



Food Infrastructure Improvement Program

Fiscal Year 2023 Request for Applications

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-AMS-TM-FIIP-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: Food Infrastructure Improvement Program Cooperative Agreements

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

Announcement Type: Initial

Assistance Listing Number: 10.###

Funding Authorization: The Food Infrastructure Improvement Program (FIIP) program was authorized by section 1001 of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021 (Pub. L. No. 117—2).

Eligible Entities: Eligible entities are State agencies, commissions, or departments in States and territories that are responsible for agriculture, commercial food processing, seafood, or related food system/distribution or commerce activities within the State or Territory. AMS will consider only one application per State; agencies within the State must coordinate on the application. AMS requires a Lead State agency partnering with at least one additional relevant state agency. The term 'State' means the several States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the United States Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Applying for funds under this solicitation is a two-step process (see [section 1.4](#) for full details). First, eligible entities must submit a Letter of Intent conveying their intention to apply for funds. Second, eligible entities must then submit a full application describing their funding request, how it aligns with the program's priorities and intent, and implementation plans.

Letter of Intent Due Date: Eligible entities must submit a Letter of Intent by XX, 2023. The letter of intent must be from the Lead State Agency and reflect engagement and commitment from partner agencies in the State. States that do not submit a letter of intent will not be eligible for funds under this program.

Application Due 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 fiscal year (FY) 2023 from each U.S. State and territory for Food Infrastructure Improvement Program Cooperative Agreements (FIIP) to develop and administer state coordinated initiatives to build resilience across the middle of the State's food supply chain for food crops. Funds will be used to expand capacity for the aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, and distribution of food products, including specialty crops, dairy, grains for human consumption, aquaculture, and other food products, excluding meat and poultry. This program is intended to provide similar support to that provided in other USDA funding for meat and poultry processing, but for the non-meat and poultry sectors. States will work in partnership with USDA to make competitive subaward investments in middle of the supply chain infrastructure (Infrastructure Grants) to food and farm businesses and other eligible entities, and may use a limited portion of funds to develop and/or strengthen the State's supply chain coordination and targeted market development services.

Approximately \$400 million in American Rescue Plan funding is available for this program. Funds will be allocated by formula (see [section 2.4](#)) for activities that will take place between FY 2023 and FY 2026.

The overall goal of FIIP is to create more and better processing options for producers across the specialty crops, dairy, grain (for food), and other sectors detailed in [section 1.2.1](#) (i.e., non- meat and poultry sectors) by targeting gaps and opportunities in the pandemic assistance, Food Systems Transformation (FST) programs, and existing USDA grant programs that support the agricultural supply chain.

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.

In all programs and initiatives, 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.

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:

- SF-424 – Application for Federal Assistance (in Grants.gov)
- SF-424A – Budget Summary (in Grants.gov)
- Project Abstract Summary (in Grants.gov)
- State Plan Template
- Signed Letter(s) of Commitment [Section 5.2.6](#)
- [Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement \(NICRA\) \(PDF Attachment\)](#)

Note: Project Profile Templates may be submitted at the time of application through Grants.gov OR within one year of the start date on the grant agreement by email to AMS. It should be clear from the Grant Administrative Template which option the State department of agriculture will choose.

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1.0 FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

1.1 LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The Food Infrastructure Improvement Program (FIIP) program was authorized by section 1001 of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021 (Pub. L. No. 117—2).

1.2 PURPOSE

The purpose of the FIIP program is to assist U.S. states and territories (States) to build resilience in the middle of the supply chain and strengthen local and regional food systems and creating new revenue streams for producers. States will make subawards in the form of Infrastructure Grants to middle-of-the-supply businesses to create more diverse local market options and create more economic opportunities for communities, allowing them to retain more of the food system dollar. These investments aim to create a food systems infrastructure to support competitive and profitable market access for farm products. States may use some of the funds to conduct complementary state-led supply chain coordination in alignment with these program goals.

The Food Infrastructure Improvement Program (FIIP) serves as an important component of USDA’s framework to transform the food system to benefit consumers, producers, and rural communities by providing more options, increasing access, and creating new, more, and better markets for small and mid-size producers. The pandemic and recent supply chain disruptions have revealed the perils of a national food system that depends on capacity concentrated in a few geographic areas and requires many steps to get from farm to fork. To be more resilient, the food system of the future needs to be more distributed and local.

FIIP addresses this need by targeting crucial parts of the agricultural supply chain to address gaps in existing pandemic assistance, Food Systems Transformation (FST) programs, and other USDA programs. The primary goal of FIIP is to support food system crops and products meant for human consumption (excluding meat and poultry products, which are funded through other USDA programs).

The program also aims to:

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

This program is also aligned with efforts to:

- Ensure equitable access to USDA programs and benefits from USDA-funded projects and support the policies of Executive Order 13985 (Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government). Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce).
- Contribute to the resilience of the food and agricultural supply chains through support for diversified, value-added agriculture and support the policies of Executive Order 14017 (Executive Order on America’s Supply Chains).

- Promote competition in the food system and support the policies of Executive Order 14036 (Executive Order on Promoting Competition in the American Economy).
- Implement the Build America, Buy America (BABA) Act. Guidance on BABA requirements for USDA award recipients is available [here](#).

1.2.1 TARGET LOCAL AND REGIONAL AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS

FIIP is intended to serve middle-of-the-supply-chain needs to provide more and better markets to producers of the target agricultural products below. These represent food system crops and products meant for human consumption (excluding meat and poultry products, which are funded through other USDA programs).

Eligible products include:

- Grains, beans, and pulses for human consumption (not for animal feed and forage)
- Fruits and vegetables
- Tree nuts
- Peanuts
- Milk and other dairy products from cows, sheep, and goats
- Eggs
- Aquaculture (food fish and mollusks, crustaceans for food, seaweed and algae)
- Honey
- Hemp hearts and hempseed oil
- Fiber

Ineligible products include: meat and poultry, wild-caught seafood, animal feed and forage products, including pet food, landscaping products, or highly processed commodity crops such as corn and sugar beets.

