionally, proposals will be scored based on the degree that they demonstrate their project will drive economic activity in the area of animal procurement and product sale and incorporate project design that utilizes ownership models that support worker, producer, or consumer needs. Higher points will be awarded to applications that document support for price transparency, producer profitability, and

value-added production as well as commitments from producers, or consumers, end users, and potential buyers. Applicants should address the following criteria:

- a. Plan and mechanisms for animal or input procurement, including but not limited to the frequency of procurement.
 - i. For facilities purchasing livestock or poultry, the narrative will include estimated purchase types and volumes (cash, formula, forward contract, negotiated grid, etc.).
 - ii. For facilities that own livestock or poultry, the narrative will also include a general description of any production contract terms for the livestock or poultry.
 - iii. For facilities that provide fee-for-service processing to producers, the narrative will outline the services provided with estimated prices and anticipated volumes.
 - iv. For facilities that only provide Further Processing without slaughter, the narrative will include the plan for sourcing inputs from independently owned processors and the percentage of inputs that will be sourced from such processors.
- b. Discuss the current or anticipated number of producers involved in the project, as appropriate.
- c. Discuss potential for confirmed commitments relative to initial opening operational capacity (expressed as a percentage) and the projected timeline for reaching full maximum operating capacity (as applicable).
- d. Discuss current or prospective end-user commitments, including potential or identified markets (domestic or international), and the potential amount of output to be sold.
- e. To the extent applicable, discuss current or prospective commitments for the sourcing of inputs for further processing from independent processors and if known, the volume of potential commitments relative to operational capacity (expressed as a percentage).
- f. The anticipated geographic region from which the applicant will source input and market products and/or services.
- g. Contingency plan for loss of inputs or markets.
- h. Whether the operation is a cooperative business model or otherwise shares profits or ownership with consumers, producers, or workers, if applicable.
- i. Description of any other market concerns to be addressed and/or opportunities achieved should the project be selected for funding.

- j. Applicants must indicate whether or not they are among the top four processors in beef, pork, chicken, or turkey.

3. **Community Impact & Support: Up to 15 points.**

Applicants must describe the community impact and support of their proposed project as well as any strategies to generate community support. Discussion should include direct or indirect commitments of support from producers (and other processors serving as suppliers for projects that involve further processing), end users, potential buyers, community leaders, and other stakeholders. Applicants should also include information about commitments (financial or otherwise) provided by other Federal, tribal, state, or local governments, either directly or indirectly. Commitments or contributions from other third parties should also be discussed. In order to receive any points for this section, applicants must also provide a letter of support from state, local, or tribal leadership where the proposed startup or expansion activities will take place. A resolution of support is **required** for projects on tribal lands, from the governing body of the tribe with jurisdiction over that land, if the applicant is not the Tribe nor an entity owned or operated by that tribe. Higher points will be awarded to applications that describe the sustained community impact of their project and describe any strategies, planned or in process, to attain and maintain community support, and provide letters of support.

- a. The applicant must submit at least one letter of support from state, local, or tribal leadership, or zero points will be awarded under this criterion. Qualifying leaders may include but are not limited to state government officials, local government officials, and tribal government officials. Additional letters of support from relevant local and regional stakeholders may include but are not limited to economic development organizations, associations of agricultural producers, labor unions, institutions of higher education, and state, local, and tribal governments. Applications will not be scored under this section without at least one letter of support from community leadership where the proposed startup or expansion activities will take place. All letters should include the following:
 - i. Identify the stakeholder producing the letter and their connection to the project activities,
 - ii. Describe the sustained community impact that will be supported by the proposed startup or expansion activities to be carried out under the grant, and
 - iii. Provide further information relative to the project's impact on the long-term needs and goals of the community.

- b. The applicant should address the community impact and support of their proposed project and describe any strategies to generate community support.

