



# Organic Market Development Grants

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**Fiscal Year 2023 Request for Applications**

**Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-AMS-TM-OMD-G-23-00##**

**Publication Date: [PUBLICATION DATE]**

**Application Due Date: 11:59 PM Eastern Time on [60 DAYS FROM PUBLICATION]**

## Program Solicitation Information

**Funding Opportunity Title:** Organic Market Development Grants

**Funding Opportunity Number:** USDA-AMS-TM-OMD-G-23-00##

**Announcement Type:** Initial

**Assistance Listing Number:** 10.###

**Dates:** Applications must be received by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on [60 DAYS FROM PUBLICATION], 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 the fiscal year (FY) 2023 from certified organic producers and handlers, as well as producers and handlers in transition to organic certification, to the Organic Market Development Grant (OMDG) Program. These grants will serve as investments in the creation of new and improved markets for domestically produced organic products, driving by investing in certified organic processing capacity, market access, and product development. These investments are anticipated to increase the consumption of domestic agricultural commodities by expanding or aiding in the expansion of markets or by developing or aiding in the development of new and additional markets, marketing facilities, and uses for such commodities.

Approximately \$75 million is available in FY 2023 to fund applications under this solicitation. Recipients are expected to execute projects from FY 2023 through FY 2026. This announcement identifies the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply.

AMS encourages applications that benefit smaller farms and ranches, and [historically underserved producers](#). For projects intending to serve these entities, applicants should engage and involve those beneficiaries when developing projects and applications.

USDA promotes climate-resilient landscapes and rural economic systems, including tools to support agriculture, forests, grazing lands, and rural communities. AMS encourages applicants to consider including goals and activities related to reducing and stabilizing the levels of heat-trapping greenhouse gases in the atmosphere or adapting to the already occurring climate change in their project's design and implementation.

**Stakeholder Input:** AMS seeks comments about this Request for Applications (RFA). We will consider the comments in developing the next RFA for the program. Email written comments within one year of the publication date of this RFA to: [AMSGrants@usda.gov](mailto:AMSGrants@usda.gov). (This e-mail address is intended only for receiving comments regarding this RFA and not requesting information or forms.) In your comments, please state that you are responding to the **2023 Organic Market Development Grants RFA**.

## Application Checklist

AMS expects applicants to read the entire RFA prior to submitting their application to ensure that they understand the program's requirements.

This application checklist provides the required and conditionally required documents for an application package. The OMDG program requires that **all application packages** include the following:

- SF-424 – Application for Federal Assistance (in [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov))
- SF-424A – Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs (in [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov))
- Project Abstract Summary (in [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov))
- Project Narrative Form (PDF Attachment)
  - Ensure the required template is used
  - Ensure the executive summary is no more than 250 words
  - Ensure the Project Narrative does not exceed the page limit **(20 pages)** per [section 4.2.4](#)
  - Ensure project excludes unallowable costs and activities per [section 4.6.2](#)
- Signed Letters Verifying Matching Funds for EACH cash and/or in-kind resource (PDF or MS Word Attachment) per [section 4.2.5](#)
- Signed Letter(s) of Commitment from each partner or collaborating organization at the time of application per [section 4.2.5](#)

If applicable, packages may also be required to include the following documents:

- Signed Letter(s) Stating Evidence of Critical Resources and Infrastructure (PDF or MS Word – Attachment)
- Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) (PDF Attachment)

## Application Tips

- To do business with the Federal Government and to submit your application electronically using Grants.gov, you must —
  - Have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and a Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN);
  - Be registered in SAM.gov, the Government's primary registrant database;
  - Provide your UEI number and TIN on your application; and
  - Maintain an active SAM registration with current information throughout the application review period and, if you are awarded a grant, during the project period.
- Register in Grants.gov and submit applications early. **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE DAY OF THE APPLICATION DEADLINE.** AMS encourages you to submit your application at least two weeks before the application deadline to ensure all certifications and registrations are met.
- 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 using the correct Assistance Listing "**10.170**" and "**USDA-AMS-TM-SCBGP-G-23-0003.**"
- Ensure 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 Size/ File Name Characters (50 or less).
- Avoid Special Characters in File Names (\$, %, &, \*, Spanish "ñ", etc.).
- 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".
- 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>

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## 1.0 FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

### 1.1 LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The Organic Market Development Grants (OMDG) program designed to use the funds and authorities of the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) ([15 U.S.C. 714-714f](#)).