1.3 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The program will award cooperative agreements to each State. Cooperative agreements are a form of grant that anticipates substantial involvement by the awarding federal agency (e.g., engaging with the grant recipient on overall project direction and implementation).

AMS will make only one award to each state and territory. Each State will apply through a Lead State Agency (see [Section 3.1](#)). States will use the formula funds awarded by USDA to make competitive Infrastructure Grant subawards as described in Section 1.5 for projects to expand capacity and infrastructure for the aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, or distribution of targeted agricultural products (see [section 1.2.1](#)).

States may also use up to 20 percent of their formula grant, for a total of up to \$1 million per State, to develop and/or enhance a supply chain coordination initiative that focuses on business support and market development (see [section 1.4.5](#)) to benefit local and regional food systems and contributes to the success and impact of the FIIP Infrastructure Grant investments. States can also use grant funds to pay administrative costs associated with implementing their program.

There is no match requirement for grant funds dedicated to activities conducted by the state (see [section 4.1](#)). Sub-awardees will be required to provide matching funds on a graduated scale (see [section 1.5.3](#)).

States must ensure that Infrastructure Grants are used for the purpose of expanding middle of the supply chain capacity and offer more and better market opportunities and new streams of revenue to small and mid-sized agricultural producers, including those who may not have access to value-added opportunities or processing to meet market demand for premium or value-added products. The FIIP program will focus on funding Infrastructure Grant activities in each state that:

- Expand capacity for processing, aggregation and distribution of agricultural products to create more and better markets for producers;
- Modernize manufacturing, tracking, storage, and information technology systems;
- Enhance worker safety through adoption of new technologies or investment in equipment or facility improvements;
- Improve the capacity of entities to comply with federal, state, and local food safety requirements;
- Improve operations through acquiring consultant services and training opportunities;
- Support construction of a new facility or purchase of an inoperable facility;
- Modernize or expand an existing facility (including expansion and modifications to existing buildings and/or construction of new buildings at existing facilities;
- construction of wastewater management structures, etc.); and
- Modernize processing and manufacturing equipment.
- Develop, customize or install climate-smart equipment that reduces greenhouse gas emissions, increases efficiency in water use, improves air and/or water quality, and/or meets one or more of USDA's climate action goals.

States must propose in their initial application how they will prioritize Infrastructure Grant applications that benefit the following:

- Underserved farmers and ranchers;
- New and beginning farmers or ranchers;
- Veteran producers;
- Processors and other middle-of-the-supply businesses owned by socially disadvantaged individuals as defined by the Small Business Administration (SBA).

States must include criteria in their Infrastructure Grant competition that focuses funding to projects that:

- Offer family-supporting job quality and treatment/safety of workers;
- Focus on small and medium-sized enterprises that add options and choices for consumers and producers (emphasis on value-added);
- Demonstrate local support for the project;
- Support underserved communities; and
- Are submitted by cooperatives, farmer- and worker-owned enterprises.

States may choose to prioritize investments based on specific markets that align with program goals and are important in the State. Some potential markets for prioritization include:

- Institutions
- Retail
- Intermediaries, such as food hubs, aggregators, wholesalers, and distributors
- Market channels or mechanisms intended to respond to food access challenges in the state, including distinct cultural markets, corner stores, etc.

1.4 STATE RESPONSIBILITIES

States are responsible for (1) submitting a letter of intent, (2) developing an initial state application outlining how the state plans to conduct outreach and use the funds, (3) conducting outreach and an Infrastructure Grant competition and submitting Infrastructure Grant award recommendations to USDA in a State Infrastructure Grant Proposal, and (4) upon USDA approval, making Infrastructure Grant awards, conducting associated state-led coordination activities and overseeing funded projects. This includes ensuring that Infrastructure Grant recipients maintain appropriate records and follow all applicable Federal statutes and regulations as well as the Cooperative Agreement and Program Specific and [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#).

States must ensure that proposals are fully responsive to the FIIP program by reviewing [section 1.2 Purpose](#) and award criteria found in [section 6.1](#). Contact a specialist listed in [section 8.0 Agency Contacts](#) if there is any question about whether or not a project qualifies for FIIP.

1.4.1 LETTER OF INTENT

States are required to submit a letter of intent by [XX date]. This letter must be submitted by the agency selected to lead the work in the state (Lead State Agency). The letter must include (1) intent to use the formula funds offered to the state, and (2) identify the Lead Agency applicant and any partner agencies that will work on the program (if partners are planned and identified by then). Upon confirmation of USDA receipt of your letter of intent, states should proceed to developing their initial application ([Section 1.4.2](#)).

1.4.2 INITIAL APPLICATION – PROJECT NARRATIVE

By the deadline in this RFA, States must submit an Initial Application, including Project Narrative, submitted by the Lead State Agency and responsive to the requirements in [Sections 5.2](#) of this RFA. The Initial Application will describe the state’s outreach plan, a description of anticipated priorities and needs in the state relative to this program, the State’s plan for its Infrastructure Grant competition process, including how it will ensure that the purpose and priorities of FIIP will be fulfilled, and whether it will use a portion of the funds (up to 20% of the State’s award amount or up to \$1 million, whichever is less) for complementary State-led supply chain coordination activities described in [Section 1.4.5](#). USDA will review, inform, and approve this Initial Application before entering into a cooperative agreement with the Lead State Agency, as described in [Section 6.1](#). Initial Applications will be expected to meet the award criteria outlined in [Section 6.1](#).