4. **Labor/Workforce/Personnel**

The Biden-Harris administration is committed to principles that support worker empowerment and commitments to well-paying jobs, the free and fair choice to join a union, greater job security, safe and healthy workplaces, essential benefits like health insurance and retirement plans, and protections from workplace harassment and other forms of discrimination for workers across the country. Applicants must describe key personnel involved with the facility, construction personnel engaged with the facility, and operations personnel to be hired or currently employed by the project applicant:

- a. **Key Personnel - Up to 5 points**

Applications will be scored on the basis of how key personnel will contribute to the likelihood of project success, including but not limited to their leadership's qualifications, training, and experience. Experience of key personnel will be assessed in relation to the scale of the plant and the type of the operation. Higher points will be awarded to applicants that thoroughly describe in narrative and provide resumes and other documentation to support the following criteria:

- i. Roles and relevant qualifications of owners, staff, contractors, consultants, or new hires performing tasks included in the workplan
- ii. Project leaders, individuals identified by name who will be responsible for managing and completing the proposed tasks in the work plan; and
- iii. Commitment, qualifications, role, and the availability of any consultants or other professionals who will be hired for the project.

- b. **Construction Labor (if applicable) - Up to 10 points**

Applicants will be scored based on the construction labor standards upheld by contractors and subcontractors. Higher points will be awarded to applicants that thoroughly describe in narrative and provide documentation to support the criteria below, if available. (Projects not involving construction will not be penalized for not addressing this section.)

- i. Whether and, if so, how the construction project will incorporate labor standards referenced herein, including whether workers (including employees of contractors and subcontractors) will be paid wages at or above the prevailing rate.
- ii. Whether the project construction firm will be under a project labor agreement, either with the construction company or with the applicant.

- iii. What safety training, professional certifications, in-house training and/or licensure will be provided and required of construction workers (including contractors and subcontractors).
- iv. Whether a locally-based construction workforce will be used.
- v. For projects that propose to build on tribal lands, whether the applicant, its contractors, or subcontractors will follow tribal laws such as tribal employment rights ordinances.

c. Operational Workforce: Up to 10 points

Applicants will be scored on the basis of the labor standards that the applicant plans to maintain as well as the wages, benefits, and other opportunities offered to workers. Applicants will also be scored on their strategy for workforce recruitment, training, and retention; higher points will be awarded to applicants whose narrative addresses how the strategy contributes to the overall viability of the project. Higher points will be awarded to applicants with a staffing plan that includes analysis of the local job market and that thoroughly address and, if available, provide documentation to support the following criteria:

- i. Plan for compensation, benefits, and employee ownership opportunities (if appropriate) that will be offered to workers.
 - (a) Whether the project operates under or will operate under a collective bargaining agreement.
 - (b) Whether the project operates under or will operate under a worker safety agreement.
- ii. Strategy for workforce recruitment, training, and retention.
- iii. Availability of professional certification, credentials, and other training or opportunities for career advancement.
- iv. What safety training, professional certifications, in-house training and/or licensure will be provided and required of workers (including contractors and subcontractors).

5. Discretionary Points – Up to 15 points

During Administrative Agency Review, discretionary points may be assigned by the RBCS Administrator for projects to maximize diversity among awards on the basis of geography (including those located in underserved communities), operation size, species, ownership, and business model.

4.2 REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

Step 1: Initial Qualification Screening.

Each application is initially reviewed for overall completeness, as well as compliance with eligibility and program requirements as set forth in this RFA. If an application does not meet these requirements, it is removed from consideration.

Step 2: Panel Review.

Each application that passes initial screening (Step 1) is evaluated by a panel of independent reviewers. Each reviewer signs a conflict of interest and confidentiality agreement regarding any assigned proposals. The review panel evaluates their assigned proposals using instructions prepared by USDA/RBCS officials. Individual reviewers confer with other team members to derive a consensus score. The consensus review serves as the basis for awarding and allocating grant funds and focuses on strengths and weaknesses of each proposal.

Step 3: Agency Review.

RBCS will conduct a final administrative evaluation of top rankings and recommendations. In addition to the rank and scores, RBCS reviews each application to ensure that potential recommended projects align with the scope, allowability of budget items, available funding, geographic diversity, and USDA priorities. RBCS staff will work with top-ranked applicants to negotiate any revisions as necessary. RBCS will also assess an organization's ability to account for the use of Federal funds and monitor the performance associated with these monies using the guidance provided by 2 CFR § 200.206.

