

2022 SUPPORTING STATEMENT
for
USDA Regional Food Business Centers – The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021
(Pub. L. 116-260)
OMB No. 0581-NEW

NOTE TO REVIEWER:

We are requesting review and approval of a new information collection. A burden is being imposed on eligible universities, non-profit organizations, state agencies, and other eligible entities for the collection of reporting requirements under Division N, Title VII, subtitle B, section 751 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, signed into law on December 27th, 2020.

USDA is allocating \$360 million for this new Regional Food Business Center Program. Given the immense need for supply chain coordination and technical assistance, we request approval of the information collection, so that the Department can announce the Request for Applications (RFA) by late June and allocate the funds as soon as possible to support supply chain resilience and local and regional food systems stakeholders who were immensely impacted by the market disruptions of the pandemic.

A. Justification.

1. EXPLAIN THE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT MAKE THE COLLECTION OF INFORMATION NECESSARY. IDENTIFY ANY LEGAL OR ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS THAT NECESSITATE THE COLLECTION.

The information collection requirements in this request are needed for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) to administer a new competitive cooperative agreement program, entitled the Regional Food Business Center Program, under its Transportation and Marketing Program and in accordance with the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Super Circular) (2 CFR part 200).

The Regional Food Business Center Program is authorized and funded by the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 in response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic to respond to coronavirus, including activities to support small- to mid-sized producers, processors, and distributors that sell into all types of markets, including local and regional markets. The COVID-19 pandemic and associated public health mandates caused unprecedented shifts and disruptions in United States (U.S.) food systems. Impacts on farm enterprises, value chain stakeholders, market channels, and food system infrastructure were both vast and varied. The Regional Food Business Centers will support producers and small food businesses by providing localized assistance to access local and regional supply chains, including linking producers to wholesalers and distributors. The Regional Food Business Centers will also provide technical assistance needed to access new markets, particularly in food deserts, and to access to federal, state, and local resources, thereby closing the gaps or barriers to market

access and increasing competition. In short, these Regional Food Business Centers will work to expand access and create linkages to small and mid-sized producers to assist in overcoming barriers faced by many producers, particularly socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.

The legal authority and administrative requirements to carry out the new grant program in this request is as follows:

The Regional Food Business Center Program is authorized pursuant to the authority of Division N, Title VII, subtitle B, Section 751 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 (Pub. L. No. 116-260) in response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Partnerships of two or more of these entities are eligible applicants: Institutions of higher education, state agencies, tribal governments, economic development corporations, and nonprofit organizations. No cost sharing or matching funds are required. All awards are subject to the terms and conditions, cost principles, and other considerations described in the signed cooperative agreement.

2. INDICATE HOW, BY WHOM, AND FOR WHAT PURPOSE THE INFORMATION IS TO BE USED. EXCEPT FOR A NEW COLLECTION, INDICATE THE ACTUAL USE THE AGENCY HAS MADE OF THE INFORMATION RECEIVED FROM THE CURRENT COLLECTION.

The Regional Food Business Center Program is voluntary and respondents will apply for this specific competitive cooperative agreement program. In doing so, they provide information, and AMS is the primary user of the information.

The information collected is needed to certify that cooperators are complying with applicable program regulations, and the data collected is the minimum information necessary to effectively carry out the program requirements. The information collection requirements in this request are essential to carry out the intent of section 751 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, to provide the respondents the type of service they request, and for AMS to administer this program.

Applicants must have a Unique Entity ID which will be issued by the System for Award Management (SAM.gov).

A small number of forms are specific to this competitive grant program. These forms may have specific programmatic dates, data elements and other information required for this specific grant program. For these reasons, the formatting of this collection lists forms grouped into two subtitles: 1) Standardized Forms for All AMS Financial Assistance Programs; and 2) Competitive AMS Cooperative Agreement Program Forms: Regional Food Business Centers Only.

STANDARDIZED FORMS FOR ALL AMS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

The following forms are used by all AMS financial assistance programs (approved under OMB No. 0581-0240) including the Regional Food Business Centers and the responses and burden for each are entered on the AMS-71 under the subtitle “Standardized Forms for All AMS Grant Programs” as one-line entry for Regional Food Business Centers only.