1.4.3 OUTREACH TO IDENTIFY INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT FUNDING PRIORITIES

States are expected to perform outreach to interested parties, including underserved farmers and ranchers, new and beginning farmers or ranchers, veteran producers, farm and food businesses in supply chains for Target Agricultural Products, and underserved communities, prior to the development and release of the State's request for applications for their Infrastructure Grants, through a transparent process of receiving and considering public comment to identify State funding priorities. The State should conduct this outreach to ensure that the Initial Application it submits to USDA for review has been developed with proven and justified public support.

1.4.4 ADMINISTER INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT SUBAWARDS

States will administer a competitive process to award Infrastructure Grants in their State, as described in [Section 1.5](#).

1.4.5 STATE-LED COMPLEMENTARY SUPPLY CHAIN ACTIVITIES

States may allocate up to 20% of a their FIIP funding, or up to \$1 million (whichever is smaller), to Supply Chain Coordination activities, led by the Lead State Agency or one or more partner state agencies, aligned with the purposes of the program, and designed to serve the producers and supply chains targeted by this FIIP program, including but not limited to Infrastructure Grant recipients. States are encouraged to conduct these activities themselves, in order to build state-level capacity, but may contract or enter subagreements for some of the activities. See [Section 1.6](#) for more details.

1.5 INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT SUBAWARD PROCESS

States must offer most of their FIIP funding to Infrastructure Grants through a competitive subawards process administered according to the requirements in this section and the following sections ([1.5.1](#) - [1.5.8](#)) and other relevant requirements in this RFA. After states take their allowed administrative funds and indirect costs (see [Section 4.2](#) and [4.3](#)) and up to 20% of the funding or \$1 million, whichever is less, for complementary state-led technical assistance (see [Section 1.6](#)), the remainder must be used for Infrastructure Grants.

1.5.1 INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT – FUNDING AMOUNTS

The minimum award amount is \$100,000 and maximum award amount is \$3,000,000.

1.5.2 ENTITIES ELIGIBLE FOR INFRASTRUCTURE GRANTS

Entities eligible for Infrastructure Grants made by states will be:

- Agricultural producers or processors, or groups of agricultural producers and processors
- Nonprofit organizations operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, distribution of targeted agricultural products
- Local government entities operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, distribution of targeted agricultural products

- Tribal governments operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, distribution of targeted agricultural products.
- Institutions such as schools, universities, or hospitals bringing producers together to establish cooperative or shared infrastructure or invest in equipment that will benefit multiple producers middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, distribution of targeted agricultural product.

1.5.3 INFRASTRUCTURE GRANTS – COST SHARING AND MATCHING

For the **Market Development and Promotion and Processing Capacity Expansion Projects**, the recipient must pay 50% of the project cost, as a match to federal funding. **Turnkey Equipment-Only Projects** do not require matching funds.

Reduced Matching Funds– Historically Underserved Groups

For [underserved farmers and ranchers](#), or for other businesses that qualify under [SBA categories](#) of Small disadvantaged business, Women-owned small business, or veteran-owned small business, the required match funding contribution or cost share is reduced to 25% of the project cost.

Historically Underserved Farmers and Ranchers Certification

To receive the reduced match or cost share, qualifying applicants must use the following options:

Qualifying farmer and rancher applicants should complete form [CCC-860, Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, Beginning and Veteran Farmer or Rancher Certification](#). This form allows producers to certify that they, or the entity or joint operation applying for the program, are:

- Members of a socially disadvantaged group;
- Qualify as limited resource producers;
- Are beginning farmers or ranchers; or
- Are a veterans.

Qualifying applicants must complete the form according to the [CCC-860 instructions](#) and submit it to their local [USDA Farm Service Agency office](#).

Small Business Certification

Small disadvantaged businesses, women-owned small businesses or veteran-owned small businesses should get certified through SAM.gov using the Small Business Administration (SBA) categories. Information on the SBA Certification process can be on the program pages for the [Small Disadvantaged Business](#) program, [Women-Owned Small Business Federal Contract](#) program, and the [Veteran Contracting Assistance Program](#).

Other Matching Fund Information

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 Project Narrative, [section 5.2.5](#). Additionally, applicants must submit signed letters or other documentation verifying the match for EACH cash and/or in-kind resource. Refer to section 5.2.6, Matching Funds and Letters of Verification for more information.

Indirect costs may count toward your match. Refer to [section 4.2](#), 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.

1.5.4 INFRASTRUCTURE GRANTS – INDIRECT COSTS

Indirect costs are any costs that are incurred for common or joint objectives that therefore, cannot be readily identified with an individual project, program, or organizational activity. They generally include facilities operation and maintenance costs, depreciation, and administrative expenses. If an Infrastructure Grant recipient has a NICRA, States are required to honor that negotiated rate, and a copy of the NICRA must be submitted with the Infrastructure Grant application. Otherwise, applicants may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10 percent of modified total direct costs (MTDC). For additional information, refer to [section 4.2](#).

1.5.5 INFRASTRUCTURE GRANTS – COMPETITIVE REVIEW PROCESS

States must award Infrastructure Grants through a competitive review process. State will facilitate and have operational responsibility to carry out the competition and should simplify the process and application to the maximum extent possible.

The competitive review process must:

- follow all applicable state policies and procedures
- include the use of an independent review panel of experts or qualified individuals
- include the factors and reasons for selecting an applicant and any changes in project proposal ranks/scores that may occur during the review process
- 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\(b\)](#)

All documentation affecting the decision to approve, disapprove, defer, or otherwise not fund an application should be maintained in an accessible, centralized program file.

When conducting their competitive review of subaward applications for Infrastructure Grants, States should consider the extent to which each:

- Is being submitted by an eligible entity as defined in [Section 1.5.2](#)
- Is for a project with eligible activities as described in [Section 1.5.6](#)
- Is responsive to priorities as described in [Section 1.3](#)
- Demonstrates financial viability, technical feasibility, and readiness.
- Describes market impact and opportunities.
- Demonstrates community impact and support, including labor and workforce considerations.