Step 4: Ranking of Applications.

RBCS will rank complete and eligible applications based on their scores with higher scoring applications receiving first consideration.

Step 5: Funding selected applications.

As applications are funded, if insufficient funds remain to fund the next highest scoring application, the Agency may elect to fund a lower scoring application. Before this occurs, the Agency will provide the applicant of the higher scoring application the opportunity to reduce the amount of the applicant's grant request to the amount of funds available. If the applicant agrees to lower its grant request, the applicant must certify that the purposes of the project will be met and provide the remaining total funds needed to complete the project.

If two or more applications score the same and if remaining funds are insufficient to fund each such application, the Agency will notify the applicants that they may accept a proportional amount of funds. The applicants must certify that the purposes of the project will be met and provide the remaining total funds needed to complete the project if they accept a proportional amount.

At its discretion, the Agency may also elect to allow any remaining funds to be carried over to the next fiscal year rather than selecting a lower scoring application.

5.0 AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

5.1 AWARD NOTICES

Successful applicants will receive a signed notice of Federal award, containing instructions on requirements necessary to proceed with execution and performance of the award.

5.2 UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified in writing and informed of any review and appeal rights in accordance with the National Appeals Division regulation at 7 CFR part 11. For feedback, RBCS will provide unsuccessful applicants with a summary of the anonymous review panel consensus comments regarding their proposals. Funding of successfully appealed applications will be limited to available funding.

5.3 ADMINISTRATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS

Additional requirements that apply to recipients selected for this program can be found in the Grants and Agreements regulations of the Department of Agriculture codified in 2 CFR parts 180, 400, 415, 417, 418, 421; 2 CFR parts 25 and 170; and 48 CFR 31.2, and successor regulations to these parts.

All recipients of Federal financial assistance are required to report information about first-tier sub-awards and executive compensation (see 2 CFR part 170). The recipient must have the necessary processes and systems in place to comply with the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 (Pub. L. 109-282) reporting requirements (see 2 CFR 170.200(b), unless exempt under 2 CFR 170.110(b)).

All grants made under this RFA are subject to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as required by the USDA (7 CFR part 15, subpart A) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

5.4 REPORTING REQUIREMENTS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Project Performance/Reporting.

After grant approval and through grant completion, you will be required to provide the following, as indicated in the Financial Assistance Agreement:

(a) A SF-425, "Federal Financial Report," and a project performance report will be required on a semiannual basis (due 30 working days after end of the semiannual period). For the purposes of this grant, semiannual periods end on March 31st and September 30th. The project performance reports shall include the elements prescribed in the Financial Assistance Agreement, including, as appropriate,

but not limited to shackle space added, processing capacity added, new value-added products developed, and jobs created.

(b) A final project and financial status report within 120 days after the expiration or termination of the grant.

(c) Outcome project performance reports and final deliverables.

Awardees must comply with FSIS or CIS officials as required to attain and maintain inspection status. The Agency will conduct onsite reviews more frequently during construction and at least annually for all projects during the period of performance.

Real property must be used for the originally authorized purpose of the grant award. Recipients must not dispose of or encumber its title or other interests as long as it is being used for the originally authorized purpose. RBCS must be notified if a sale or change of total or partial ownership of the facility is under consideration. RBCS will issue disposition instruction in accordance with 2 CFR 200.311 and the recipient may be expected to return a proportional amount of funds received from the sale or change of total or partial ownership.

If the facility is going to be sold or undergo a change of total or partial ownership within ten years after receiving the grant, the awardee will notify USDA and the sale will be subject to USDA review to determine if the sale or change of total or partial ownership is consistent with the purposes of the program. The review could require partial return of grant funds or other actions.

Applicants are advised that the use of grant funding through MPPEP is subject to 2 CFR 200.313 (Equipment), which relates to disposition of property and the prohibition of the encumbrance of property without agency approval.