- a. **Request for Application (RFA) (Reading)** is an announcement and guidance documentation published by AMS that contains information regarding how to complete a grant application package, along with a public notice of funds. The Request for Application Announcement and Program Guidelines will be revised annually, or as needed, and posted with the application announcement at Grants.gov and on the AMS website at www.ams.usda.gov as soon as the Agency announces that it is accepting applications. While this document is not signed, applicants must read and utilize this document to prepare their application, review which items are allowable, and understand the terms and conditions of the grant award. Certain sections of these forms are uniform for every financial assistance program, and while specific programmatic dates and other information varies, this does not affect the underlying Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) burden.
- b. **SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance (approved under OMB No. 4040-0004)** is completed when the participants apply for the program. The information will be used by AMS to determine applicant eligibility for participation in the program. The information can be obtained electronically and is required to be collected electronically through Grants.gov. (Responses and burden will be submitted to OMB No. 4040-0004.)
- c. **Notice of Award and Agreement (approved under OMB No. 0581-0240)** will be entered into by the recipient and AMS after award of a cooperative agreement. The agreement will be read, and one copy is required to be signed by the recipient and returned to AMS. This information will be used by AMS to certify that cooperators are complying with applicable program regulations. The agreements require an original signature and will be collected electronically. AMS is submitting one form as an example that is representative of what all AMS financial assistance programs use.
- d. **SF-270 Request for Advance or Reimbursement (approved under OMB No. 4040-0012)** is completed whenever the recipient requests an advance or reimbursement of cooperative agreement funds. The information will be used by AMS to make and keep track of advances and disbursements. The information can be obtained electronically and is collected electronically in GrantSolutions. (Responses and burden will be submitted to OMB No. 4040-0012.)
- e. **SF-425 Federal Financial Report** is completed quarterly alongside the SF-270 and outlines expenditures from that quarter. The

information is submitted electronically in GrantSolutions. (Responses and burden will be submitted to OMB No. 4040-0012.)

- f. **AMS General Terms and Conditions (Reading)** is a document published by AMS setting forth recipient compliance with terms and conditions of the award and all Federal grant regulations and administrative requirements including 2 CFR part 200. The document also includes recipient assurances and certifications with the incoming application submission; changes in project contacts, leaders, managers, and staff; cost principles; actions that need prior approval; performance monitoring; reporting requirements; and payment requirements. The AMS General Terms and Conditions does not require a signature and may be updated annually to reflect mandatory additions and other changes made by regulatory or OMB requirements. Certain sections of these forms are uniform for every grant program, and while specific programmatic dates and other information varies, this does not affect the underlying PRA burden. This document is available on the AMS website at www.ams.usda.gov. AMS is submitting one form as an example that is representative of what all AMS Grant Programs use.
- g. **Accounting System and Financial Capability Questionnaire** is completed by recipients and used by AMS to evaluate the recipient's accounting system to ensure the system will allow for the adequate, appropriate, and transparent use of Federal funds. Recipients of Federal funds must maintain an adequate accounting system that meets the criteria outlined in 2 CFR part 200's Standards for Financial and Program Management. The questionnaire is available at the AMS grants website.
- h. **AMS Grant Programs Worksheet** is submitted along with each SF-270 request to document the details of requested reimbursed costs shown on the SF-270. The data provided on the Worksheet enables AMS to ensure that the requested reimbursements were part of the approved project budget, and to assess if the project is on track with the approved timeline. The worksheet collects the Grant Agreement Number; Recipient Organization; Recipient Contact; Time Period of the Request; Payee name; Date of Expense; Amount; Assigned Budget Category; and any Notes to explain the expense. The Worksheet is available at the AMS grants website.
- i. **Recordkeeping** is required by AMS for recipients and subrecipients to maintain all records pertaining to the agreement for a period of 3 years after the final financial report has been submitted to AMS, in accordance with Federal recordkeeping regulations. This requirement is provided in 2 CFR § 200.334 and the general award terms and conditions, which are published on the AMS website.