The OMDG program will support the development of new and expanded organic markets by providing additional resources and certainty for businesses transitioning to organic or initiating new organic production and processing capacity. By investing in expanded capacity for certified organic aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, distribution, or consumer markets, the anticipated increase in market activity will both address demand for domestically produced agricultural products and the critical need for additional market paths identified by domestic organic producers.

This program is also aligned with efforts to:

1. Ensure equitable access to USDA programs and benefits from USDA-funded projects and support the policies of Executive Order 13985 (Executive Order on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce).
2. Contribute to the resilience of the food and agricultural supply chains and support the policies of Executive Order 14017 (Executive Order on America’s Supply Chains).
3. Promote competition in the organic sector and support the policies of Executive Order 14036 (Promoting Competition in the American Economy).
4. Implement the Build America, Buy America (BABA) Act. Guidance on BABA requirements for USDA award recipients is available [here](#).

### 1.2 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The OMDG program supports innovations that increase domestic organic supply chain capacity for handlers, suppliers, and processors; support market development for domestically produced organic food products; and remove barriers to entry for historically underserved entities. OMDG focuses on investments which will open new markets for U.S. organic producers and/or address inadequate capacity in certified organic processing, storage, and handling/shipping, which have not kept up with the growth in organic crops or the demand for organic products and therefore limit market access for transforming domestic organic crops into organic feed grains or consumer products.

USDA seeks projects which are targeted to specific production regions or crops to ensure meaningful impacts that facilitate the movement of agricultural products in key markets.

## 1.3 PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Eligible projects could include, but are not limited to, the following activities:

- Facilitating connections between buyers and sellers, such as trade shows and conferences;
- Market development related to producer and consumer education that creates or increases demand for new or existing organic products domestically or abroad;
- Purchase and install equipment for on farm processing to help agricultural producers add value to their products at the farmgate level to generate new products and increase producer income;
- Purchase and install equipment for aggregation, processing, storage, marketing, and distribution of organic commodities to create a path to market for producers; or
- Create or strengthen [farm to institution](#) market channels.

**Information Gathering Activities:** Applicants should note that while activities such as developing marketing plans or conducting feasibility studies may be included in project proposals, a project cannot be limited to solely information gathering activities. Projects including information gathering work must demonstrate how such work will support other project activities, such as increasing certified organic processing capacity and/or product development.

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### 1.3.1 PRIORITY AREAS

USDA organic stakeholders have identified the following categories, which will be given priority consideration:

- Organic grains and livestock feed.
- Organic dairy.
- Organic fibers.
- Organic legumes and other rotational crops, including but not limited to processing capacity and consumer product development for peanuts, oats, beans, field peas, barley, and lentils.
- Organic ingredients currently unavailable in commercial form, as evidenced either by inclusion on the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances or by data cited in the application.

Proposals for projects which do not address these categories should explain the market needs or gaps which the funding would fill.

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### 1.3.2 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 OMDG 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. Applicants are encouraged to include specific elements for how they will advance these efforts

## 1.4 DEFINITION OF A PROJECT

A project is a set of interrelated tasks with a cohesive, distinct, specified, and defined goal. It follows a planned, organized approach over a fixed period of time and within specific limitations (cost, performance/quality, etc.). Additionally, it uses resources that are specifically allocated to the work of the project and usually involves a team of people.

Projects are different from other ongoing operations in an organization because, unlike operations, projects have a definitive beginning and end – they have a limited duration. A project has an overarching goal that the applicant wants to accomplish through a series of individual activities or tasks.