AMS will provide a subaward project narrative template for Infrastructure Grant applications.

After the State Infrastructure Grant competition is complete, and within the first year of the grant agreement, States will submit their Infrastructure Grant award recommendations to USDA in a State Infrastructure Grant Proposal for review and final approval. The State Infrastructure Grant Proposal will include a compiled set of project profiles based on the AMS-provided project narrative template, one for each project the State proposes to fund. Each State Infrastructure Grant Proposal will be reviewed by a USDA Review Board (Board) against the criteria described in this section and to ensure that project portfolios in each state align with the program purpose, provide reasonable geographic coverage within the state, support a diversity of targeted agricultural products appropriate to the specific state, prioritize underserved producers and businesses and support program goals as stated in this RFA. This Review Board may respond to the State with questions and recommendations to adjust award recommendations.

1.5.6 INFRASTRUCTURE GRANTS – PROJECTS ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

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.

Infrastructure Grants will fund projects that expand capacity and infrastructure for the aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, or distribution of targeted agricultural products. Examples include:

- Expanding processing capacities, including adding product types, increasing production volumes, and supporting new wholesale/retail product lines;
- Modernizing equipment or facilities through upgrades, repairs, or retooling; (e.g., adapting product lines for institutional procurement or adding parallel processing capacity);

- Purchase and installation of specialized equipment, such as processing components, sorting equipment, packing and labeling equipment, or delivery vehicles;
- Modernizing manufacturing, tracking, storage, and information technology systems
- Enhancing worker safety through adoption of new technologies or investment in equipment or facility improvements
- Construction of a new facility
- Increasing packaging and labeling capacities that meet compliance requirements under applicable laws (e.g. sealing, bagging, boxing, labeling, conveying, and product moving equipment);
- Increasing storage space, including cold storage;
- Develop, customize or install climate-smart equipment that reduces greenhouse gas emissions, increases efficiency in water use, improves air and/or water quality, and/or meets one or more of USDA's climate action goals;
- Modernize equipment or facilities to ensure food safety, including associated Hazard, Analysis, and Critical Control Points (HACCP) consultation, plan development and employee training;
- Training on the use of all equipment purchased under the grant and associated new processes;

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

- Hiring personnel for the project activities
- Purchasing special purpose equipment: defined in Section 8.2 of the [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#). This includes the purchase of special purpose equipment for institutions or others that will benefit multiple producers through middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, distribution of targeted agricultural product.
- Developing marketing plans, conducting feasibility studies, analyzing potential facility upgrades and changes that meet regulatory requirements, obtaining design and/or architecture services, etc.
- Planning for Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) or other food safety or worker safety measures or equipment recommendations
- Upgrades or new facilities for processing specific agricultural products, such as:
 - On-farm post-harvest processing, preservation, and storage/cold storage
 - Post-harvest cleaning and grading
 - Aggregator warehouse and storage, including cooperatives
 - Purchase of freezing equipment, freezer, or cold storage
 - Processing, canning, preserving and pasteurization
 - Preparation and packing
 - Drying, hulling, shelling, and milling
 - Cooking, baking, juicing, distilling, fermenting

1.5.7 INFRASTRUCTURE GRANTS - ACTIVITIES NOT ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

The following activities are not eligible for funding:

- Acquiring real property (including land purchases), or any interest therein.
- Projects focused on meat and poultry processing or other ineligible agricultural products as noted in [Section 1.2.1](#).
- Activities that have received a Federal award from another Federal award program.
- Claim expenses that have been or will be reimbursed under any Federal, State, or local government funding.

Activities which have already received funding or are more directly targeted by other USDA-funded grant programs are also ineligible for funding under this program, including but not limited to:

- [Depending on timing of announcements, add Organic Market Development]
- 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](#).

1.5.8 INFRASTRUCTURE GRANTS – EVIDENCE OF CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Evidence of Critical Infrastructure is required if critical resources and/or infrastructure are necessary for the completion of the proposed Infrastructure Grant project. States must require applicants to submit evidence (in MS Word or PDF) that critical resources and infrastructure necessary to support the initiation and completion of a project are in place. Land, structures, and other critical resources must be in place and in working condition at the time of application submission. The letter must indicate the critical resources that are necessary for initiation and completion of the project and certify that they are in place and committed prior to the start date of the project. States may use the AMS Suggested Evidence of Critical Resources and Infrastructure Template Letter. If States do not require Infrastructure Grant applicants to use this template, Letters of Evidence of Critical Infrastructure must minimally include the following:

- Project Applicant
- Project Title
- A statement about committing/approving/granting permission, etc. of the critical resource or infrastructure to the project for the time period
- A description of the approved use of the critical resource or infrastructure approved for the project, any costs associated with its use, and any qualifying circumstances for its use

1.6 STATE-LED COMPLEMENTARY SUPPLY CHAIN COORDINATION ACTIVITIES

Up to 20% of a state’s FIIP funding, or up to \$1 million (whichever is smaller) may be allocated to Supply Chain Coordination activities, led by the Lead State Agency or a partner state agency, aligned with the purposes of the program and designed to serve the producers and supply chains targeted by this FIIP program, including but not limited to Infrastructure Grant recipients. States are encouraged to conduct these activities themselves, in order to build state-level capacity, but may contract or enter subagreements for some of the activities.

States within a region served by one of the USDA’s Regional Food Business Centers (Regional Food Centers) are expected to coordinate with the Regional Food Center to the maximum extent possible.

States are also encouraged to coordinate program activities with applicable Local Food Purchase Assistance Agreements and Local Food for Schools agreements, which many states and territories have with USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service Commodity Procurement Program.

States are encouraged to connect local and regional producers with Federal and State programs, including USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Farm to School Leads, USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) State Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coordinators, and state food and agriculture councils.

