



USDA Regional Food Business Centers

Request for Applications

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-AMS-TM-XXXX

Publication Date: XXXX, 2022

Application Due Date: 11:59 PM Eastern Time on XXXX, 2022

Program Solicitation Information

Funding Opportunity Title: USDA Regional Food Business Centers

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-AMS-TM-

Announcement Type: Initial

Assistance Listing (formerly CFDA) Number: 10.

Dates: Applications must be received on or before 11:59 pm Eastern Time on **INSERT DATE 75 DAYS FROM ANNOUNCEMENT**, 2022, through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). Applications received after this deadline will not be considered for funding.

Executive Summary: The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), requests applications for USDA Regional Business Food Centers (Regional Food Centers). The Regional Food Centers will serve as a cornerstone in the development of the local and regional supply chains. They will offer coordination, technical assistance, and capacity building support to small and mid-sized food and farm businesses with the goal of creating a more resilient, diverse, and competitive food system. AMS will award cooperative agreements to support regional food supply chains. Approximately \$360 million is available from funds authorized under Division N, Title VII, subtitle B, section 751 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 (Pub. L. No. 116—260).

Through this solicitation, AMS will fund at least six Regional Food Centers

This announcement identifies the eligibility criteria for Regional Food Centers, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for a Regional Food Center agreement.

This program is intended to benefit small and mid-sized producers, processors, and distributors that sell into all types of markets, including local and regional markets. This program is inclusive of all types of local and regional food producers and processors, including fruits, vegetables, meat, poultry, fish, grains, and dairy. Applicants are required to prioritize service to underserved communities and businesses. Applicants should engage and involve these beneficiaries when developing projects and applications. AMS specifically encourages applications that include plans for outreach to Indian Tribes and Native communities.

Stakeholder Input: AMS welcomes comments about this RFA, and we will consider them in developing future Regional Food Center RFAs. Email written stakeholder comments within one year of the publication date of this RFA to: RegionalFoodCenters@usda.gov. In your comments, please state that you are commenting on the **Regional Food Center RFA**.

Timing to Obtain and Submit Grants.gov Required Elements

Required Action	Timing to Obtain/Submit
AMS Deadline to receive final application and all supporting materials through Grants.Gov.	XXXX- 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time
Establishing an Active SAM.gov Account (if you do not already have one) and obtaining your Unique Entity ID.	7-10 business days
Obtaining a TIN/EIN (if you do not already have one)	Up to 2 weeks

Required Action	Timing to Obtain/Submit
Creating your Grants.gov profile and registering your Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) authorization	Up to 2 weeks

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Program Solicitation Information.....	2
Application Checklist.....	2
Timing to Obtain and Submit Grants.gov Required Elements.....	3
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	3
1.0 Funding Opportunity Description.....	6
1.1 Legislative Authority.....	6
1.2 Purpose.....	6
1.3 Program Description.....	7
1.4 Regions.....	10
1.5 Type of Federal Assistance.....	13
1.6 Type of Applications.....	13
1.7 Available Funding.....	13
1.8 Federal Award Period Duration and Size.....	14
1.9 Substantial Involvement.....	14
2.0 Eligibility Information.....	14
2.1 Eligible applicants.....	14
2.2 Cost-Sharing and Matching.....	16
3.0 Application and Submission Information	16
3.1 Electronic Application Package.....	16
3.2 Content and Form of Application Submission.....	16
3.3 Submitted Application Qualification.....	19
3.4 Submission Date and Time.....	20
3.5 Intergovernmental Review.....	20
3.6 Funding Restrictions.....	20
3.7 Grants.gov Application Submission and Receipt Procedures and Requirements.....	22
4.0 Application Review Information.....	25
4.1 Project Evaluation Criteria.....	25
4.2 Review and Selection Process.....	28
5.0 Award Administration Information.....	29
5.1 Award Notices.....	29
5.2 Unsuccessful Applicants.....	29
5.3 Administrative and National Policy Requirements.....	29
5.4 Reporting Requirements.....	30
6.0 Agency Contacts.....	30
6.1 Programmatic Questions.....	30
6.2 Available Resources.....	30

6.3	Grants.gov Questions.....	30
7.0	Other Information.....	30
7.1	Equal Opportunity Statement.....	31
7.2	Freedom Of Information Act Requests.....	31
7.3	Paperwork Reduction.....	32

1.0 FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

1.1 LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The USDA Regional Food Business Centers (Regional Food Centers) are authorized and funded by Division N, Title VII, subtitle B, section 751 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 (Pub. L. No. 116—260). Under this section, the Secretary is directed to provide support for agricultural producers, growers, and processors impacted by coronavirus, including producers and growers of specialty crops, non-specialty crops, dairy, livestock, and poultry, producers that supply local food systems, including farmers markets, restaurants, and schools.