In addition to the priorities established in [section 1.4.1](#), the OMDG program focuses on projects such as:

- Expanding capacity for processing, aggregation and distribution of agricultural products to create more and better markets for producers;
- Modernizing manufacturing, tracking, storage, and information technology systems;
- Enhancing worker safety through adoption of new technologies or investment in equipment or facility improvements;
- Improving the capacity of entities to comply with federal, state, and local food safety requirements; and
- Improving operations through acquiring consultant services and training opportunities.

Activities or tasks that could be a part of such projects might include:

- Hiring personnel
- Purchasing special purpose equipment: defined in Section 8.2 of the [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#) as equipment used only for research, scientific, or technical activities.
- Upgrading facilities or equipment...
- Contracting with consultant/experts to conduct marketing plans, feasibility studies, recommend facility upgrades and changes that meet regulatory requirements, conduct design and/or architecture services, etc.
- Contracting with consultants/experts to advise on HACCP or other food safety or worker safety measures or equipment recommendations.
- Non-construction projects to repair or retool processing facilities.
- Consumer advertising, public relations, point-of-sale demonstrations, and participation in trade fairs and exhibits.
- Technical assistance that focuses on enhancing “middle of the supply chain” organic processing and product development.
- Equipment purchases such as processing components, delivery vehicles, and commingling/sorting equipment.

## 1.5 COORDINATION WITH USDA TRANSITION TO ORGANIC PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

Coordination with the USDA’s Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP) is encouraged. See <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/organic-certification/topp> for more information. The six regions of



the TOPP network can provide key insights into the regional processing infrastructure needed to create new markets for organic products produced in those same regions.

Applicants will be asked to indicate if they are coordinating with a TOPP partner in their Project Narrative ([section 4.2.4](#)).

## 1.6 SUBAWARDS

An applicant may subcontract or subaward with partners and collaborators ([section 3.3](#)). Only the applicant must meet the eligibility requirements listed in this RFA. Applicants must maintain guidelines and procedures to prevent any conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest as required by [2 CFR § 400.2\(b\)](#).

## 1.7 NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT

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

## 2.0 AWARD INFORMATION

### 2.1 TYPE OF FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

AMS will use a Grant Agreement to provide the Federal award to applicants.

### 2.2 TYPE OF APPLICATIONS

**New application.** AMS will review all applications for conformance with the criteria in [section 5.0](#) and may require the applicant to provide additional information or clarification by a specified date.

### 2.3 AVAILABLE FUNDING AND FEDERAL AWARD PERIOD DURATION

Source	Available Funding	Award Period	Start Date	End Date
Commodity Credit Corporation	\$75 million	3 years	09/30/2023	09/29/2026

The applicant must indicate the start and end dates on the SF-424, “Application for Federal Assistance” in block 17.

Funding may be contingent on Federal appropriations or authorizations. USDA does not guarantee minimum funding levels or a specific number of awards.

### 2.4 AWARD AMOUNTS AND MATCH REQUIREMENT

Minimum Award	Maximum Award	Matching Requirement
\$100,000	\$3,000,000	25%

This funding opportunity requires matching funds from non-Federal sources in the form of cash and/or in-kind contributions in an amount equal to 25 percent of the **total Federal portion of the project**. There is no competitive advantage for an applicant to provide a cost share or match that exceeds the required amount. If the project is selected for funding, any exceeding amount will be considered voluntary and must be documented and secured at the time of the award.

[Historically underserved producers](#) can qualify for a waiver of the matching fund requirement. (for proposals under \$250,000???). ADD LANGUAGE MIRRORING NRCS PROCESS HERE

### 3.0 ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

#### 3.1 ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants must be domestically owned:

- Individual or groups of agricultural producers and processors;
- Majority-controlled producer-based ventures;
- Tribes and Tribal Entities; or
- Farmer or rancher cooperatives.

Applicants must either be certified to the USDA organic standards or in transition to organic certification, consistent with [7 C.F.R. §205](#). Transitioning applicants must provide either proof of organic certification or proof of initiating the transition process, as verified by a letter from a [USDA-accredited certifier](#).

