OMB No. 0581-0240

Agricultural Marketing Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

# Local Food Promotion Program

## Fiscal Year 2024 Request for Applications

**Funding Opportunity Number:** USDA-AMS-TM-LFPP-G-24-0011

**Publication Date:** February 27, 2024

**Application Due Date**: 11:59 PM Eastern Time on May 14, 2024

## PROGRAM SOLICITATION INFORMATION

**Funding Opportunity Title**: Local Food Promotion Program

**Funding Opportunity Number**: USDA-AMS-TM-LFPP-G-23-0011

**Announcement Type:** Initial

**Assistance Listing Number**: 10.175

**Dates:** Applications must be received before 11:59 pm Eastern Time May 14, 2024, through 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) 2024 Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP). LFPP's purpose is to support the development, coordination, and expansion of local and regional food business enterprises that engage as intermediaries in indirect producer-to-consumer marketing to increase access to and availability of locally and regionally produced agricultural products. AMS will competitively award grants to eligible applicants for projects that meet the purpose of the grant program.

Approximately $10.5 million is available to fund applications under this solicitation. Applicants may select from one of four project types. Planning projects range from $25,000 to $100,000, while implementation projects range from $100,000 to $500,000. Two Turnkey (simplified) project types are available: Turnkey Marketing and Promotion projects and a new option for Turnkey Recruitment and Training projects. Each of the turnkey project options are available for a defined set of activities, with funding amounts ranging between $50,000 and $100,000. Eligible entities and activities remain the same as in previous years. LFPP is a part of the Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP).

In the FY 2023 application cycle, AMS funded 33 (13%) of the 264 applications received.

To be competitive, applications must meet all program requirements, be of high quality, and include 25% matching funds, as required by legislation. All applications will undergo review according to merit and customary evaluation procedures. This announcement provides information regarding the eligibility criteria for applicants and projects, details on matching fund requirements, and the forms and instructions needed to apply for an award.

Priority consideration will be given to applications that:

- Benefit underserved communities, including communities that are located in areas of concentrated poverty with limited access to fresh locally or regionally grown food; or
- Are used to carry out eligible activities under a partnership agreement as part of the AMS Regional Food Systems Partnership program and have not received an LFPP award in the recent past.

AMS encourages applications that benefit smaller farms and ranches, historically underserved farmers and ranchers, or underserved communities. For grants 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 welcomes your comments about this Request for Applications (RFA). We will consider the comments in developing the next RFA. Email written stakeholder comments within six months of the publication date of this RFA to: 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 commenting on the **Local Food Promotion Program RFA**.

## 2024 HIGHLIGHTS AND CHANGES

- A new streamlined application type called Turnkey Recruitment and Training projects has been added. Applicants applying to this Turnkey project type may apply for funds to conduct a minimum of 3 specific activities out of 5 options listed in Section ***1.3.4***. Applicants cannot add additional activities to the workplan and should use the simplified "LFPP Turnkey Recruitment and Training Project Narrative" for their application package. (This option is in addition to the Turnkey Marketing and Promotion option offered in 2023, which continues to be available for specific activities outlines in that project type.)
- Section ***1.4*** has been updated from "Priority areas" to "Priority considerations" to describe the statutory priorities AMS will consider when awarding grants in accordance with the Local Agriculture Market Program statutory language.
- The AMS General Terms and Conditions have been updated to reflect recent changes to the Uniform Guidance (2 CFR Part 200) and the Build America, Buy America Act preference for infrastructure projects.

## APPLICATION CHECKLIST

AMS requests applicants to read the entire RFA prior to submitting their application to ensure they understand the program's requirements. The application checklist below lists the required and conditionally required documents for an application package.