COMPETITIVE AMS COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT PROGRAM: The Regional Food Business Center Program ONLY

The following forms are used by Regional Food Business Centers and the responses and burden for each are entered on the AMS-71 to cover this program.

- a. **Semi-annual Performance Report** will be submitted no later than 30 calendar days after the performance period expiration date. AMS is submitting a document that shows the information that will be requested on a semi-annual basis.
- b. **Application** is completed one time when the eligible entity applies for a cooperative agreement. Required components of a grant application include a Project Narrative; Project Abstract; Letters of Commitment from Partner and Collaborator Organizations. The RFA published for each competitive program describes the specific grant application components, process and eligibility requirements in detail. **Applications must be submitted electronically through Grants.gov.**
- c. **Program-Specific Terms and Conditions (Reading)** is a document developed in addition to the AMS General Terms and Conditions. These terms and conditions specifically apply to the Regional Food Business Centers awards, due to the specific requirements of the program. In the event of an inconsistency between the AMS General Terms and Conditions and the Regional Food Business Centers program specific terms and conditions, this document will take precedence.
- d. **Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA)** is an agreement generated by the recipient in coordination with their cognizant agency for indirect costs to reflect an estimate of indirect cost rate negotiated between the Federal Government and a Grant Recipient organization which reflects the indirect costs (facilities and administrative costs) and fringe benefit expenses incurred by the organization that will be the same across all the agencies of the United States.

3. DESCRIBE WHETHER, AND TO WHAT EXTENT, THE COLLECTION OF INFORMATION INVOLVES THE USE OF AUTOMATED, ELECTRONIC, MECHANICAL, OR OTHER TECHNOLOGICAL COLLECTION TECHNIQUES OR OTHER FORMS OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, E.G. PERMITTING ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION OF RESPONSES, AND THE BASIS FOR THE DECISION FOR ADOPTING THIS MEANS OF COLLECTION. ALSO DESCRIBE ANY CONSIDERATION OF USING INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY TO REDUCE BURDEN.

AMS financial assistance programs typically employ several online systems (i.e., SAM.gov; Grants.gov; GrantSolutions.gov; and ezFedGrants.gov) to administer its programs from funding opportunity planning through award to grant closeout. These online systems allow grant management specialists, financial and budget staff, and award applicants and recipients to manage all aspects of their grants business and reporting electronically. This helps produce assured compliance with Federal government and agency standards, improves transparency and accountability, shortens processing timelines, and reduces time spent on administrative activities.

GrantSolutions is developing a financial assistance management software platform that will use the data elements from the Application for Federal Assistance (SF 424).

Applicants must have a Unique Entity ID issued by the System for Award Management (SAM.gov) registration.

Once award recipients are selected, AMS will work with GrantSolutions to process the awards using their Payment Management System. The system provides significant efficiencies to all users managing grant and agreement portfolios at AMS. The Notice of Award will be communicated from GrantSolutions and will mimic the Grant Agreement (AMS 33), which requires an original signature, can be signed and submitted electronically.

4. DESCRIBE EFFORTS TO IDENTIFY DUPLICATION. SHOW SPECIFICALLY WHY ANY SIMILAR INFORMATION ALREADY AVAILABLE CANNOT BE USED OR MODIFIED FOR USE FOR THE PURPOSE(S) DESCRIBED IN ITEM 2 ABOVE.

This program is not maintained by any other Agency; therefore, the requested information will not be available from any other existing records. There is no other program offering the same services to small- to mid-sized food and farm businesses.

5. IF THE COLLECTION OF INFORMATION IMPACTS SMALL BUSINESSES OR OTHER SMALL ENTITIES (ITEMS 5 OF THE OMB FORM 83-I), DESCRIBE THE METHODS USED TO MINIMIZE BURDEN.

The Regional Food Business Center Program is aiming to support small businesses as beneficiaries of the program, but not as the main cooperators.