Any applicant subject to pending administrative, civil, or criminal enforcement is ineligible for funding. Likewise, suspended or revoked operations, as defined by [7 C.F.R. §205.662\(e\)](#), are ineligible for funding.

#### 3.2 ACTIVITIES NOT ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

Due to restrictions outlined in the Commodity Credit Corporation Charter Act, the following activities are not eligible for funding.

- Acquiring real property, or any interest therein.
- Purchase or construction of refrigerated cold storage facilities.
- Construction of new facilities.
- Research, per section 4(m).
  - The prohibition on research does not extend to information gathering activities outlined in [section 1.4](#).

Activities eligible for funding under other USDA-funded grant programs are also ineligible for funding, including but not limited to:

- Organic certification or transition to certification activities funded under the [Organic Certification Cost Share Program](#); and
- Food safety program expenses funded under the [Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops Program](#).

### 3.3 EQUIPMENT

As outlined in the [Program Specific Terms and Conditions](#) and the AMS General Terms and Conditions, equipment purchases that support producer access to new markets and/or benefit organic supply chains are generally allowable as special purpose equipment. Special purpose equipment purchases may include the following:

1. Processing, aggregation, or storage investments;
2. Value chain/supply chain innovation or upgrades, including equipment or technology upgrades or investments to support process adaptations;
3. Food safety equipment, processing equipment, packaging equipment, or vehicles such as delivery vans; and
4. Product development, packaging, and marketing of agricultural products.

Purchases over \$5,000 must be approved in writing and the resulting purchased equipment monitored by AMS, as required by [2 CFR § 200.313](#).

OMDG funds may not be used for construction and property acquisition per uniform guidance on federal financial assistance. All AMS awards are subject to the terms and conditions, cost principles, and other considerations described in the Program Specific and AMS General Terms and Conditions.

Applicants that have questions concerning the allowability of costs after reviewing this document should contact AMS staff using the contact information listed in the RFA.

### 3.4 PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS

Applications should document evidence of existing organic community or industry support and engagement. In the project narrative ([section 4.2.4](#)), applicants must describe how the requested funding will support expanding organic processing capacity and/or develop products to create market paths for domestic organic agricultural producers.

In addition to the narrative, applications shall include letters of commitment (partnership or collaboration) from individuals/entities. Partners and collaborators may come from private or public, for-profit or nonprofit entities:

- A *partnership* is a relationship involving close cooperation between parties having specified and joint rights and responsibilities in the management of the project; and
- A *collaborator* is a person or an organization unaffiliated with the applicant that cooperates with the applicant in the conduct of the project and is not immediately connected to the management of the project.

### 3.5 COST SHARING AND MATCHING

All applications are required to demonstrate a matching contribution equal to 25% of the requested federal award. Cost sharing or the required match must be in the form of allowable direct or indirect costs. Refer to [2 CFR § 200.306](#) for additional Federal requirements and definitions, including the basis for determining the value of cash and in-kind contributions.

In-kind contributions are defined, when used as a cost share or match for a grant, as the value of goods or services provided for the benefit of the grant program, where no funds transferred hands. For example, a partner, such as a tribal community member, may volunteer their professional expertise as a match contribution to the project as described in [2 CFR § 200.306\(e\)](#). These contributions cannot satisfy a cost sharing or matching requirement for this grant program if they are used toward satisfying a match requirement under any other Federal grant agreement to which the applicant is a party.

All matching contributions **must be committed or secured** at the time an applicant is recommend for an award.

Applicants must indicate the total amount of match and how it will specifically align with their requested funding when completing the fiscal plan and resources section of the OMDG Project Narrative, [section 4.2.4](#). Additionally, applicants must submit signed letters or other documentation verifying the match for EACH cash and/or in-kind resource. Refer to [section 4.2.5](#), Matching Funds and Letters of Verification for more information.

Indirect costs may count toward your match. Refer to [section 4.6.1](#), Indirect for more information.

Program income (as defined in [2 CFR § 200.1](#)) or any other Federal funds is an ineligible source of match or cost share.