6.0 AGENCY CONTACTS

6.1 PROGRAMMATIC QUESTIONS

After closely reviewing this RFA in its entirety, applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact the MPPEP staff listed below or at mppep@usda.gov.

For additional information, please visit the MPPEP Website: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/mppep>.

6.2 TEAM LEAD AND GRANTS MANAGEMENT SPECIALISTS

Name: Mark Brodziski
Address: U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW.
Room 5803-S, Stop 3201
Washington, DC 20250-3201
Phone: (202) 205-0903
E-Mail: mppep@usda.gov

6.3 AVAILABLE RESOURCES

RBCS provides resources and information on its <https://www.rd.usda.gov/mppep> that may be helpful to applicants, including Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's), required application forms and Agency contact information. Staff is available to provide timely responses to questions emailed to mppep@usda.gov.

6.4 ADDRESS

U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW.
Room 5803-S, Stop 3201
Washington, DC 20250-3201

6.5 GRANTS.GOV QUESTIONS

All questions regarding Grants.gov technical assistance must be directed to Grants.gov's Applicant Support portal at <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/support.html>.

7.0 OTHER INFORMATION

7.1 DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this program, the following definitions will apply:

Agency. The Rural Business—Cooperative Service or successor Agency assigned by the Secretary of Agriculture to administer the Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program.

Amenable Species. Amenable Species are: a) Livestock products amenable to the FMIA are prepared from cattle, sheep, swine, goats, horses, mules and other equines, and fish of the order Siluriformes. However, the slaughter of horses and other equines is effectively prohibited by the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 Pub. L. 116-260. and b) Poultry products amenable to the PPIA are prepared

from any domesticated bird, including chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese, guineas, ratites, or squabs, whether live or dead.

Complete application. An application that contains all parts necessary for the Agency to determine applicant and project eligibility, and the financial feasibility and technical merit of the project and contains sufficient information to determine a priority score for the application as determined by the Agency.

Cooperative. An entity that is legally chartered by the State or Tribe in which it operates as a cooperatively operated business, or an entity that is not legally chartered as a cooperative but is owned and operated for the benefit of its members, with returns of residual earnings paid to such members on the basis of patronage.

Cooperative Interstate Shipment (CIS) Compliance. The USDA program that allows state-inspected plants to operate as federally-inspected facilities, under specific conditions, and ship their product in interstate commerce and may provide the opportunity to export the product to foreign countries, provided the CIS participating State has entered into a supplemental agreement that addresses the export of CIS inspected products.

Domestically owned. An entity organized in the United States under the law of the State, the states, or under Tribal jurisdiction where the entity operates, and a majority of the entity is owned by members meeting the citizenship test.

Facility. A single meat or poultry processing plant designed, built, equipped, etc., for Primary and/or Further Processing of Meat or Poultry.

Feasibility study. A report including an opinion or finding conducted by a qualified consultant(s) evaluating the economic, market, technical, financial, and management feasibility of a proposed project or operation in terms of its expectation for success.

Financial Assistance Agreement. Form RD 4280-2, Rural Business-Cooperative Service Financial Assistance Agreement or successor form, and is an agreement between the Agency and the recipient setting forth the provisions under which the grant will be administered.

Further processing. Smoking, cooking, canning, curing, refining, or rendering in an official establishment of product previously prepared in official establishments, as defined in 9 CFR 301.2.

Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points. A management system in which food safety is addressed through the analysis and control of biological, chemical, and physical hazards from raw material

production, procurement and handling, to manufacturing, distribution and consumption of the finished product.

Independently Owned and Operated. Not influenced or controlled by others in matters of opinion, conduct, etc. and not subject to another's authority or jurisdiction.

Meat. Species amenable to USDA inspection including cattle, sheep, swine, goats, Siluriformes (catfish), and equine. Also, nonamenable species eligible for voluntary inspection including exotic species as described in 9 CFR part 352 and rabbit as described in 9 CFR part 354.

National Appeals Division. A division of the United States Department of Agriculture as described in 7 CFR part 11.