LFPP requires that **all application packages** include the following:

- ☐ SF-424 – Application for Federal Assistance (Grants.gov)
- ☐ SF-424A – Budget Summary for Non-Construction Programs (Grants.gov)
- ☐ Project Abstract Summary (Grants.gov)
- ☐ Project Narrative Form or Turnkey Project Narrative Form (PDF Attachment)
  - ☐ Must use the required fillable PDF template.
  - ☐ Executive Summary supports project goals and objectives and is no more than 250 words
  - ☐ Ensure the text does not exceed the page limit specified in Section ***5.2.4*** or ***5.2.5***
  - ☐ Ensure the proposal excludes unallowable costs and activities per Section ***4.4***
  - ☐ Ensure the federal funds requested do not exceed the maximum or minimum award amount per Section ***2.4.***
- ☐ Signed Letter(s) of Verification for Matching Funds for EACH cash and/or in-kind resource (PDF or MS Word Attachment)

☐ Signed Letter(s) of Commitment from Partner and Collaborator Organizations (PDF or MS Word Attachment)

If applicable, application packages are 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 (PDF Attachment)

## TIPS FOR APPLICANTS

- 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 to submit your application at least two weeks before the application deadline to ensure all certifications are met.
- The applicant organization registration process may take **more than four weeks** to complete. You must complete the organization registration to allow enough time to meet the required application submission deadlines. Please refer to section ***5.3.1 How to Register to Apply*** for more information on this process.
- Thoroughly read this RFA and follow all instructions.
- 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 number 10.175 and Funding Opportunity Number "USDA-AMS-TM-LFPP-G-24-0011".
- Ensure you have the most recent copy of Adobe Reader installed on your computer and that it is compatible with Grants.gov software at grants.gov/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility.html.
- 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".
- Input the correct UEI number on the SF-424 form cover page.
- Review the Grants.gov Applicant User and Registration Guides:
  https://www.grants.gov/applicants/workspace-overview.html
  https://www.grants.gov/applicants/applicant-faqs.htm

## TIMING TO OBTAIN AND SUBMIT GRANTS.GOV REQUIRED ELEMENTS

| Required Action | Timing to Obtain/Submit |
|---|---|
| AMS Deadline to receive final application and all supporting materials through Grants.Gov | May 14, 2024 – 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time |
| Obtaining Your Organization's UEI Number (if you do not already have one) | 7-10 business days |
| Establishing an Active SAM.gov Account (if you do not already have one) | 7-10 business days |
| Obtaining a TIN/EIN (if you do not already have one) | Up to 2 weeks |
| Creating your Grants.gov profile and registering your Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) authorization | Up to 2 weeks |

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# 1.0 FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

## 1.1 LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP) is authorized by subtitle A of the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 ((7 U.S.C. § 1627c), as amended. LAMP supports the development, coordination, and expansion of direct producer-to-consumer marketing, local and regional food markets and enterprises, and value-added agricultural products. The primary goals are to:

- Connect and cultivate regional food economies through public-private partnerships;
- Support the development of business plans, feasibility studies, and strategies for value-added agricultural products and local and regional food system infrastructure;
- Strengthen capacity and regional food system development through community collaboration and expansion of mid-tier value chains;
- Improve income and economic opportunities for producers and food businesses through job creation; and
- Simplify the application and the reporting processes for the grants administered under the Program.

The Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP), Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP), the Value-Added Producer Grants (VAPG) Program and the Regional Food Partnership Program (RFSP) are implemented under LAMP. LFPP, FMPP and RSFP are administered by AMS and VAPG is administered by the Rural Business-Cooperative Service under Rural Development (RD). This RFA is for LFPP.

## 1.2 PURPOSE

LFPP funds projects that develop, coordinate, and expand local and regional food business enterprises that engage as intermediaries in indirect producer to consumer marketing to help increase access to and availability of locally and regionally produced agricultural products. The program focuses on:

- Supporting the processing, aggregation, distribution, and storage of local and regional food products that are marketed locally or regionally, including value-added agricultural products;
- Encouraging the development of value-added agricultural products;
- Assisting with business development plans and feasibility studies;
- Developing marketing strategies for producers of local food and value-added products;
- Facilitating regional food chain coordination and mid-tier value chain development;
- Promoting new business opportunities and marketing strategies to reduce on-farm food waste;
- Responding to changing technology needs in indirect producer-to-consumer marketing; and
- Covering expenses related to cost incurred in obtaining food safety certification and improvements to food safety practices and equipment.