**Project activities ineligible for program funding may be counted as match.**

## 4.0 APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

### 4.1 ELECTRONIC APPLICATION PACKAGE

Only electronic applications may be submitted via Grants.gov in response to this RFA. AMS strongly encourages 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 4.7](#).

Applicants can find the opportunity under either the Assistance Listing number "10.###," or the OMDG Funding Opportunity Number "USDA-AMS-TM-OMDG-G-23-00##."

### 4.2 CONTENT AND FORM OF APPLICATION SUBMISSION

#### 4.2.1 FORM SF-424 APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

**Required.** Form [SF-424](#) is available via the opportunity at Grants.gov. Applicants may use the following supplemental instructions associated with specific blocks on the SF-424.

Box	Instruction
1 - Type of Submission	Application
2 - Type of Application	New
8.a Legal Name	Must match SAM.gov exactly
8.c - Organizational Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)	Enter applicant UEI for the Organization submitting the application.
8.d – Address	The applicant 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 (Assisted Listing Number)	10.###.
12 - Funding Opportunity Number	USDA-AMS-TM-OMDG-G-23-0008.
14 - Areas Affected by Project	Enter cities, counties, States affected by project.
15 - Descriptive Title of Applicant’s Project	Provide a short descriptive title of the project (do not include applicant organization name).
16.a - Congressional Districts for Applicant	Enter the Congressional district where your main office is located.
16.b - Congressional Districts for Program/Project	Enter the Congressional district where your project will be performed. Write “All” if the projects will be performed in more than one location.
17 - Proposed Project Start Date and End Date	Start date: September 30, 2023 End date: No later than September 29, 2026
18 - Estimated Funding	Total Federal funds requested.
19 - Is Applicant Subject to Review by State Under Executive Order 12372 Process?	Not covered. See <a href="#">section 4.5</a> .

#### 4.2.2 FORM SF-424A BUDGET SUMMARY

**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. The following are supplemental instructions associated with specific boxes on form.

Please complete only sections A and B. (Do not complete sections C - F.)

<b>Section A – Budget Summary</b>	
<b>Box</b>	<b>Instructions</b>
1.a – Grant Program Function or Activity	Enter “OMDG – Federal”

1.b – Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number	Enter “10.###”
1.e – Federal	Enter the amount of Federal funding requested for the project
<b>Section B – Budget Categories</b>	
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 “Travel”, enter 2000 in Column 1, box 6.c

#### 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 form. 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 NARRATIVE

**Required.** Applicants are required to prepare and submit a narrative using the [Project Narrative form](#). The narrative must describe objectives and goals, types and sequence of project activities, monitoring and evaluation strategies associated with the proposed activities, and how the initiative will manage the project (including the subaward process).

The narrative also includes a budget narrative and justification section. A general line-item for “grants” may be provided under Contracts in the application’s budget. The individual subaward budgets are not expected at the submission of this application. However, the applicant will be expected to provide a comprehensive plan detailing each subgrant project, associated outcomes, and applicable expenses in order to draw down on the funds associated with this line item.

The narrative must be typed, single-spaced, in an 11-point font, not to exceed twenty (20) pages, excluding existing form content. For example, if the form is 15 pages before you begin entering your project information, your narrative form may be up to 35 pages (15 original pages + 20 pages of applicant content). DO NOT modify the margins of the Project Narrative form. Handwritten applications or applications 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.

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.

**The supporting documents in subsequent sections do not count toward the 20-page limit for the Project Narrative.**

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#### 4.2.5 MATCHING FUNDS AND LETTERS OF VERIFICATION

**Required.** Each application must include or be accompanied by written verification of match commitments from any party, including the applicant, who will contribute cash or in-kind matching from non-Federal resources to the project.