Poultry. Species amenable to USDA inspection including chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese, guineas, ratites, squabs (young pigeons). Also, nonamenable species subject to voluntary inspection, including migratory waterfowl and game birds as described in 9 CFR part 362.

Primary processing. Slaughter of an animal in an official establishment for the purpose of eventual human consumption.

Processing. Slaughter and further processing as defined in 9 CFR 301.2

Program. Program means the Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program authorized by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 and administered by the Agency.

Public Body. A state, municipality, county, or other political subdivision of a State; a special purpose district; a Tribe; or an organization controlled by any of the above.

Qualified Consultant. An independent third-party person possessing the knowledge, expertise, and experience to perform the specific task required.

Socially disadvantaged group. A group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities.

State. Any of the 50 States of the United States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Republic of Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Tribe. Tribe means the term as defined in the Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act of 1994 (Public Law 103-454; 108 Stat. 4791, 4792).

Value-added. The incremental profit earned from each transaction or step in manufacture after deducting production costs, depreciation, and other relevant expenses. Each stage of production or ownership transfer typically adds value to a good, product, or service.

Veteran. A veteran is a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service and was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable as defined in 38 U.S.C. 101(2).

Work Plan. A narrative provided by the applicant that demonstrates the feasibility of the proposed project and facility to meet the objectives of the MPPEP program, including a set of goals, strategies, anticipated outcomes, and well-developed targeting criteria for doing so.

7.2 NON-DISCRIMINATION AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY STATEMENTS

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, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, 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.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language) should contact the responsible Mission Area, agency, or staff office; the USDA TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY); or the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, *USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form*, which can be obtained online at <https://www.ocio.usda.gov/document/ad-3027>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

(1) Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights

1400 Independence Avenue, SW

Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or

(2) Fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or

(3) Email: program.intake@usda.gov

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

7.3 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUESTS

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) of 1966 ([5 U.S.C. § 552](#)) and the Privacy Act of 1974 ([5 U.S.C. § 552a](#)), as implemented by USDA's regulations ([7 CFR](#) Part 1, Subpart A), govern the release or withholding of information to the public in connection with this Federal award. The release of information under these laws and regulations applies only to records held by RD and imposes no requirement on the recipient or any subrecipient to permit or deny public access to their records.

FOIA requests for records relating to this Federal award may be directed to USDA, USDA Rural Development Business Center, Records and Information Management Branch, Room 0706-S, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-0706, Telephone: (202) 720-2826; or email: RD.FOIA@usda.gov.

7.4 PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. § 3501 et seq), an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0570-NEW. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 2.3 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering, and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information.

7.5 CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW ACT

Pursuant to Subtitle E of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996 (also known as the Congressional Review Act or CRA), 5 U.S.C. 801 et seq., the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs in the Office of Management and Budget designated this action as a major rule, as defined by 5 U.S.C. 804(2), because it is likely to result in an annual effect on the economy of \$100,000,000 or more. Accordingly, there is a 60-day delay in the effective date of this action. Application selection will not begin until after April 25, 2022. Therefore, the 60-day delay required by

the CRA is not expected to have a material impact upon the administration and/or implementation of the program.

7.6 EXECUTIVE ORDER (EO) 13175 CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION WITH INDIAN TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS

On January 27, 2022, USDA hosted a tribal consultation and listening session focused on Creating a Tribal Action Plan for Fairer Meat, Poultry and Seafood Processing. The consultation and listening session was conducted virtually and hosted by USDA's Office of Tribal Relations and the Office of the General Counsel. Consulting officials from USDA Rural Development and the Market and Regulatory Programs participated to hear concerns and input from elected tribal leaders, their proxies and tribal organizations. There was robust participation and dialogue. Tribes shared plans, strategies and concerns regarding regional intertribal collaboration, small, community scaled processing, limiting environmental impacts, mobile meat processing, and, processing bison, seafood and other traditional sources of meat proteins, among other commentary. To the extent allowable and practicable that input was taken into consideration in the drafting of this request for applications. Additionally, the comments and perspectives shared through the consultation and listening session will be taken into consideration in future funding opportunities and rulemaking.