1.2 PURPOSE

The Regional Food Centers will serve as a cornerstone in the development of the local and regional supply chains. They will offer coordination, technical assistance, and capacity building support to small and mid-sized food and farm businesses with the goal of creating more resilient, diverse, and competitive food system. The Regional Food Centers will provide technical assistance to small- to mid-sized producers and other food businesses in the middle of the supply chain to access local and regional markets by facilitating linkages throughout the supply chain. Our current food system has prioritized price and efficiency. As such, small and mid-sized producers often struggle to access markets. Regional Food Centers will support producers by providing localized assistance to access a variety of markets, including linking producers to wholesalers and distributors. By strengthening connections between rural and urban areas, the Regional Food Centers will drive economic opportunities across the region. The Regional Food Centers will also provide technical assistance needed to access new markets, and to access to federal, state and local resources, thereby closing the gaps or barriers to access. In short, these Regional Food Centers will assist small and mid-sized producers in overcoming barriers to market access, with a focus on underserved farmers, ranchers, and food businesses. Through partnership with USDA, the Regional Food Centers offer comprehensive, collaborative, and regionally driven community and economic development that improves opportunities and competitiveness of food businesses.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused unprecedented changes in where, how, and what food U.S. consumers purchased and acquired. The 2020 Local Food Marketing Practices Survey, administered by the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, found that the number of farms selling locally produced food decreased by 12% nationally between 2015-2020. Despite this decrease, the demand for local food persists. A [consumer survey](#) conducted by Colorado State University showed that 35% of consumers tried at least one new market channel in spring and summer 2020. Of those, over 72 million consumers shifted to buying from a farmers market, CSA, or directly from a producer. While pandemic impacts were extensive, and often detrimental, COVID-19 also highlighted the strengths of local and regional food systems, and food acquisition and purchasing took on new dimensions as local food businesses such as co-ops and farmers markets saw a rise in popularity and filled gaps in supply chains.

The Regional Food Centers create opportunities for participating geographic regions to tailor development and investment to fit their needs, while recognizing that resilient supply chains are built upon strong relationships between individuals, communities, regions, sectors, and institutions. A

regional approach relies on the cultivation of strategic alliances between supply chain actors, which are intentionally structured to produce both economic success and equitable social benefits.

The Regional Food Centers will support coordination in their region, fund technical assistance providers to offer value chain coordination and business technical assistance to food and farm businesses, and provide small amounts of funding to food businesses looking to expand or start in their region.

The Regional Food Centers will collaborate with existing USDA programs and services to complement their purposes and activities. The ultimate goals of the Regional Food Centers are to:

- Strengthen regional food systems networks and partnerships in response to hardships and vulnerabilities exposed by recent national emergencies, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic,
- Increase food and farm business and finance acumen,
- Create more and better markets and increase market awareness and access, ensuring small and mid-size producers have the opportunity to gain access to distributors, retail outlets, and institutions,
- Increase the number of local producers that distributors, retailers and foodservice buyers source from, either directly or through intermediaries.
- Increase the number of new food and farm businesses and viability of existing businesses, and
- Increase the revenue of food and farm businesses served.

The Regional Food Centers will be leaders in food systems development, employing data-driven and evidence-based decision making and contributing to the body of knowledge in food systems and market development.

1.3 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The USDA Regional Food Business Centers will have three main responsibilities:

- **Coordination** - The Regional Food Centers will act as regional hubs coordinating across geographic areas with USDA, other federal, state, and tribal agencies with relevant resources, regional commissions, and the other Regional Food Centers. Regional Food Centers will conduct a needs analysis of the region they plan to serve, along with developing strategic and funding plans.
- **Technical Assistance** - The Regional Food Centers will establish subawards with organizations to provide direct business technical assistance to small- and mid-sized food and farm businesses and value chain coordination.
- **Capacity Building** - The Regional Food Centers will provide financial assistance that ranges from \$5,000 to \$20,000 to support projects that are unique to the region and may not be eligible for other USDA funding. These subawards may support staff time, business planning activities, software implementation, the purchase of [special purpose equipment](#), such as food safety, processing and packaging equipment, and value chain coordination, and other expenses associated as outlined in this RFA.

1.3.1 EQUITY AND TRUST

In alignment with [E.O. 13985](#), *Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government*, and the [E.O. 13175](#), *Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal*

Governments, the USDA Regional Food Business Center program takes a comprehensive approach to advancing equity for all, including people of color and others who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality, and meeting a Federal trust responsibility to advance programming that recognizes tribal sovereignty, policies, and standards.

The Regional Food Centers should be carried out in a manner that increases investment in underserved and tribal communities, as well as individuals from those communities. This includes, but is not limited to consulting with members of communities and organizations led by and serving communities that have been historically underrepresented and underserved by, or subject to discrimination in, Federal policies and programs, gathering data and conducting evaluation that helps measure and advance equity, addressing barriers and full participation to programming for historically underserved communities, and conducting equitable hiring practices in accordance with the law.

1.3.2 COORDINATION

The Regional Food Centers must maintain and cultivate partnerships with a variety of organizations, including organizations led by and serving historically underserved individuals. Additionally, Regional Food Centers will be encouraged to collaborate with related initiatives and hubs both inside and outside of USDA.¹ The Regional Food Centers will be a vital link, working across the supply chain, collaborating with other Regional Food Centers and across USDA.

The Regional Food Centers will work closely with AMS's Transportation and Marketing Program, particularly the Grants Division and the Local and Regional Foods Division. Specifically, to engage with AMS grant recipients and applicants to build stakeholder capacity to apply for and execute successful projects. In addition, the Regional Food Centers will be thought partners on and users of local and regional food systems research and data, working closely with AMS and other USDA agencies to share resources with relevant stakeholders. Regional Food Centers, in partnership with AMS Regional Coordinators, will collaborate with other USDA staff to ensure the region is aware and engaged in all relevant programming and resources.

1.3.3 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The Regional Food Centers will partner with third-party technical assistance providers to support value chain coordination and direct technical assistance to farm and food businesses. Technical assistance providers will be:

- Expected to attain or maintain a physical presence in the Regional Food Centers geographic region (excluding the tribal center, which may have a multi-region or nationwide reach).
- Experienced in food and agriculture business development services.
- Experienced in helping smaller-scale food producers and processors in identifying and navigating third party financial assistance, particularly from federal, state, tribes, and other sources. Able to support the wide-ranging needs of stakeholders in the region, including providing value chain coordination.