The act of collecting information for Regional Food Business Centers will not have an adverse impact on small businesses or other small entities. In addition, the information is voluntarily collected from each applicant to receive cooperative agreement funds. To the extent that a small business is a beneficiary of the program, they deliver the same services as larger businesses and maintain similar information.

6. DESCRIBE THE CONSEQUENCE OF FEDERAL PROGRAM OR POLICY ACTIVITIES IF THE COLLECTION IS NOT CONDUCTED OR IS CONDUCTED LESS FREQUENTLY, AS WELL AS ANY TECHNICAL OR LEGAL OBSTACLES TO REDUCING BURDEN.

Regional Food Business Centers will provide financial and technical assistance to small- to mid-sized food businesses that are working to start, expand, or rebuild their businesses as the pandemic has disrupted markets.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 authorized the apportionment of \$360 million from fiscal year (FY) 2021 funds, which are available until expended. Without this collection of information, AMS will not be able to review applications, award funds to eligible entities, or monitor compliance with regulations and administration procedures of the program.

7. EXPLAIN ANY SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES THAT WOULD CAUSE AN INFORMATION COLLECTION TO BE CONDUCTED IN A MANNER:

- **REQUIRING RESPONDENTS TO REPORT INFORMATION TO THE AGENCY MORE OFTEN THAN QUARTERLY;**

Respondents are not required to report more than quarterly.

- **REQUIRING RESPONDENTS TO PREPARE A WRITTEN RESPONSE TO A COLLECTION OF INFORMATION IN FEWER THAN 30 DAYS AFTER RECEIPT OF IT;**

Respondents are not required to prepare a written response to a collection of information fewer than 30 days after receipt.

- **REQUIRING RESPONDENTS TO SUBMIT MORE THAN AN ORIGINAL AND TWO COPIES OF ANY DOCUMENT;**

Respondents are not required to submit more than an original and two copies of any document.

- **REQUIRING RESPONDENTS TO RETAIN RECORDS, OTHER THAN HEALTH, MEDICAL, GOVERNMENT CONTRACT, GRANT-IN-AID, OR TAX RECORDS FOR MORE THAN 3 YEARS;**

Respondents are not required to retain any records for more than 3 years. This is part of normal business practice.

- **IN CONNECTION WITH A STATISTICAL SURVEY, THAT IS NOT DESIGNED TO PRODUCE VALID AND RELIABLE RESULTS THAT CAN BE GENERALIZED TO THE UNIVERSE OF STUDY;**

The information collected will not be utilized in connection with a statistical survey.

- **REQUIRING THE USE OF A STATISTICAL DATA CLASSIFICATION THAT HAS NOT BEEN REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY OMB;**

There is no requirement for a statistical data classification.

- **THAT INCLUDES A PLEDGE OF CONFIDENTIALITY THAT IS NOT SUPPORTED BY AUTHORITY ESTABLISHED IN STATUE OR REGULATION, THAT IS NOT SUPPORTED BY DISCLOSURE AND DATA SECURITY POLICIES THAT ARE CONSISTENT WITH THE PLEDGE, OR WHICH UNNECESSARILY IMPEDES SHARING OF DATA WITH OTHER AGENCIES FOR COMPATIBLE CONFIDENTIAL USE; OR**

No confidential information is collected.

- **REQUIRING RESPONDENTS TO SUBMIT PROPRIETARY TRADE SECRET, OR OTHER CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION UNLESS THE AGENCY CAN DEMONSTRATE THAT IT HAS INSTITUTED PROCEDURES TO PROTECT THE INFORMATION'S CONFIDENTIALITY TO THE EXTENT PERMITTED BY LAW.**

Respondents are not required to submit proprietary trade secrets or other confidential information.