**Submit one match verification letter for EACH cash or in-kind resource signed by the matching organization.**

AMS highly encourages you to use the **Suggested Match Verification Template Letter** on the grant program’s website. If you do not use this template or if you are an applicant submitting a match, your match verification document must minimally include the following:

- Project Applicant
- Project Title
- Cash Commitment per year (if applicable) and Total Cash Match
- In-kind Contribution per year (if applicable) and Total In-kind Match. Break down items into categories as applicable:
  - Salaries (employee name, title, duties, pay rate/hr., amount matched per year)
  - Items/Activities (fair market value per unit, how value determined, and amount matched per year)
- Explanation of how each type of match will correspond to the budget or be used by the Applicant
- Signature of Matching Organization Representative with typed name and title

Submit Matching Funds and Letters of Verification on letterhead and address them to the applicant (i.e., Project Director). Clearly indicate at the top of the documents that they are **MATCH VERIFICATION LETTERS**. Letters must accompany the proposal at the time of application. Unsigned letters will not be accepted.

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

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#### 4.2.6 LETTERS OF COMMITMENT FROM PARTNER AND COLLABORATOR ORGANIZATIONS

**Required.** Applicants must provide letters of commitment from all project partners and collaborators. More information can be found on partners and collaborators in [section 3.3](#). The letter must state the partner or collaborator agrees to the project management plan presented in the Project Narrative. The Letter of Commitment must include the following:

- Project Applicant
- Project Title

- A short introduction describing the partnering organization’s mission and its interest in this program’s development
- What the organization commits to participating in and supporting
- The time period of the partnership
- Roles of the participating individuals, as applicable, and any individual time commitment
- A statement that these individuals and the organization agree to abide by the management plan contained in the application

Letters of commitment must be written on partner letterhead and addressed to the applicant (i.e., Project Director). Clearly indicate at the top of the documents that they are **LETTERS OF COMMITMENT**. Letters must accompany the proposal at the time of application. Unsigned letters will not be accepted. Emails will not be accepted.

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

**PLEASE NOTE:** AMS does not require Congressional letters of support and such letters do not carry additional weight during the evaluation process.

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#### 4.2.7 NEGOTIATED INDIRECT COST RATE AGREEMENT (NICRA)

**Required if the applicant has a NICRA.** Refer to [section 4.6.1](#) 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.

### 4.3 FUNDING RESTRICTIONS

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#### 4.3.1 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.

If the applicant entity has a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) they wish to apply, evidence of the NICRA must be supplied as part of the application package. 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.

As stated in the regulations ([2 CFR §§ 200.413](#) and [414](#)), any non-Federal entity that has never received a negotiated 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) which 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 an active 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](#).

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#### 4.3.2 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](#).

Applicants that have questions concerning the allowability of costs after reviewing this document should contact AMS staff using the contact information listed under [section 7.0](#).

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#### 4.3.3 COORDINATOR MEETING TRAVEL

Recipients are expected to attend an AMS sponsored grants management meeting during the project's period of performance. The proposed budget should include travel funds for the Project Coordinator and any additional key personnel as reasonably determined by the recipient and AMS.

To estimate these costs in the budget section, please account for flight, hotel, per diem, and ground transportation expenses for a 3-day, 2-night stay. Location and dates are to be determined with a possibility of a virtual conference. If the conference is virtual, recipients will be able to reallocate those funds to other allowable project costs.

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### 4.4 GRANTS.GOV APPLICATION SUBMISSION AND RECEIPT PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS

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#### 4.4.1 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 sufficient time to ensure it does not impact your ability to meet required application submission deadlines.