¹ For example, the Small Business Administration's Regional Innovation Clusters, NIFA's Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program, USDA's Climate Hubs, FNS's State Nutrition Action Councils, and university-based food innovation centers.

These technical assistance providers must demonstrate an understanding of unique regional needs and the capacity to meet the needs of small and mid-sized food businesses in the region. These subawards will support a variety of business technical assistance needs such as:

- *Value chain coordination*, including networking and peer-to-peer sharing.
- *Market development*, including market research, access, and generic marketing support.
- *Navigating and managing financial resources from third parties*, including federal, state, tribal, and other sources.
- *Business development services or training*, as resources allow, including planning, financial literacy, legal and regulatory awareness, succession planning, and record keeping.

Technical assistance providers will provide training and guidance to:

- Producers that focus on direct marketing or accessing local and regional intermediated markets, such as locally focused distributors, food hubs, institutions, restaurants, and retailers.
- Small- and mid-size food processors, distributors, and food hubs.
- USDA grant applicants and recipients, with a priority on small and mid-sized producers and processors.
- State, tribal, and local government agencies.
- Other entities as determined by the Regional Food Center and USDA.

1.3.4 CAPACITY BUILDING

The Regional Food Centers, in partnership with AMS and technical assistance providers, will support supply chain resiliency by building the capacity of small and mid-sized food producers, businesses, or networks of businesses. Small grants will provide food and farm businesses the capital needed to launch and expand their businesses while they work to build income streams or identify needed investors.

The Regional Food Centers may use subawards to support individual food businesses, to conduct research and feasibility studies at a larger scale than individual business projects, to procure special purpose equipment,² and to fund supply chain analysis and strategy development for identified gaps and specialization opportunities. The Regional Food Centers will be expected to direct most of the capacity building funding to priority areas identified in the application and with USDA.

The Regional Food Centers will issue subawards on a rolling basis ranging from \$5,000 to \$20,000 and last for no more than one year.

1.3.5 ADMINISTRATION

The partnership must have demonstrated capacity and experience managing a high value and quantity of federal funds. These are large complex agreements with many partners that require close programmatic and financial monitoring. Successful applications will demonstrate:

- Ability to manage many (100+) subawards per year.
- Ability to manage reporting and financial tracking of subawards.
- Capacity to maintain proper financial controls as required by [2 CFR part 200](#).
- Experience in managing large complex federal agreements and/or grants.

² Special purpose equipment is defined in section [4.6.2](#).

- Experience facilitating large-scale collaborative projects to advance of a goal.

Regional Food Centers must ensure that subrecipients maintain appropriate records and follow all applicable Federal statutes and regulations as well as the Cooperative Agreement and [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#).

1.4 REGIONS

The USDA Regional Food Business Centers will be geographically based. Applicants must define the regions that their proposed Regional Food Center will cover. Applications must define the geographic region it intends to serve and priority areas within that region. USDA intends to select at least one Regional Food Center that serves each of the following areas:

- [Indian Country](#) (potentially including multiple geographic regions – up to nationwide)
- [Colonias](#) (counties on the US/Mexico border)
- High need areas of the Southeast
- High need areas of Appalachia

USDA intends to make awards to Regional Food Centers that serve other areas of the country beyond those explicitly listed above.

For the purposes of this program a geographic region is defined as reaching at least three states or territories (does not need to be contiguous), a 400-mile radius, or reach a population of at least 10 million. Regions do not need to be geographically contiguous. For example, multiple states and/or territories with similar needs, such as locations outside the lower 48 states, may propose a region serving disparate areas of the U.S. Applicants must include details describing why this region would benefit from a Regional Food Center, with a specific focus on small and mid-sized food businesses and priority areas that would benefit. The application must demonstrate the availability and commitment of local government, philanthropy, and industry investment to support the growth of the region.

Applications must define priority areas within their proposed region that would classify as high need, underserved communities that were particularly affected by the pandemic. Project narratives should include specific data showing why the region and priority areas were chosen. Applications should describe the degree of historic economic distress experienced in the project region, including the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic. Applicants may include data such as:

- [Persistent poverty](#) (poverty rates exceeding 20% for the last 30 years);
- [Social Vulnerability Index](#) (SVI; indication of vulnerability to social factors including socioeconomic, demographic, and housing/transportation);
- [Distressed Community Index](#) (DCI; a measure of distress by zip-code)
- [Persistent child poverty](#)
- [Low employment](#)

The evaluation criteria in Section 5.0 describe how Regional Food Center proposals will be evaluated. While the Regional Food Centers will likely not reach every state and territory, USDA will make awards that prioritize service to the broadest coverage of high need areas.

Tribal Center

Given the unique legal challenges Indian Country faces with regard to complex trust land, tribal and federal law, and other issues, a tribal focused center will be uniquely capable of addressing these targeted issues. The Tribal Center may have non-tribal partners; however, the Regional Food Center must be a tribe, an organization that primarily serves Native American applicants and tribal communities, or an organization that has a documented history of successfully working with native communities. While this Center may employ some place-based strategies, its network will focus on particular population.

2.0 AWARD INFORMATION

2.1 TYPE OF FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

AMS will use a Cooperative Agreement to provide a Federal award to successful applicants.

2.2 TYPE OF APPLICATIONS

AMS will review all new applications for conformity with the criteria in [section 4.2](#) *Error: Reference source not found* and may require the applicant to provide additional information or clarification by a specified date.

2.3 AVAILABLE FUNDING

The anticipated amount available to fund applications for Regional Food Centers is approximately \$360,000,000.