- 8. IF APPLICABLE, PROVIDE A COPY AND IDENTIFY THE DATE AND PAGE NUMBER OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER OF THE AGENCY'S NOTICE, REQUIRED BY 5 CFR 1320.8(d), SOLICITING COMMENTS ON THE INFORMATION COLLECTION PRIOR TO SUBMISSION TO OMB. SUMMARIZE PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED IN RESPONSE TO THAT NOTICE AND DESCRIBE ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE AGENCY IN RESPONSE TO THESE COMMENTS. SPECIFICALLY ADDRESS COMMENTS RECEIVED ON COST AND HOUR BURDEN.**

AMS is requesting approval from OMB for this new collection. The 60-day notice for public comment on this new information collection was submitted to the Federal Register for publication and it was posted on Friday, March 11, 2022 (Vol. 87, No. 48, page 13961). Two public comments were submitted. The first public comment discussed the importance of technical assistance providers and the importance of regional and national networks supporting supply chain resiliency and defining the roles of the regional networks. The second public comment was supportive of this information collection process to meet the needs of AMS and stated that the process was clear and not an undue burden for reporting. USDA reviewed both of these comments and determined they have both been addressed in the application.

DESCRIBE EFFORTS TO CONSULT WITH PERSONS OUTSIDE THE AGENCY TO OBTAIN THEIR VIEWS ON THE AVAILABILITY OF DATA, FREQUENCY OF COLLECTION, THE CLARITY OF INSTRUCTIONS AND RECORDKEEPING, DISCLOSURE, OR REPORTING FORMAT (IF ANY), AND ON THE DATA ELEMENTS TO BE RECORDED, DISCLOSED, OR REPORTED.

USDA has spent the past 9+ months gathering stakeholder feedback on this potential opportunity and engaged with over 50 stakeholder groups who provided input on program structure, application process and reporting requirements. As part of the stakeholder engagement plan, USDA gathered feedback through informal channels to inform the design of the Regional Food Business Centers. To facilitate these discussions, USDA provided stakeholders with a brief program summary and posed the following questions to gain relevant feedback and help support the development of the program. Stakeholder responses to the questions below helped AMS inform decisions as the Regional Food Business Centers program has been developed.

Questions for Consideration -- As we move this potential concept forward, we are interested in stakeholder feedback on the concept in general and specifically on the questions below:

- Are there clear partners to lead these centers that can manage the coordination and administrative roles?
- Do the key regional support organizations have relationships lenders (CDFIs, Development Finance Agencies, etc)? If not, what recommendations do you have to forge those partnerships?
- What are some ways we can ensure the centers are coordinating with all the relevant players?
- How can we make sure the Center design intentionally includes underserved communities from the outset?
- How do we ensure successful sharing and coordination across the centers?
- Are there metrics that you are already collecting that we can leverage in the evaluation of the Centers?
- What would an ideal regional breakdown for the centers look like?

In addition to these questions, USDA staff discussed issues informally at stakeholder meetings. Stakeholders provided feedback that they supported business technical assistance for producers, which would focus on market access and planning and complement services provided by other parts of USDA. Stakeholders provided feedback that smaller regions would provide more targeted support and that this opportunity could be more geographically specific instead of having to cover the entire country. Feedback also included the support of a tribal focused center based on the unique technical assistance needs of these communities.

USDA plans to provide technical assistance via webinars and in telephone conversations with applicants prior to the application deadline. USDA's role will also include substantial involvement and will provide assistance to recipients as they carry out their projects.

CONSULTATION WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THOSE FROM WHOM INFORMATION IS TO BE OBTAINED OR THOSE WHO MUST COMPILE RECORDS SHOULD OCCUR AT LEAST ONCE EVERY 3 YEARS – EVEN IF THE COLLECTION OF INFORMATION ACTIVITY IS THE SAME AS IN PRIOR

PERIODS. THERE MAY BE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT MAY PRECLUDE CONSULTATION IN A SPECIFIC SITUATION. THESE CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD BE EXPLAINED.

AMS cannot identify a circumstance that would preclude consultation with stakeholders.

9. EXPLAIN ANY DECISION TO PROVIDE ANY PAYMENT OR GIFT TO RESPONDENTS, OTHER THAN REMUNERATION OF CONTRACTORS OR GRANTEES.

No payments or gifts are provided to respondents for filling out forms. Payment will be made in the form of a cooperative agreement.