## 1.3 PROJECT TYPES

LFPP offers four project types: **Planning**, **Implementation, Turnkey Marketing and Promotion,** and **Turnkey Recruitment and Training**. Each application must select only one project type.

| Project Type | Planning | Implementation | Turnkey Marketing and Promotion | Turnkey Recruitment and Training |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Funding Range** | $25,000 - $100,000 | $100,000 - $500,000 | $50,000 - $100,000 | $50,000 - $100,000 |
| **Duration (months)** | 24 | 36 | 24 | 24 |
| **Description** | Supports the planning stages of a food business that supports the development, coordination or expansion of local and regional food system. | Establish, improve, or expand a new or existing Local and Regional Food Business Enterprise that benefits the local and regional food system. | Supports marketing and promotion activities through a set of 5 pre-defined activities. | Supports vendor and producer recruitment and training activities through a set of 5 pre-defined activities. |
| **Key Points** | Planning awards should not include Implementation project type activities. | Recipients of previous Planning awards must describe how that work informs the Implementation project application. | Simplified application.<br>Projects conduct a minimum of 3 (of 5) specific activities. | Simplified application.<br>Projects conduct a minimum of 3 (of 5) specific activities. |

### 1.3.1 PLANNING PROJECTS

Planning projects range from $25,000 to $100,000 to be used within 24 months (2 years). Planning projects are used in the planning stages of developing, coordinating, or expanding a food business that supports locally and regionally produced agricultural products and food system infrastructure.

Projects may include, but are not limited to:

- Completing a feasibility study or facilitating supply chain partner planning for a new intermediary food channel (i.e., food hub), to analyze market potential, capacity, and potential competitors, and partners in the region.
- Hiring experts for technical assistance to implement a local/regional food transportation system.

- Hiring experts for training on managing a local/regional food storage or processing facility.
- Devising a business development plan associated with the processing/marketing of local/regional agricultural products, including value-added agricultural products.

### 1.3.2 IMPLEMENTATION PROJECTS

Implementation projects range from $100,000 to $500,000 to be used within 36 months (3 years). Implementation projects are used to establish a new food enterprise or market channel or to improve or expand an existing food enterprise or market channel that supports locally and regionally produced agricultural products and food system infrastructure.

Projects may include, but are not limited to:

- Developing or expanding food incubator programs or mid-tier value chains.
- Connecting, cultivating, and strengthening relationships between local and regional producers and local and regional food businesses and consumer-facing markets.
- Instituting group-based Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) certification to increase opportunities for farmers to sell produce into institutional or wholesale marketing channels, including providing financial support for making changes and upgrades to practices and equipment to improve food safety.
- Cultivating new local and regional wholesale market channels through an online portal or virtual marketplace.
- Investigating and implementing more cost-effective means of transportation for food supply chains through backhaul, route optimization, and/or other operational efficiencies.

If the applicant previously received an LFPP planning award that is directly related to the submitted proposal, the applicant must indicate how this project contributed to its proposed work in the Project Narrative (section ***5.2.4*** or ***5.2.5*** Project Narrative)

### 1.3.3 TURNKEY MARKETING AND PROMOTION

The Turnkey Marketing and Promotion option range from $50,000 to $100,000 to be used within 24 months (2 years). The Turnkey Marketing and Promotion option offers a streamlined application for common LFPP marketing and promotion activities. Those applying to the Turnkey Marketing and Promotion option agree to conduct specific activities that support the marketing and promotion of intermediated producer-to-consumer market opportunities for local and regional foods. Applicants must select a minimum of 3 and maximum of 5, pre-defined activities listed below. Applicants may not propose other activities under this project type. Doing so will disqualify the application from consideration.

- Identify and analyze new or improved market opportunities.
- Develop or revise a marketing plan.
- Design or purchase marketing and promotion media.
- Implement a marketing plan.
- Evaluate marketing and promotion activities.