Enactment of additional continuing resolutions, funding rescissions, or an appropriations act may affect the availability or level of funding for this program. There is no commitment by USDA to fund any application or to make a specific number of awards.

2.4 FEDERAL AWARD PERIOD DURATION AND SIZE

AMS expects recipients to complete their projects within the required timeframe. The applicant must indicate the start date and end date on Block 17 of the SF-424 "Application for Federal Assistance".

Duration (Months)	Start Date	Completion Date	Minimum Award	Maximum Award
60	December 2022	November 2027	\$15M	\$50M

2.5 SUBSTANTIAL INVOLVEMENT

AMS will be substantially involved throughout the period of performance of the award. Substantial involvement may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Specification of the manner, method, performance, or timing of the work in an approved work plan;
- Review and approval of one stage of work before a subsequent stage may begin during the period of performance;
- Participate in the selection and approval of new partners;
- Participate in potential geographic expansion or adjustment and approval of geographic reach;
- Review and approval of an evaluation plan;
- Participation in the selection and approval of individuals or organizations that will conduct all required evaluations;
- Participation in the selection and approval of individuals or organizations that are considered for funding in the subaward program;
- Participation in data collection and analysis for required evaluations and other performance reports;
- Provision of specific direction or redirection of work during the period of performance; and
- Establish guidelines to ensure funds are distributed equitably and driven by the region's priorities and needs.

3.0 ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

3.1 ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Partnerships are eligible to apply to lead a Regional Food Center. A partnership is an agreement between one or more eligible entities. To demonstrate partnerships, the applicant must submit letters of commitment outlining the partnership. Within 45 days of award, the partnership will provide USDA with Memoranda of Understanding detailing how each partner will contribute to the agreement.

An application may be submitted by an eligible entity on behalf of the partnership. The partnership must specify in its application which organization(s) in the partnership are responsible for receiving and managing the award.

Partnerships that include Limited Resource Entities are strongly encouraged to apply. Limited Resource Entity means an organization that provides technical assistance services to and engages historically underserved farmers, ranchers, and businesses in addressing their needs. See USDA definition of [Historically Underserved Groups](#) for further information.

All applicants must be domestic entities owned, operated, and located within the 50 United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the United States Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, or tribal governments.

Applications should include engagement from multiple sectors such as local, state, or regional governments, food policy councils, producers and/or producer organizations, universities, urban and rural food system stakeholders, philanthropy, distributors, processors, retailers, and underserved communities and agricultural businesses.

Eligible entities include:

Entity Type	Description
Producer Network or Association	Producer group- or member-owned organizations or businesses that provide, offer, or sell agricultural products or services through a common distribution system for the mutual member benefit of the owners, as well as organizations or other businesses that assist, represent, or serve producers or producer networks.
Food Council	Food policy council or food and farm system network that represents multiple organizations involved in the production, processing, and consumption of food, and local, tribal, and State governments.
Tribal Governments	Tribal government has the meaning as defined in the Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act of 1994 (Public Law 103-454; 108 Stat. 4791, 4792).
State Agencies or Regional Authorities	Planning commissions, councils of governments, regional economic development organizations/districts, and similar organizations.
Institutions of Higher Education	Educational institutions that meet the requirements specified at 20 U.S.C. § 1001 .
Nonprofit Corporations	Any organization or institution, including nonprofits with State or IRS or Tribal 501 (c) status and accredited institutions of higher education, where no part of the organization's or institution's net earnings inure to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual.
Economic Development Corporations	Organizations whose missions are to improve, maintain, develop, and/or market or promote a specific geographic area.

3.2 COST-SHARING AND MATCHING

This funding opportunity does not have a Federal cost-sharing or matching requirement and such information should not be included in the submitted application nor subsequent performance or financial reports.

4.0 APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

To be considered for funding, an applicant must submit a complete application with all required documentation outlined below.

USDA may seek additional information or documentation from the applicant to clarify information presented in the application. USDA also may, in its sole discretion, continue review of any application with minor defects or errors, while the applicant supplies the missing information.

4.1 ELECTRONIC APPLICATION PACKAGE

Only electronic applications for this RFA will be accepted and must be submitted via Grants.gov. We urge applicants to submit 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 AMS-specific attachments. More information about applying through Grants.gov can be found in [section XX](#).

Applicants can find the opportunity under either the Assistance Listing number "10.," or the Regional Food Business Center Funding Opportunity Number "USDA-AMS-TM-

4.2 CONTENT AND FORM OF APPLICATION SUBMISSION

4.2.1 SF-424 APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

Required: Form SF-424 is available via the opportunity at Grants.gov. Most information blocks on the required form are either self-explanatory or adequately explained in the instructions. However, applicants must use the following supplemental instructions associated with specific blocks on the SF-424.

Block	Instructions
#1 Type of Submission	Application
#2 Type of Application	New
#4 through #7	Not required
#8d Address	Enter the organization street address as it appears in SAM.gov. P.O. Boxes will not be accepted. Enter a 9-digit zip code
#10 Name of Federal Agency	AMS, USDA
#11 Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number (Assistance Listing Number)	10.
#12 Funding Opportunity Number	USDA-AMS-TM-
#13 Competition Identification Number	Not applicable
#14 Areas Affected by Project	Enter cities, counties, States affected by project
#15 Descriptive Title of Applicant's Project	Provide a short description of the project
#16a Congressional Districts for Applicant	Enter the Congressional district where your main office is located
#16b Congressional Districts for	Enter the Congressional district where your project will

Block	Instructions
Program/Project	be implemented. Write "All" if the project will be implemented in more than one location
#17 Proposed Project Start Date and End Date	Start Date: October 31, 2021 End date: Enter the appropriate End Date for your project type
#18a Estimated Funding - Federal	Total Federal amount requested
#18b - 18f Estimated Funding - Applicant	Not applicable
#19 Is Applicant Subject to Review by State Under Executive Order 12372 Process?	See section XX

4.2.2 SF-424A BUDGET INFORMATION

Required. SF-424A is available via the application package in Grants.gov. Most information blocks on the required form are either self-explanatory or adequately explained in the form instructions. However, for applications the following supplemental instructions must be used for specific boxes on the form. **Do not use instructions found on Grants.gov or elsewhere on the internet for the boxes below.**

On SF-424A, please complete **only** Sections A and B. Do **not** complete Sections C - F.