10. DESCRIBE ANY ASSURANCE OF CONFIDENTIALITY PROVIDED TO RESPONDENTS AND THE BASIS FOR THE ASSURANCE IN STATUTE, REGULATION, OR AGENCY POLICY.

The Regional Food Business Center Program does not request confidential information from respondents and therefore provides no assurances related to confidentiality.

11. PROVIDE ADDITIONAL JUSTIFICATION FOR ANY QUESTIONS OF A SENSITIVE NATURE, SUCH AS SEXUAL BEHAVIOR AND ATTITUDES, RELIGIOUS BELIEFS, AND OTHER MATTERS THAT SHOULD INCLUDE THE REASONS WHY THE AGENCY CONSIDERS THE QUESTIONS NECESSARY, THE SPECIFIC USES TO BE MADE OF THE INFORMATION, THE EXPLANATION TO BE GIVEN TO PERSONS FROM WHOM THE INFORMATION IS REQUESTED, AND ANY STEPS TO BE TAKEN TO OBTAIN THEIR CONSENT.

Questions of a sensitive nature are not found in this information collection.

12. PROVIDE ESTIMATES OF THE HOUR BURDEN OF THE COLLECTION OF INFORMATION.

THE STATEMENT SHOULD:

- **INDICATE THE NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS, FREQUENCY OF RESPONSE, ANNUAL HOUR BURDEN, AND AN EXPLANATION OF HOW THE BURDEN WAS ESTIMATED. UNLESS DIRECTED TO DO SO, AGENCIES SHOULD NOT CONDUCT SPECIAL SURVEYS TO OBTAIN INFORMATION ON WHICH TO BASE HOUR BURDEN ESTIMATES. CONSULTATION WITH A SAMPLE (FEWER THAN 10) OF POTENTIAL RESPONDENTS IS DESIRABLE. IF THE HOUR BURDEN ON RESPONDENTS IS EXPECTED TO VARY WIDELY BECAUSE OF DIFFERENCE IN ACTIVITY, SIZE, OR**

COMPLEXITY, SHOW THE RANGE OF ESTIMATED HOUR BURDEN, AND EXPLAIN THE REASONS FOR THE VARIANCE. GENERALLY, ESTIMATES SHOULD NOT INCLUDE BURDEN HOURS FOR CUSTOMARY AND USUAL BUSINESS PRACTICES.

This collection will have up to 170 respondents participating. Each participant will have 14 responses total up to 202 responses annually. We expect one complete application per respondent. Each complete application packet will contain six forms. There will be 470.83 total hours for reporting and recordkeeping. Of the 470.83 hours for record keeping and reporting, 181.67 is for Regional Food Center specific materials and 289.16 hours are for the forms required for all AMS programs.

With this being a new cooperative agreement program, the number of responses was calculated based on the standardized requirements that are either read or submitted for all MS cooperative agreement Programs (RFA, SF-424, AMS 33, Terms and Conditions, amendments, and reporting), while also considering the specifics of this program. The complete public reporting burden is summarized on AMS-71.

- **IF THIS REQUEST FOR APPROVAL COVERS MORE THAN ONE FORM, PROVIDE SEPARATE HOUR BURDEN ESTIMATES FOR EACH FORM AND AGGREGATE THE HOUR BURDENS IN ITEM 13 OF OMB FORM 83-I.**

The complete public reporting burden is summarized on the AMS-71.

- **PROVIDE ESTIMATES OF ANNUALIZED COST TO RESPONDENTS FOR THE HOUR BURDENS FOR COLLECTIONS OF INFORMATION, IDENTIFYING AND USING APPROPRIATE WAGE RATE CATEGORIES.**

The respondents estimated annual cost in providing information to the Regional Food Business Center Program is \$22,077.22.

This total has been estimated by multiplying 470.83 total burden hours by \$46.89, the national estimate for the average hourly wage for administrative management consulting services (NAICS code 541611, <https://www.naics.com/naics-code-description/?code=541611>). Data for computation of this hourly wage were obtained from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics, for December 2021 (<https://www.bls.gov/web/empsit/ceseeb3a.htm>).