States should include nonmonetary assistance to businesses through either targeted technical assistance or trainings and other relevant resources. Specific forms of assistance may include:

- Assessing supply chain needs and opportunities in the state to benefit agricultural producers, expand product offerings for consumers, expand processing options and capacity, facilitate cooperative solutions to bottlenecks, and plan for best use to meet needs and build opportunities through Infrastructure Grants;
- Providing innovative, yet practical, planning for the aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storage, transportation, wholesaling, or distribution of food;
- Developing or facilitating general informational websites, webinars, conferences, trainings, plant tours, and field days; and
- Business assistance, including business plan development for processed products, strategic planning assistance, and distribution and supply chain innovation.

1.7 USDA SUBSTANTIAL INVOLVEMENT IN COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH STATES

A cooperative agreement means a legal instrument of financial assistance between a Federal awarding agency and a recipient or a pass-through entity and a subrecipient (See [2 CFR § 200.1](#)). A cooperative agreement is distinguished from a grant in that it provides for substantial involvement of the Federal awarding agency in carrying out the activity contemplated by the Federal award.

USDA will review, inform, and approve States' Initial Application before entering into cooperative agreements, which will include tailored substantial USDA involvement based on the goals articulated by each state.

As described in [Section 1.5.5](#) above, USDA will provide partnership and expertise in its review of State Infrastructure Grant Proposals and provide input to states to ensure that funded Infrastructure Grants are aligned with the program.

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

- USDA will maintain engagement to ensure that implementation maintains consistency across states and in alignment with FIIP program purpose while also being responsive to the specific needs of the producers in the state. This may include coordinating state partner meetings.
- Sharing expertise and resources on local and regional food systems, market development, value chain coordination or other topics identified as useful to support state FIIP activities.

- Provision of specific direction or redirection of work during the period of performance, including reallocation of Infrastructure Grant funds or supply chain coordination funds to alternative projects or uses, as needed.
- Developing and disseminating clear and consistent branding for this program. USDA will coordinate with states on all award announcements to ensure they are amplified at the federal level and provide opportunities for USDA officials to attend announcement events if feasible. States will also coordinate with USDA on events or ribbon-cuttings or other events to highlight success of Infrastructure Grant projects.
- Collaborating with States on data collection methods and data analysis for performance reports.

USDA substantial involvement does not release the State from their role in ensuring that all activities, including subawards are conducted in accordance with all federal, state, and local regulations.

1.8 NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT AND OTHER FEDERAL LAWS AND REGULATIONS

States must ensure Infrastructure Grant Recipients comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), Endangered Species Act (ESA), and all other federal environmental laws and regulations. States are required to review projects for NEPA compliance prior to the award of Infrastructure Grant subaward funds. States are responsible for assisting Infrastructure Grant recipients with obtaining any authorities, permits, easements or other approvals necessary for the implementation of the activities in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

If selected for an award, Infrastructure Grant recipients will need to provide States all requested information to support compliance with NEPA, ESA, NHPA, and other Federal laws or regulations as part of the administrative process. The costs associated with satisfying environmental review requirements and permits are also eligible for reimbursement as pre-application expenses. See section XXX of program specific terms and conditions for allowable pre-application costs for environmental review process and permitting.

AMS will complete an Environmental Screening evaluation before awarding of grant funds. All Environmental areas evaluated can be found in the grant specific Terms and Conditions. AMS reserves the right to deny an application that does not meet NEPA or permitting policies or does not provide documentation by established time frame. A project cannot begin until a completed NEPA review has been completed by AMS.

2.0 AWARD INFORMATION

2.1 TYPE OF FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

AMS will use a Cooperative 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
ARP	\$400 million*	4 years	TBD	TBD

*Amounts do not include AMS administrative costs. Enactment of additional continuing resolutions or an appropriations act may affect the availability or level of funding for this program.

The applicant must indicate the start and end dates on the SF-424, “Application for Federal Assistance” in block 17. AMS encourages States to allow ample time for completion of all projects.

2.4 AMOUNTS AVAILABLE TO EACH APPLICANT

Subject to the amount of available funding as set forth above in [section 2.3](#), each eligible applicant that submits an application that the AMS reviews and accepts is eligible to receive the available allocation as indicated below. These allocation amounts are based a formula using available NASS data across eligible commodities (e.g., wheat, pulses, rice, fruits, vegetables, dairy, aquaculture, and more). The formula is developed to favor States that have a significant amount of production of the target commodities AND where that production is produced mostly by small farms. The formula is based on sales figures for each State’s share of national small farm production and each state’s share of national production for targeted commodities. Small farm share is weighted 2:1 to overall production to prioritize small and midsize agriculture. AMS is providing a minimum funding allocation of \$2 million for all states and territories regardless of the size of their production.

State	Available Allocation
Alabama	\$3,508,613
Alaska	\$2,132,943
American Samoa	\$2,059,801
Arizona	\$4,571,518
Arkansas	\$3,996,759
California	\$45,211,987
Colorado	\$4,358,569
Connecticut	\$2,707,145
Delaware	\$2,177,586
District of Columbia	\$2,000,000
Florida	\$7,688,273
Georgia	\$6,070,235
Guam	\$2,093,440
Hawaii	\$3,310,769
Idaho	\$7,683,683
Illinois	\$4,400,961
Indiana	\$7,277,544
Iowa	\$5,160,859
Kansas	\$6,490,069
Kentucky	\$5,260,690