Box	Instructions
1.a - Grant Program Function or Activity	Enter "Regional Food Centers - Federal"
1.b - Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number	Enter " 10.### "
1.e - Federal	Enter the amount of Federal funding requested for the project
Section B - Budget Categories	
6.a - 6.j - Object Class Categories	In Column 1, enter the amount of Federal funds requested for each Object Class Category. For example, if you are requesting \$2,000 in Federal funds for "Supplies", enter 2000 in Column 1, box 6.e.

4.2.3 PROJECT ABSTRACT SUMMARY

Required. The [Project Abstract](#) Summary form will be used as the award description for the overarching Federal award. This is separate from the [Project Narrative](#). The Project Abstract box must include:

- Project purpose
- Activities to be performed
- Deliverables and expected outcomes
- Intended beneficiary(ies): Who will benefit from this beyond the applicant organization?

- Subrecipient activities. Will the award result in subawards? If yes, who are the sub-awardees and how does the subaward support the applicant organization?

4.2.4 PROJECT AND BUDGET NARRATIVE

Required: Applicants are required to prepare and submit a narrative using the Regional Food Center Project Narrative form. The form and instructions are available on the [program's webpage](#). The Project Narrative must clearly describe the project's partners, actual or potential definition of the geographic region served, objectives and goals, types and sequence of project activities, monitoring and evaluation strategies associated with the proposed activities, and how the applicant will manage the project, with an emphasis on financial controls.

The project narrative must be typed and single-spaced in an 11-point font and must not exceed fifteen (15) 8.5 x 11 pages (excluding pre-existing form content). For example, if the form is 10 pages before you begin entering your project narrative information, your form may be up to 25 pages in length when completed (10 original pages + 15 pages of applicant content). DO NOT modify the margins of the Project Narrative form. Applicants must submit the Project Narrative form as a PDF and attached to the Grants.gov application package using the "Project Narrative Attachment Form" on the application package. Handwritten applications or applications submitted in MS Word will not be accepted.

Prior to submitting the application to Grants.gov, please make sure no tracked changes or mark-up edits and comments are visible.

The supporting documents listed below do not count toward the 15-page limit.

4.2.5 LETTERS OF COMMITMENT FROM PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Required: Applicants must provide letters of commitment (not support) from all project partners at the time of application.

AMS has posted a [PARTNER ORGANIZATION TEMPLATE](#) on the program's application website. We highly encourage you to use this template. If you do not use this template, the Letters of Commitment must include at least the following information:

- Project Applicant.
- Project Title.
- A short introduction describing the partner entity's mission and its reason(s) for joining the partnership.
- The specific role(s) the entity is committing to for the project, including the participation of specific individuals, as applicable; and
- A statement that these individuals and the entity agree to abide by the management plan contained in the application.

Submit *Letters of Commitment* on letterhead and address them to the applicant (i.e., Project Director). Clearly indicate at the top that they are **LETTERS OF COMMITMENT**. Letters must accompany the proposal at the time of application. Unsigned letters or letters emailed separately will not be accepted.

Letter(s) must be attached to the Grants.gov application package using the “Add Attachments” button under SF-424 item #15.

PLEASE NOTE: The Regional Food Center program does not require Congressional letters of support and such letters do not carry additional weight during the evaluation process.

4.2.6 NEGOTIATED INDIRECT COST RATE AGREEMENT (NICRA)

Required if the applicant has a NICRA: Refer to [section XXX](#) for more information. The NICRA must be in PDF format and attached to the Grants.gov application package using the “Add Attachments” button under SF-424 item #15

4.2.7 ACCOUNTING SYSTEM AND FINANCIAL CAPABILITY FORM

Recipients of Federal funds must maintain adequate accounting systems that meet the criteria outlined in 2 CFR part 200's [Standards for Financial and Program Management](#). The responses to this questionnaire are used to assist in the AMS evaluation of your accounting system to ensure the adequate, appropriate, and transparent use of Federal funds. Failure to comply with the criteria outlined in the regulations above may preclude your organization from receiving an award.

4.3 SUBMITTED APPLICATION QUALIFICATION

Your application may **not be reviewed or considered for funding** if it is:

- Received by Grants.gov after the submission deadline, or
- Submitted via any method other than through Grants.gov, or
- Submitted to the wrong program, or
- Not responsive to the requirements of this RFA (eligibility, incomplete application, application exceeds page limit, not providing all required documents, etc.).

See [AMS' Late and/or Non-Responsive Applications Policy](#) for more information.

4.4 SUBMISSION DATE AND TIME

Applicants must submit applications electronically via [Grants.gov](#) by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on [DATE, 2022](#). AMS cannot consider applications received after this deadline for funding. (See [AMS' Late and/or Nonresponsive Applications Policy](#).)

Ensure that all components 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. AMS encourages you to submit your application at least two weeks prior to the application deadline to ensure all certifications and registrations are met.