If individual applicants 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) [Obtain a Unique Entity Identifier \(UEI\) Number](#): All entities applying for funding, including renewal funding, must have a Unique Entity Identifier from SAM.gov. Applicants must enter the UEI number in the data entry field labeled "Organizational UEI" on the SF-424 form.
- 2) [Register with the System for Award Management \(SAM\)](#): In addition to having a UEI number, organizations applying online through Grants.gov must register with SAM. Current SAM.gov registrants have already been assigned their UEI and can view it within SAM.gov. All organizations must register with SAM to apply online. Failure to register with SAM will prevent your organization from applying through Grants.gov. **SAM.gov accounts must be updated annually, and your organization must have an active SAM.gov account to submit your application to Grants.gov.**
- 3) [Create a Grants.gov Account](#): The next step in the registration process is to create an account with Grants.gov. Applicants must know their organization's UEI number to complete this process. Completing this process automatically triggers an email request for applicant roles to the organization's E-Business Point of Contact (EBiz POC) for review. The EBiz POC is a representative from your organization who is the contact listed for SAM. To apply for grants on behalf of your organization, you will need the Authorized Organization Role (AOR).
- 4) [Authorize Grants.gov Roles](#): After creating an account on Grants.gov, the EBiz POC receives an email notifying him or her of your registration and request for roles. The EBiz POC will then log in to Grants.gov and authorize the appropriate roles, 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.
- 5) [Track Role Status](#): After registering with Grants.gov and authorizing the applicant AOR, Grants.gov allows you to track your status.
- 6) **Electronic Signature**: When applications are submitted through Grants.gov, the name of the organization's AOR 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.**

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#### 4.4.2 HOW TO SUBMIT AN APPLICATION TO AMS VIA GRANTS.GOV

Applicants can apply using Grants.gov Workspace. Workspace is a shared, online environment where members of a grant team may simultaneously access and edit different web forms within an application. For each funding opportunity announcement (FOA), 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's name, address, and UEI number. To trigger this feature, an applicant must complete the SF-424 information first. Once it is completed, the information will transfer to the other forms.
- 3) *Submit a Workspace:* Submit your application through Workspace by clicking the Sign and Submit button on the Manage Workspace page, under the Forms tab. Grants.gov recommends submitting your application package **at least 24-48 hours prior to the 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 **4.2 Content and Form of Application Submission** are included.

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

*Applicant Support:* Grants.gov provides additional [training resources, including video tutorials](#).

Applicants may also call the 24/7 toll-free support number 1-800-518-4726, or email [support@grants.gov](mailto: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, contact individuals mentioned in section **section 7.0**.

#### 4.5 APPLICATION SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

AMS will not consider any applications received after the deadline, any applications submitted by fax, email, or postal mail and any applications not responsive to the requirements of this RFA (eligibility, incomplete application, missing required attachments documents, etc.). See [AMS' Late Applications, Denials and/or Appeal Procedures 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 before the application deadline to ensure all certifications and registrations are met.

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.

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.

#### 4.6 SUBMISSION DATE AND TIME

Applicants must submit applications via [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on **XXX**, 2023. AMS cannot consider applications received after this deadline for funding. (See [AMS' Late and/or Nonresponsive Applications Policy](#))

#### 4.7 INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW

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

### 5.0 APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

#### 5.1 PROJECT EVALUATION CRITERIA

Each application that meets the initial qualifications screening requirements will be reviewed and scored competitively using the following criteria:

**Alignment and Intent .....25 Points**

- 1) The extent to which the project narrative provides a clear and concise description of the specific market segment, problem, or need addressed by the project, and how the objectives for the project will address these needs.
- 2) The extent to which the project helps develop, coordinate, and expand organic agricultural market development through innovative yet concrete plans to enhance specific supply chains, creating clear market channels and incentives for organic production, strengthening connections between growers and handlers providing new paths to market, and/or improving handling, processing, or distribution capacity.
- 3) The extent to which the applicant identifies and engages the intended beneficiaries, including the number of beneficiaries and how they will benefit. Projects which engage historically underserved communities may receive additional points.
- 4) The extent to which the application demonstrates a commitment to engage potential project beneficiaries as active participants in partnership activities.

5) The extent to which application complies with all written instructions and requirements described within the RFA and Project Narrative Template.

6) The extent to which the applicant demonstrates how the current project is linked to a larger intervention that opens new markets or facilitates the movement of commodities, to increase consumption of domestic organic agricultural products.

**Technical Merit ..... 20 Points**

1) The extent to which the application presents a clear, well-conceived, and overall suitable work plan for fulfilling the goals and objectives of the proposed project.

2) The extent to which the application presents a realistic schedule for implementing the proposed project during the award project period.