Louisiana	\$3,740,678
Maine	\$3,844,902
Maryland	\$3,468,633
Massachusetts	\$3,473,450
Michigan	\$9,972,045
Minnesota	\$12,987,792
Mississippi	\$3,335,204
Missouri	\$6,028,016
Montana	\$4,421,795
Nebraska	\$3,527,251
Nevada	\$2,220,919
New Hampshire	\$2,613,746
New Jersey	\$3,201,008
New Mexico	\$3,735,487
New York	\$19,072,647
North Carolina	\$4,898,935
North Dakota	\$5,154,107
Northern Mariana Islands	\$2,027,308
Ohio	\$11,084,535
Oklahoma	\$4,666,330
Oregon	\$6,202,506
Pennsylvania	\$26,234,156
Puerto Rico	\$3,613,241
Rhode Island	\$2,192,385
South Carolina	\$3,363,842
South Dakota	\$3,373,791
Tennessee	\$3,925,606
Texas	\$8,732,092
U.S. Virgin Islands	\$2,058,614
Utah	\$3,152,600
Vermont	\$4,719,321
Virginia	\$4,583,008
Washington	\$10,982,411
West Virginia	\$2,664,089
Wisconsin	\$30,409,819
Wyoming	\$2,156,288

3.0 ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

3.1 ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible entities are State agencies, commissions, or departments in States and territories that are responsible for agriculture, commercial food processing, seafood, or related food system/distribution or commerce activities within the State. The Governor may decide which agency to apply as the Lead State

Agency applicant, as there is one application per state. The Lead State Agency applicant may implement the program in partnership with other eligible agencies within the state. The Lead State Agency is responsible for submitting the letter of intent and should describe partnerships with any other eligible entity agencies in the state who will play a significant role in implementation. USDA has designated funding for each of the 50 States, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, Guam, and the United States Virgin Islands.

AMS expects that applicants will consult with the Governor's Office and other relevant stakeholders before developing FIIP project applications to ensure maximum public input and benefit. These stakeholders should play an important role in development of project goals and objectives, in implementing the project plan, and in evaluating and disseminating project results and outcomes.

3.2 PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS

An applicant may establish subcontracts or subagreements with partners and collaborators for coordination and technical assistance activities, or to conduct outreach for the Infrastructure Grant competition.

- A *partnership* is a relationship involving close cooperation between parties having specified responsibilities in the management of the project. In FIIP, this may include other state agencies working with the Lead State Agency applicant.
- 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. Collaborators may come from private or public, for-profit or nonprofit entities, as appropriate for their intended roles in the proposal, and are not required to meet the eligibility requirements listed in this RFA.

3.3 PERFORMANCE MEASURES

AMS is required to report on the outcomes of the FIIP on a national scale to demonstrate the performance of this program. By collecting, aggregating, and reporting performance data across all States, AMS can share the impact of the FIIP with all stakeholders, including OMB, U.S. Congress, the agricultural community, and the public.

Each project submitted in the State Plan must include at least one of the outcomes listed in the FIIP Performance Measures and at least one of the indicators listed in the selected outcome(s). The progress of the one or more outcomes and indicators selected will need to be reported in the Annual Performance Report, and the results will be reported in the Final Performance Report. Please refer to the FIIP Performance Measures for more information.

4.0 FUNDING CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 COST SHARING AND MATCHING

States are not required to provide match funding or cost share in this program.

4.2 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.

Presenting Direct and Indirect Costs Consistently

Applicants are responsible for presenting direct and indirect costs appropriately and consistently and must not include costs associated with their organization’s indirect cost rate agreement as direct costs. In addition, a cost may not be allocated as an indirect cost if it also incurred as a direct cost for the same purpose and vice versa.

Direct costs are costs that can be identified specifically with a particular award, project or program, service, or other organizational activity or that can be directly assigned to such an activity relatively easily with a high degree of accuracy. Typically, direct costs include, but are not limited to, compensation of employees who work directly on the award to include salaries and fringe benefits, travel, equipment, and supplies directly benefiting the grant supported project or program.

Indirect costs (also known as “facilities and administrative costs”) defined at [2 CFR § 200.1](#) are 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. Refer to [2 CFR §§ 200.413](#) and [414](#) for additional information on determining if costs charged to the award are direct or indirect.

The salaries of administrative and clerical staff should typically be treated as indirect costs. However, charging these costs as direct costs may be appropriate where [all](#) the following conditions are met:

- (1) administrative or clerical services are integral to a project or activity;
- (2) individuals involved can be specifically identified with the project or activity;
- (3) such costs are explicitly included in the budget or have the prior written approval of the Federal awarding agency; and
- (4) the costs are not also recovered as indirect costs.

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 and which would be applicable to future federal grant awards.

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 Infrastructure Grant (regardless of the period of performance of the Infrastructure Grants 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 Infrastructure Grant 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](#).

4.3 GRANT ADMINISTRATION FUNDS

AMS encourages all grant applicants to include the grant administrative funds, up to XX percent of their total Federal award, in their budget narrative, which can be used for costs such as monitoring subrecipients, ensuring grant recipient and subrecipient compliance with regulations and requirements, and grant management training. Grant recipients are encouraged to conduct periodic site visits to review project accomplishments and monitor progress, to review financial and performance records, organizational procedures, and financial control systems, and to provide technical assistance to subrecipients as required. These recommended site visits are meant to support accountability, compliance with regulations and requirements, and achievements of subrecipients. It is imperative that States consider the capacity of support staff to manage these grants funds to not only ensure that subrecipients are paid in a timely way, but also that Federal funds are managed appropriately.

4.4 SUPPLANTING

The funds awarded through this RFA must increase, expand, or replace, and not duplicate, existing activities of the Lead State Agency applicant or its partners.

4.5 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](#).

Funds may not be used for the following:

- Pay costs that have been or will be reimbursed by a third party.
- Pay costs incurred prior to the date the Agreement is executed unless prior approval is granted by AMS.
- Pay costs that support or oppose union organizing.
- Pay costs associated with conducting research and development.
- Pay costs or allow for current market value of property and equipment as eligible total project costs that only support existing processing capacity for a facility.

- Support an application (project) that has a proposed period of performance longer than 48 months.