4.5 INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW

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

4.6 FUNDING RESTRICTIONS

All AMS awards are subject to the terms and conditions, cost principles, and other considerations described in the [AMS Terms and Conditions](#). In addition, USDA must be listed and named as the funder on all external communications. Applicants that have questions concerning the allowability of costs after reviewing the Terms and Conditions should contact AMS staff using the contact information listed under [section XXX](#).

4.6.1 PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES NOT ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

Projects are not eligible for funding if the proposed activities:

- Are for production-related expenses.
- Are related to construction or purchasing land for use by a non-Federal entity.
- Benefit only one agricultural producer or individual (except for Capacity Building subawards).
- Depend upon the completion of another project or the receipt of another grant.
- Duplicate activities in a project that has received a Federal award from another Federal award program.
- Provide capital for revolving loan funds or seed equity funds.

4.6.2 EQUIPMENT

As outlined in the Terms and Conditions, below are the allowable and unallowable use of funds for equipment:

Unallowable for acquisition costs of general purpose equipment or lease agreements to own (i.e., lease-to-own or rent-to-own).

Allowable for rental costs of general purpose equipment when provided in the approved budget or with prior written approval. Vehicles may be leased but not purchased. The lease or rental agreement must terminate at the end of the grant cycle.

For vehicle and equipment leases or rentals with an acquisition cost that equals or exceeds \$5,000, rates should be in light of factors such as: rental costs of comparable vehicles and equipment, if any; market conditions in the area; alternatives available; and the type, life expectancy, condition, and value of the vehicle or equipment leased.

Allowable when provided in the approved budget or with prior written approval for acquisition costs and rental costs of special purpose equipment provided the following criteria are met:

- 1) Necessary for the research, scientific, or other technical activities of the grant agreement;
- 2) Not otherwise reasonably available and accessible;
- 3) The type of equipment is normally charged as a direct cost by the organization;
- 4) Acquired in accordance with organizational practices;
- 5) Must be used solely to meet the legislative purpose of the program and objectives of the agreement;
- 6) More than one single commercial organization, commercial product, or individual must benefit from the use of the equipment;

- 7) Must not use special purpose equipment acquired with grant funds to provide services for a fee to compete unfairly with private companies that provide equivalent services; and
- 8) Equipment is subject to the full range of acquisition, use, management, and disposition requirements under 2 CFR § 200.313 as applicable.

4.6.3 INDIRECT COSTS

Indirect costs (also known as “facilities and administrative costs”—defined at [2 CFR § 200.1](#)) are those costs incurred for a common or joint purpose benefitting more than one cost objective, and not readily assignable to the cost objectives specifically benefitted, without effort disproportionate to the results achieved.

As stated in [2 CFR § 200.413](#) and [414](#), any non-Federal entity that does not have a current negotiated (including provisional) indirect cost rate, except State and Local Government and Indian Tribe Indirect Cost Proposals, may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10 percent of modified total direct costs (MTDC) that may be used indefinitely. No documentation is required to justify the 10% de minimis indirect cost rate. As described in [2 CFR § 200.403](#), costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs, but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both. If chosen, this methodology once elected must be used consistently for all Federal awards until such time as a recipient chooses to negotiate for a rate, which the recipient may apply to do at any time.

All applicants who elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10 percent must use the MTDC as the base. MTDC are defined in [2 CFR § 200.1](#) as all direct salaries and wages, applicable fringe benefits, materials and supplies, services, travel, and up to the first \$25,000 of each subaward (regardless of the period of performance of the subawards under the award). MTDCs exclude equipment, capital expenditures, charges for patient care, rental costs, tuition remission, scholarships and fellowships, participant support costs, and the portion of each subaward in excess of \$25,000. Other items may be excluded only when necessary to avoid a serious inequity in the distribution of indirect costs, and with the approval of the cognizant agency for indirect costs.

If an applicant has a negotiated indirect cost rate approved by its cognizant agency, the applicant must submit a copy of its approved NICRA with its application. Entities that would like to negotiate an indirect cost rate must contact their cognizant agency. For assignments of cognizant agencies, see [2 CFR § 200.1](#). Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities

All AMS awards are subject to the terms and conditions, cost principles, and other considerations described in the [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#).

Eligible entities may propose direct costs for outreach, education, application evaluation & processing, and system improvements to properly implement the program.

Applicants that have questions concerning the allowability of costs after reviewing this document should contact AMS staff using the contact information listed under [section XX](#).

4.6.4 PRE-AWARD COST FLEXIBILITY

AMS is allowing flexibility for those applicants who wish to incur pre-award costs. An applicant may, at their own risk and without AMS prior approval, incur obligations and expenditures up to 180 days before the performance start date as long as such costs:

- are necessary to conduct the project; and
- would be allowable under the potential award and without AMS prior approval.

If specific costs would otherwise require prior approval (see the [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#)), the applicant may be required to provide additional documentation during the application review process before an award is made. The cost and associated activities must be included in the project narrative and budget justification.

Incurring a pre-award cost in anticipation of being selected by AMS for an award imposes no obligation on AMS either to make the award or to reimburse such costs if for any reason the applicant does not receive an award. Recipients must be fully aware that pre-award costs result in borrowing against the potential award and that such borrowing must not impair the recipient's ability to accomplish the project objectives in the approved time frame or in any way adversely affect the completion of the project.

4.7 GRANTS.GOV APPLICATION SUBMISSION AND RECEIPT PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS

4.7.1 HOW TO REGISTER TO APPLY THROUGH GRANTS.GOV

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

If individual applicants are eligible to apply for this grant funding opportunity, refer to:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration.html>.

Organization applicants can find complete instructions here:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html>.

- 1) *Register with SAM:* In addition to having a DUNS 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.**
- 2) *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 DUNS 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 (AOR).