13. PROVIDE AN ESTIMATE OF THE TOTAL ANNUAL COST BURDEN TO RESPONDENTS OR RECORDKEEPERS RESULTING FROM THE COLLECTION OF INFORMATION. (DO NOT INCLUDE THE COST OF ANY HOUR BURDEN SHOWN IN ITEMS 12 AND 14).

- **THE COST ESTIMATE SHOULD BE SPLIT INTO TWO COMPONENTS: (a) A TOTAL CAPITAL AND START-UP-COST COMPONENT (ANNUALIZED OVER ITS EXPECTED USEFUL LIFE); AND (b) A TOTAL OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE AND PURCHASE OF SERVICES COMPONENT. THE ESTIMATES SHOULD TAKE INTO ACCOUNT COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH GENERATING, MAINTAINING AND DISCLOSING OR PROVIDING THE INFORMATION. INCLUDE DESCRIPTIONS OF METHODS USED TO ESTIMATE MAJOR COST FACTORS INCLUDING SYSTEM AND TECHNOLOGY ACQUISITION, EXPECTED USEFUL LIFE OF CAPITAL EQUIPMENT, THE DISCOUNT RATE(S), AND THE TIME PERIOD OVER WHICH COSTS WILL BE INCURRED. CAPITAL AND START-UP COSTS INCLUDE, AMONG OTHER ITEMS, PREPARATIONS FOR COLLECTING INFORMATION SUCH AS PURCHASING COMPUTERS AND SOFTWARE, MONITORING, SAMPLING, DRILLING AND TESTING EQUIPMENT; AND RECORD STORAGE FACILITIES.**

- **IF COST ESTIMATES ARE EXPECTED TO VARY WIDELY, AGENCIES SHOULD PRESENT RANGES OF COST BURDENS AND EXPLAIN THE REASONS FOR THE VARIANCE. THE COST OF PURCHASING OR CONTRACTING OUT INFORMATION COLLECTION SERVICES SHOULD BE A PART OF THIS COST BURDEN ESTIMATE. IN DEVELOPING COST BURDEN ESTIMATES, AGENCIES MAY CONSULT WITH A SAMPLE OF RESPONDENTS (FEWER THAN 10), UTILIZE THE 60-DAY PRE-OMB SUBMISSION PUBLIC COMMENT PROCESS AND USE EXISTING ECONOMIC OR REGULATORY IMPACT ANALYSIS ASSOCIATED WITH THE RULEMAKING CONTAINING THE INFORMATION COLLECTION, AS APPROPRIATE.**

- **GENERALLY, ESTIMATES SHOULD NOT INCLUDE PURCHASES OF EQUIPMENT OR SERVICE, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, MADE: (1) PRIOR TO OCTOBER 1, 1995, (2) TO ACHIEVE REGULATORY COMPLIANCE WITH REQUIREMENTS NOT ASSOCIATED WITH THE INFORMATION COLLECTION, (3) FOR REASONS OTHER THAN TO PROVIDE INFORMATION OR KEEPING RECORDS FOR THE GOVERNMENT, OR (4) AS PART OF CUSTOMARY AND USUAL BUSINESS OR PRIVATE PRACTICES.**

There are no capital/start-up or ongoing operation/maintenance costs associated with this information collection.

- 14. PROVIDE ESTIMATES OF ANNUALIZED COST TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. ALSO, PROVIDE A DESCRIPTION OF THE METHOD USED TO ESTIMATE COST, WHICH SHOULD INCLUDE QUANTIFICATION OF HOURS, OPERATION EXPENSES (SUCH AS EQUIPMENT, OVERHEAD, PRINTING, AND SUPPORT STAFF), AND ANY OTHER EXPENSE THAT WOULD NOT HAVE**

BEEN INCURRED WITHOUT THIS COLLECTION OF INFORMATION. AGENCIES ALSO MAY AGGREGATE COST ESTIMATES FROM ITEMS 12, 13, AND 14 IN A SINGLE TABLE.

15.