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

4.6 COORDINATOR MEETING TRAVEL

State 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 another allowable item.

4.7 FUNDS NOT APPLIED FOR OR FAILURE TO SUBMIT LETTER OF INTENT

Eligible State applicants who do not submit a letter of intent will no longer be eligible to apply for funding. Eligible State applicants who submit a letter of intent, but do not apply for or do not request all available funding during the specified grant application period will forfeit that portion of available funding not requested. AMS will allocate funds not applied for, by a date determined by AMS, pro rata to the remaining States that submitted applications. [ADD DEADLINE]

5.0 APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

5.1 ELECTRONIC APPLICATION PACKAGE

Only electronic applications may be submitted via Grants.gov in response to this RFA. We urge applicants to submit early to the Grants.gov system. For an overview of the Grants.gov application process see Grants.gov [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 How to Register to Apply Through Grants.gov

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

5.2 CONTENT AND FORM OF APPLICATION SUBMISSION

5.2.1 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 form SF-424.

Box	Instruction
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1 - Type of Submission	Application.
2 - Type of Application	New.
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-CFS-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.
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, 2022 End date: No later than September 30, 2025.
18 - Estimated Funding	Total Federal funds requested.
19 - Is Applicant Subject to Review by State Under Executive Order 12372 Process?	See section 5.6 .

5.2.2 SF-424A BUDGET INFORMATION FOR NON-CONSTRUCTIONS PROGRAMS

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 DBI 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.

Section A – Budget Summary	
Box	Instructions
1.a – Grant Program Function or Activity	Enter “FIIP– 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 “Travel”, enter 2000 in Column 1, box 6.c

5.2.3 NEGOTIATED INDIRECT COST RATE AGREEMENT (NICRA)

Required if the applicant has a NICRA. Refer to [section 4.2](#) 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.

5.2.4 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?

5.2.5 INITIAL APPLICATION PROJECT NARRATIVE

Required. The project narrative must be completed by utilizing the provided State Initial Application Template. The narrative must describe the outreach activities, monitoring and evaluation strategies associated with the proposed activities, and how the applicant will manage the project (including the Infrastructure Grant process and the state-led Supply Chain Coordination activities, if applicable). The project narrative should include specific needs and priorities for the targeted agricultural products in the State, and be responsive to the criteria listed in [Section 1.3](#).

The project narrative also includes a budget narrative and justification section. The individual Infrastructure Grant budgets and descriptions are not expected at the submission of this application. However, the applicant will be expected to provide a comprehensive plan detailing how they plan to disburse and allocate funding to accepted applicants.

The project 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.

Applicants must submit the FIIP State Plan Template 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.

5.2.6 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 3.2](#). 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.

5.3 GRANTS.GOV APPLICATION SUBMISSION AND RECEIPT PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS

5.3.1 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. Getting a UEI number requires validation steps in SAM.gov. Applicants are encouraged to start this process as early as possible.

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.**

5.3.2 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.

- 1.0 *Create a Workspace*: This allows you to complete your Workspace online and route it through your organization for review before submitting.
- 2.0 *Complete a Workspace*: Add participants to the workspace, complete all the required forms, and check for errors before submission.
- 2.1 *Adobe Reader*: If you decide not to apply by filling out 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 device storage, 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.

- 2.2 *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.
- 2.3 *Complete SF-424 Fields First:* The forms are designed to fill in common required fields across other forms, such as the applicant name, address, and UEI number. To trigger this feature, an applicant must complete the SF-424 form information first. Once it is completed, the information will transfer to the other forms.
- 3.0 *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 the application package **at least 24-48 hours prior to the due 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 5.0](#) are included. Use the provided checklist to ensure your application package is complete.

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

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

Applicants may also call the 24/7 toll-free support number 1-800-518-4726, or email support@grants.gov. Grants.gov will issue a ticket number that you and Grants.gov can refer to if the issue is not resolved. For questions related to the specific grant opportunity, contact the person(s) mentioned in [Section 8.0](#).

5.4 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.

5.5 SUBMISSION DATE AND TIME

Applicants must submit applications via [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on [60 DAYS FROM PUBLICATION]. AMS cannot consider applications received after this deadline for funding. See [AMS' Late Applications, Denials and/or Appeal](#).

5.6 INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW

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

6.0 APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

6.1 INITIAL APPLICATION REVIEW

AMS will review Initial Applications to ensure each State proposal meets the statutory purpose of the program, all application criteria are fulfilled in accordance with section [5.0 Application and Submission Information](#), and that all costs are allowable. AMS will review project narratives and will engage with States to ensure they include the following elements and that the elements are aligned with the purpose of the program: outreach plan, relevant narrative statements of needs and priorities, clear and compelling description of how the state will conduct the Infrastructure Grants program to meet state-specific needs and program purpose and priorities, and reasoning and intention to use up to 20% of funds for state supply chain coordination activities, if requested.

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](#).

AMS will notify the applicant if additional information is required after the initial review of the application. AMS will work with applicants to negotiate any revisions if necessary and possible. Failure to provide requested information in a timely manner may result in a project not receiving funding.

Please note that while funding levels for this program were decided by a formula, see [section 2.4](#), applicants will be reviewed and scored against the benchmarks for high-quality proposals described in the award criteria below. Applicants that meet the quality threshold upon initial review will be processed immediately for funds disbursement. States that need to revise sections of their application to meet the award criteria will be able to do so. AMS will be available to work with applicants until the proposal can be funded.

Each Initial Application will be evaluated using the following award criteria:

1. The application provides a clear and concise description of the specific issues, problems, or needs to be addressed by the State's proposed approach, including the Infrastructure Grants and any complementary State-led coordination activities.
2. The application presents a clear, well-conceived, and overall suitable work plan for fulfilling the goals and objectives of the program in the specific State.
3. The State's proposed approach will develop, expand, and coordinate opportunities for the intended beneficiaries, including underserved farmers and small-to-mid-size food businesses.
4. The application identifies and provides clear plans to engage the intended beneficiaries, including the number of beneficiaries and how they will benefit.