- 3) *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](#), including the 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.
- 4) *Track Role Status:* After registering with Grants.gov and authorizing the applicant AOR, Grants.gov allows you [to track your status](#).
- 5) *Electronic Signature:* When applications are submitted through Grants.gov, the name of the organization's AOR who 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.**

4.7.2 HOW TO SUBMIT AN APPLICATION TO AMS 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 AMS forms. The individual PDF forms can be downloaded and saved to your local storage device, network drive(s), or external drives, and then accessed through Adobe Reader.

NOTE: You may need to visit the [Adobe Software Compatibility page on Grants.gov](#) 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 DUNS 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 via 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 close date** to provide you with time to correct any potential technical issues that may disrupt the application submission.

SPECIAL NOTE: Grants.gov **does not** check for AMS required attachments. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all required attachments listed in [section XX](#).

- 4) *Track via 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 if the issue is not resolved. For questions related to the specific grant opportunity, use the contact information described in [section 7.0](#).

4.7.3 TIMELY RECEIPT REQUIREMENTS AND PROOF OF TIMELY SUBMISSION

All applications must be received by the deadline established in [section XX](#). 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 AMS 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. Again, proof of timely submission shall be the acknowledgement email stating the official date and time that Grants.gov receives your application.

AMS will not accept applications 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 AMS. See [AMS' Late and/or Non-Responsive Applications Policy](#).

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 their application to 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.

4.7.4 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 the instructions provided by AMS.
- Thoroughly review the [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#) to understand allowable and unallowable costs.
- Apply to the correct grant program in Grants.gov:

- o Assistance Listing (formerly CFDA) number “10.” and Funding Opportunity Number “USDA-AMS-.”
- 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.
- Limit Application File Name Characters (50 or less).
- 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.).
- 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>.

5.0 APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

5.1 PROJECT EVALUATION CRITERIA

Each application that meets the initial qualification screening requirements (see [section XX](#)) will be reviewed and scored competitively based on the extent to which it addresses the criteria below.

Geographic Focus..... **20 Points**

- 1) The application describes the proposed geographic region and priority area(s), why it is the most appropriate place for a Regional Food Center, and justification for the priority areas and their potential market connections to other areas within the region.
- 2) The application describes the regions assets and how the proposed plan will leverage existing and develop new assets to support the region’s food systems.
- 3) The project serves a region of at least a 400-mile radius OR reaches part or all of at least three states and/or territories OR serves at least 10 million people.
- 4) Includes rural, urban, and suburban areas.
- 5) The application identifies and shows using data the degree of historic economic distress experienced in the project region, in particular the priority areas within the region, including the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic.
- 6) The application identifies the availability and commitment of local government, philanthropy, and industry investment to support the growth of the proposed region.
- 7) The application describes the lead applicant and any key partners’ history, including prior collaborative efforts, commitment, and track record working in the identified region. Explain why the lead entity and key partners are well-equipped to serve this region.

Alignment and Intent..... **20 Points**

- 1) The application outlines how it will meet the required goals and activities outlined in the request for application and does so in a clear and comprehensive manner.
- 2) The application describes a strong history of collaboration and engagement among partners to ensure high levels of participation or provides a clear and concise plan for how such engagement will occur.
- 3) The application complies with all written instructions and requirements described within the RFA and Project Narrative Template.
- 4) The application presents a clear, well-conceived, and suitable Work Plan that describes how the applicant partners will achieve the goals and objectives.
- 5) The application describes plans for coordination, communication, data sharing, and reporting across the region, with other Regional Food Centers, USDA, and other stakeholder groups.

Expertise, Partners, and Diversity **20 Points**

- 1) The application represents a substantial, effective, and diverse array of relevant partners, including organizations operated by historically underserved groups and individuals, to accomplish the agreement’s goals and objectives and meet the needs of the intended beneficiaries, including:
 - a. Commitment from the key staff, demonstrated through Letters of Commitment from Partner Organizations.
 - b. The key staff who will be responsible for managing the projects and the individuals (name and title) who comprise the Project Team; and
 - c. The expertise and experience of the Project Team necessary to successfully manage a large amount of subawards and federal funds.
- 2) The application demonstrates a commitment from partners to perform specific roles in order to achieve project goals and outcomes as evidenced by inclusion of support letters.
- 3) The project design meaningfully involves historically underserved businesses and communities..
- 4) The application demonstrates a commitment to engage potential beneficiaries as active participants in Regional Food Center activities.
- 5) The application outlines past efforts and planned strategies to reach historically underserved populations, racial minorities, and women, as well as past experience which demonstrates cultural competencies to achieve such efforts. These strategies should create the connectivity and conditions for growth where it may not exist, such as in rural and underserved communities.
- 6) The application identifies potential challenges to partner recruitment and engagement, and achievement of goals or outcomes, and describes possible strategies to address the challenges.
- 7) The application demonstrates evidence of consultation with and involvement of underserved individuals prior to or during the creation of the proposal.

Monitoring and Evaluation **15 Points**

- 1) The application describes a monitoring and evaluation plan that identifies potential feedback mechanisms and metrics that measure the results of project activities and will meet USDA's evaluation requirements.
- 2) Proposed metrics consider equity and diversity for technical assistance providers, businesses served, and subrecipients, coordinating with USDA to align metrics and reporting with other Federal equity-focused efforts.
- 3) The application describes the systems and infrastructure that will be used to collect and compile data and reports from partners and subawards.
- 4) The application describes plans for coordination, communication, appropriate data sharing and necessary systems to monitor and collect evaluation data.