**Achievability ..... 20 Points**

1) The extent to which the outcomes and indicator(s) are appropriate for the scale and scope of the project, including:

- a. How indicator numbers were derived with a clear means to collect feedback to evaluate and achieve each relevant outcome indicator; and
- b. The anticipated key factors that are predicted to contribute to or restrict progress toward the applicable indicators, including action steps for addressing identified restricting factors.

**Expertise and Partners ..... 30 Points**

1) The extent to which the proposed project represents substantial, effective, diverse and strong qualifications of the applicant (individual and team) and the relevant partnerships and collaborators to accomplish the project's goals and objectives and to meet the needs of the intended beneficiaries including:

- a. The key staff who will be responsible for managing the projects and names and titles of the individuals who comprise the Project Team;
- b. The expertise and experience of the Project Team necessary to successfully manage and implement the proposed project; and
- c. The extent to which the application describes how the project, and its partnerships and collaborations, will be sustained beyond the project's period of performance.

2) The extent to which the application describes a commitment to collaboration and engagement among partners to ensure high levels of participation or provides a clear and concise plan for how such engagement will occur.

- a. Commitment from the key partners and/or collaborators demonstrated through the Project Narrative and letters of commitment; and

- b. The degree to which applicants collaborate with [historically underserved producers](#) as part of their projects.

**Fiscal Plan and Resources..... 25 Points**

- 1) The extent to which the application budget narrative or justification provides a clear, detailed, narrative description for each budget line item including:
  - a. How the budget is consistent with the size and scope of the project; and
  - b. How the budget relates logically to the narrative describing the project.
- 2) The extent to which the application provides evidence that critical resources and infrastructure that are necessary for the initiation and completion of the proposed project are currently in place.

**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 set forth in this RFA. If an application does not meet these requirements, it is removed from consideration. Please see [AMS's Late and/or Nonresponsive Applications Policy](#) for more information. 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 applications. The peer review panels evaluate their assigned applications using instructions prepared by AMS officials. Individual reviewers score applications and then confer with other panel members. The scoring and discussion serve 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, allowability of budget items, available funding, geographic diversity, and USDA priorities. AMS staff will work with top-ranked applicants to negotiate any revisions as necessary. 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](#).

**6.0 AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION**

**6.1 AWARD NOTICES**

Upon announcement of the Federal awards, AMS will prepare and send a Notice of Award (NOA) to each recipient for signature by the appropriate official. The NOA will be signed by AMS and the AOR.

The NOA 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 awards are announced to inform them of the results. AMS will email unsuccessful applicants the review panel consensus comments regarding their proposals.

## 6.3 ADMINISTRATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS

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

## 6.4 REPORTING

Reporting and award closeout requirements are included in the [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#). If there are any program or award-specific award terms, they will be identified in the award.

## 6.5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF USDA SUPPORT

Proper acknowledgement of your USDA-AMS OMDG funding in published solicitations, presentations, press releases, and other communications is critical for the success of our agency's programs. Grant recipients must meet the acknowledgement requirements outlined in the updated [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#).

## 7.0 AGENCY CONTACTS

After closely reviewing this RFA in its entirety, applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact the OMDG staff by e-mail with questions about the grant program at [XXX@usda.gov](mailto:XXX@usda.gov).

**For additional information, please visit the AMS grants Website:** [www.ams.usda.gov/grants](http://www.ams.usda.gov/grants).

### 7.1 ADDRESS

#### **Organic Market Development Grants**

USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service, Transportation and Marketing Program  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Room 1510 South Building  
Stop 0264  
Washington, DC 20250-0264

### 7.2 GRANTS.GOV CONTACT INFORMATION

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

### 7.3 AVAILABLE RESOURCES

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

## 8.0 OTHER INFORMATION

### 8.1 NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](#) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

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 part 1, Subpart A](#)) govern the release or withholding of information to the public in connection with this Federal award. The release of information under these laws and regulations applies only to records held by 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](mailto: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 0503-0028. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 4 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.