5. If the State intends to focus on a specific geographic area within the State, the application describes the project's proposed geographic focus area, and why it is the most appropriate place to conduct project activities.
6. The application complies with all written instructions and requirements described within the RFA and Project Narrative Template.
7. The application presents a realistic schedule for implementing the proposed activities during the award project period.
8. The outcomes and indicator(s) are appropriate for the scale and scope of the proposed approach, 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.
9. 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 proposed activities; and
 - b. How the budget relates logically to the narrative describing the proposed activities.

6.2 INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT EVALUATION CRITERIA

Within the first year of the cooperative agreement or sooner, the state/territory must submit Infrastructure Grant recommendations to AMS utilizing the provided State Infrastructure Grant Proposal Template. This proposal must include the following information for each proposed Infrastructure Grant:

- Applicant name/Business Name
- Dollar amount requested and amount proposed by state for award
- Summary description of the project, to include activities, intended outcomes, alignment with program priorities and goals. This should include how the project will increase processing capacity in the area and contribute to more and better markets for the targeted agricultural products of farmers and ranchers in the state or geographic area, including whether and how it benefits underserved producers.
- Project partners
- Budget and cost share responsibility

Each State Infrastructure Grant Proposal will be reviewed by a USDA Review Board (Board) against the benchmarks for high-quality proposals described in [Section 1.5.5](#) and to ensure that project portfolios in each state align with the program purpose, provide reasonable geographic coverage within the state, support a diversity of targeted agricultural products appropriate to the specific state, and support program goals as stated in this RFA.

This Review Board may respond to the State with questions and recommendations to adjust award proposals and will be available to work with States until the proposal can be funded.

7.0 AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

7.1 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 reference to the [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#) and program-specific Terms and Conditions.

In addition, AMS encourages States to notify successful and unsuccessful sub-applicants about the outcome of the competitive process as it relates to their proposals.

7.1.1 UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS

Ineligible applicants will be contacted by AMS via email after the initial application screening.

7.2 ADMINISTRATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS

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

7.3 REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

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.

7.4 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF USDA SUPPORT

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

8.0 AGENCY CONTACTS

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

For additional information, please visit the AMS grants website: www.ams.usda.gov/grants.

8.1 AVAILABLE RESOURCES

AMS provides resources and information on the Food Infrastructure Improvement Program (FIIP) website (www.ams.usda.gov/xx) that may be helpful to applicants. AMS staff is available to provide timely technical assistance. Correspondence may be directed to:

Food Infrastructure Improvement Program

USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 1096 South Building
Stop 0264
Washington, DC 20250-0264

8.2 GRANTS.GOV QUESTIONS

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

9.0 OTHER INFORMATION

9.1 DEFINITIONS

Beginning Farmer or Rancher is an individual or entity that has not operated a farm or ranch for more than 10 years and substantially participates in the operation.

Critical Resources and Infrastructure: resources and infrastructure necessary to support the initiation and completion of a project, including but are not limited to land and structures.

Applicant/Eligible Entity: Refers to any state governments and territories applying/awarded under this opportunity.

Direct-to-Consumers: The business model of selling products directly to customers, rather than through an intermediary such as a retailer or wholesaler. These include: DTC online markets, DTC on-farm markets, DTC off-farm markets, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), and Agritourism (including u-pick, etc.)

Food Access Considerations: Distinct cultural markets, marginalized communities, or defined by USDA as low-income low access.

Infrastructure Grant recipients: FIIP subaward recipients who are awarded Infrastructure Grants by the Lead State Agency, who is the primary recipient.

Institutions: These include organizations such schools (K-12; colleges/universities), hospitals, food banks, gleaners, food rescue, workplace cafeterias, prisons, and care centers (senior, preschools).

Intermediaries: Includes aggregators, distributors, food hubs, brokers, auction houses, and wholesale.

Retail: Includes businesses such supermarkets, restaurants and caterers, and direct and other to retail markets (food cooperatives, small independent grocers, corner stores.)

Mid-Size Producers: USDA defines small family farms as those with a Gross Cash Farm Income (GCFI) of less than \$350,000; mid-size farms have a GCFI of \$350,000 to \$999,999

Small Disadvantaged Business: is defined under §124.1001 as a concern that qualifies as small under part 121 of Chapter I Small Business Administration, for the size standard corresponding to the six-digit North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code that is assigned by the contracting officer to

the procurement at issue, and that is owned and controlled by one or more socially and economically disadvantaged individuals. Unless specifically stated otherwise, the phrase “socially and economically disadvantaged individuals” includes Indian tribes, ANCs, CDCs, and NHOs.

Underserved Farmer or Rancher: is a farmer or rancher who is a member of an Underserved Group. An *Underserved Group* is a group whose members have been subject to discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and, where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program.

Veteran Farmer or Rancher: is a producer who served in the United States Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, or Coast Guard, including the reserve component thereof, was released from service under conditions other than dishonorable, and has not operated a farm or ranch or has operated a farm or ranch for no more than 10 years or who first obtained status as a veteran during the most recent 10-year period.

Veteran-Owned Small Business: is a small business concern that meets the requirements described in § 128.200(a), that is not less than 51 percent owned and controlled by one or more veterans.

Women-Owned Small Business: is a concern that is small pursuant to part 121 of Chapter I Small Business Administration, and that is at least 51 percent owned and controlled by one or more women who are citizens in accordance with §§127.200, 127.201 and 127.202.

9.2 EQUAL OPPORTUNITY 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: <mailto:program.intake@usda.gov>.

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

9.3 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.

9.4 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 0581-0240. 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.

9.5 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 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.