Fiscal Plan and Financial Controls **15 Points**

- 1) The Budget and Justification provides a clear description for each budget line item and is consistent with the size and scope of the agreement.
- 2) The Budget and Justification relates logically to the project narrative.
- 3) The applicant demonstrates its ability to manage the financial, reporting, and evaluation burdens of a large number of sub-agreements.
- 4) The application represents a substantial, effective, and sound fiscal management system to ensure funds are provided to the intended beneficiaries, including:
 - a. Commitment from the organizational leadership.
 - b. The key staff who will be responsible for managing the financial systems and the individuals (name and title) who comprise the Project Team; and
 - c. The expertise and experience of the Project Team necessary to successfully manage the funds and implement the project.
- 5) The application demonstrates a successful financial audit history of the applicant.

Sustainability **10 Points**

- 1) The application describes how the work, including partnerships, will be sustained beyond the agreement's period of performance (without federal funds) and/or how the project will lay the foundation for future resilience in the region after the project ends.

5.1.1 PRIORITY CONSIDERATION

AMS will prioritize applications that:

- Serve the widest geographic reach and highest number of high need areas collectively as a portfolio of Centers under this funding opportunity.
- Holistically collaborate with other federal, state, regional, and local initiatives that support complementary efforts.

AMS will review and apply priority consideration, based on applicant narrative responses, during its administrative review process.

5.2 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. Please see [section 4.3](#) and [AMS' Late and/or Non-Responsive Applications Policy](#) for more information.

Step 2: Technical Review

Each application that passes initial screening (Step 1) is evaluated by a panel of independent peer reviewers. AMS makes every attempt to match reviewers with applications in their areas of expertise. Each reviewer signs a conflict of interest and confidentiality agreement regarding any assigned proposals. The peer review panels evaluate their assigned proposals using instructions prepared by AMS 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: Administrative Review

AMS will conduct a final administrative evaluation of each review panel's top rankings and recommendations. In addition to the rank and scores, AMS reviews each application to ensure that potential recommended projects align with the scope of the RFA, allowability of budget items, available funding, geographic diversity, and USDA priorities. AMS staff will work with top-ranked applicants to negotiate any revisions if necessary and possible. AMS 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: Secretarial Review

The Secretary of Agriculture or his designee will conduct a final evaluation of the top-ranked applications considered for funding and shall have final discretion to determine awards. The Secretary may prioritize applications that demonstrate diverse representation of agricultural producers, growers, and processors impacted by coronavirus, including producers and growers of specialty crops, non-specialty crops, dairy, livestock, and poultry, producers that supply local food systems, including farmers markets, restaurants, and schools. as well as the capability to serve the broadest range of underserved communities.

6.0 AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

6.1 AWARD NOTICES

Upon announcement of the Federal awards, AMS will prepare and send a Notice of Award and Cooperative Agreement to each recipient for signature by the appropriate official. Cooperative Agreements will be signed by AMS and the AOR.

The Notice of Award and Cooperative Agreement will provide pertinent instructions and information including, at a minimum, the information described in [2 CFR § 200.211](#) and a reference to the [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#).

6.2 UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS

Unsuccessful applicants will be contacted by AMS via email as soon as possible after the Regional Food Center awards are announced. The unsuccessful applicants will be provided anonymous review panel consensus comments regarding their proposals as feedback.

6.3 ADMINISTRATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS

As part of the Notice of Award and Cooperative Agreement, all AMS recipients must abide by the [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#), which reference applicable *Administrative and National Policy Requirements*.

Non-Federal entities (States, local governments, tribes, and non-profit organizations) with \$750,000 or more in federal expenditures are required by the Single Audit Act Amendments of 1996 (Single Audit) and 2 CFR 200 Subpart F to have an annual audit of their Federal awards (e.g., grant and loan programs). AMS expects that recipients of grants through this program will exceed this threshold and will be required to have an annual audit of their Federal award(s).

6.4 REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Cooperators will be required to participate in program evaluation activities, including submitting baseline, biannual, and final reports. Specific requirements will be identified in the award. Reporting and award closeout requirements are included in the AMS General Terms and Conditions.

7.0 AGENCY CONTACTS

7.1 PROGRAMMATIC QUESTIONS

After closely reviewing this RFA in its entirety, applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact the Regional Food Centers staff by e-mail with questions about the grant program at XXX@usda.gov.

For additional information, please visit the Regional Food Center Website:

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/Regionalfoodcenters>.

7.2 AVAILABLE RESOURCES

AMS provides resources and information on the Regional Food Center website (<https://www.ams.usda.gov/Regionalfoodcenters>) that may be helpful to applicants, including **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)**, descriptions of funded projects, and required application forms. AMS staff is available to provide timely technical assistance. Correspondence may be directed to:

Regional Food Centers
USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service

1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 1098 South Building
Stop 0264 Washington, DC 20250-0264

7.3 GRANTS.GOV QUESTIONS

All questions regarding Grants.gov technical assistance must be directed to Grants.gov's [Applicant Support](#).

8.0 OTHER INFORMATION

8.1 EQUAL OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

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

8.2 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUESTS

The Freedom of Information Act of 1966 ([5 U.S.C. § 552](#)) (FOIA) and the Privacy Act of 1974 ([5 U.S.C. § 552a](#)), as implemented by USDA's regulations ([7 CFR § 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 AMS 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, Agricultural Marketing Service, FOIA/PA Officer, Room 1671-S, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-0273, Telephone: (202) 302-0650; or email: AMS.FOIA@usda.gov.

8.3 PAPERWORK REDUCTION

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 ([44 U.S.C. 3501](#)), 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 [XXX](#). The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 6 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.