Estimated Annual Cost to Federal Government to Operate Regional Food Business Centers

Salaries/Benefits and Compensation/Awards/Overhead	\$4,500,000
Total	\$4,500,000

The estimated annual cost currently to operate the Regional Food Business Center Program is \$4,500,000 per year for all federal employees and contracts, overhead, and other administrative costs.

The Regional Food Business Center Program includes three GS-14, Step 5 Branch Chiefs. One branch focuses on AMS’s presence in the field and consists of 10 GS-12, Step 5 field-based staff, two GS-13, Step 5 Team Leads and one GS-12, Step 5 Management and Program Analyst.

The second branch will be focused on outreach and technical assistance. This team will include three GS-12, Step 5 Agricultural Marketing Specialists and three GS-13, Step 5 Agricultural Marketing Specialists who will manage the cooperative agreements, coordinate across the Regional Centers, and support general technical assistance and oversight. This branch also includes a GS-13, Step 5 architect to support the Regional Food Business Centers and one GS-12, Step 5 Management and Program Analyst.

This research branch will include a Social Science Policy Analyst (GS-13, Step 5) focused on evaluation and one GS-12, Step 5 Management and Program Analyst.

To support systems implementation across branches, the division will add a GS-13, Step 5 project manager and two GS-5 Pathways interns.

Program oversight and policy management is provided by one GS-15, Step 5 Division Director on a part time basis. The GS-14 and GS-15 staff, in addition to the three Management and Program Analysts, are in the Washington, DC locality and all other staff are classified under “Rest of the United States,” as per the OPM General Schedule.

16. EXPLAIN THE REASON FOR ANY PROGRAM CHANGES OR ADJUSTMENTS REPORTED IN ITEMS 13 OR 14 OF THE OMB FORM 83-I.

This is a new collection mandated by Section 751 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, signed into law on December 20th, 2020.

17. FOR COLLECTIONS OF INFORMATION WHOSE RESULTS WILL BE PUBLISHED, OUTLINE PLANS FOR TABULATION, AND PUBLICATION. ADDRESS ANY COMPLEX ANALYTICAL TECHNIQUES THAT WILL BE USED. PROVIDE THE TIME SCHEDULE FOR THE ENTIRE PROJECT, INCLUDING BEGINNING AND ENDING DATES OF THE COLLECTION OF INFORMATION COMPLETION OF REPORT, PUBLICATION DATES, AND OTHER ACTIONS.

A listing of the awarded projects that will be posted on the AMS program website. This listing will be publicized through AMS Public Affairs, and Congress will also be notified.

The team will use standard quantitative methods to analyze data from the semi-annual performance reports. Analyses will be conducted using a statistical software package, such as SAS or Stata. Principal analysis methods will be descriptive, including simple tabulations, as well as cross-tabulations and hypothesis testing by subgroup where appropriate. Qualitative data from the reports will be analyzed using NVivo analytic software. The team will develop a codebook to guide the work of the NVivo data analysts and responses will be coded for emerging themes.

AMS plans to share a report on the evaluation 2-3 years after award and again at the conclusion of the agreements. The publicly available report will share outcomes achieved by the Regional Food Business Centers, such as the number of businesses supported, the value of investments leveraged, and relationships developed. In addition, AMS plans to highlight success stories on its website and via social media throughout the lifespan of the agreements to showcase the variety of work the Regional Food Business Centers will conduct.

The team will first present the findings internally and a report would be displayed on the AMS website: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/local-regional>

18. IF SEEKING APPROVAL TO NOT DISPLAY THE EXPIRATION DATE FOR OMB APPROVAL OF THE INFORMATION COLLECTION, EXPLAIN THE REASONS THAT DISPLAY WOULD BE INAPPROPRIATE.

Each form currently contains an OMB number and an expiration date.

19. EXPLAIN EACH EXCEPTION TO THE CERTIFICATION STATEMENT IDENTIFIED IN ITEM 19, "CERTIFICATION FOR PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT SUBMISSIONS," OF OMB FORM 83-I.

The agency is able to certify compliance with all provisions under Item 19 of OMB Form 83-I.

B. COLLECTIONS OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS.

This information collection does not employ statistical methods.