Applicants who would otherwise choose Planning or Implementation project types may apply under the Turnkey track, if they focus on marketing and promotion and meet all other Turnkey requirements, including the lower funding maximum. Applicants to the Turnkey project type must use the simplified "LFPP Turnkey Marketing and Promotion Project Narrative Form". More information is provided in section ***5.2.5***.

### 1.3.4 TURNKEY RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

The Turnkey Recruitment and Training option range from $50,000 to $100,000 to be used within 24 months (2 years). The Turnkey Recruitment and Training option offers a streamlined application for common LFPP recruitment and training activities for local and regional food system stakeholders. Turnkey applications must clearly demonstrate benefits to farmers and ranchers. Those applying to the Turnkey Recruitment and Training track agree to conduct specific activities that support the development or delivery of vendor and producer recruitment strategies, as well as training opportunities. Applicants must select a minimum of 3 and maximum of 5, pre-defined activities listed below. Applicants may not propose other activities under this project type. Doing so will disqualify the application from consideration.

- Identify and analyze new or improved strategies for vendor and producer recruitment, training, or both.
- Develop or revise strategies or plans for vendor and producer recruitment, training, or both.
- Design materials for vendor and producer recruitment, training, or both.
- Implement plans for vendor and producer recruitment, training, or both.
- Evaluate outcomes related to vendor and producer recruitment, training, or both.

Applicants who would otherwise choose Planning, and Implementation project types may apply using the Turnkey option, if they focus on recruitment or training for vendors and producers and meet all other Turnkey requirements, such as the lower funding maximum.

Applicants to the Turnkey project type must use the simplified "LFPP Turnkey Recruitment and Training Project Narrative Form". More information is provided in Section ***5.2.5***.

### 1.3.5 PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES NOT ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

Projects are not eligible for consideration if the proposed activities:

- Are not related to local and regional food system activities.
- Are for agricultural production related expenses, including crop production and the purchase of farm equipment, tools, materials, supplies, and other related costs (section ***4.4***)
- Include training or other activities related to agricultural production, including harvesting, crop rotation, and planting techniques.
- Benefit only one agricultural producer, vendor, or individual. Applicants must collaborate with others to benefit the larger community.
- Propose to purchase land, or for construction of a building or structure.

- Intend to register, train, and/or educate customers about Food Assistance Programs (such as SNAP, WIC, etc.), other than providing information about how they can use those benefits at the market.
- Depend upon the completion of another project or the receipt of another grant.
- Include legal fees and other costs associated with establishing a business or organization.
- Duplicate activities in a project that has received funding from another Federal award program, including the Farmers Market Promotion Program.

For additional information on allowable and unallowable activities please refer to the AMS General Terms and Conditions as well as the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ). Applicants that have questions concerning the allowability of costs after reviewing these documents should contact AMS staff using the contact information listed under ***8.0 Agency Contacts***.

## 1.4 PRIORITY CONSIDERATION

AMS will prioritize applications that:

- Benefit underserved communities, including communities that are located in areas of concentrated poverty with limited access to fresh locally or regionally grown food, which AMS has determined to mean the application is for a project located in a low income/low food access (LI/LA) census tracts (as defined below), or
- Are used to carry out eligible activities under a partnership agreement in a Regional Food Systems Partnership project (refer to section ***3.3.2***), and have not received a LFPP award within the past five (5) years.

To qualify for LI/LA priority consideration, the project's implementation address must be in a LI/LA census tract, as defined by one of the four major map layers on the ERS Food Access Research Atlas. "Implementation address" refers to the street address or census tract location within the targeted community where the applicant plans to conduct or deliver approved project activities.

The applicant must provide its census tract(s) for at least one LI/LA address (priority area). If your organization or business is located in and/or primarily serves at least one LI/LA community, your application will be considered under this priority area.

Applicants are not required to meet these priorities to be eligible to apply or receive grant funds. AMS will review and apply priority consideration, based on applicant narrative responses, during its administrative review process (see section ***6.2***).

## 2.0 AWARD INFORMATION

### 2.1 TYPE OF FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

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

### 2.2 TYPE OF APPLICATIONS

**New application**. All new applications will be reviewed competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in section ***6.0.***

### 2.3 AVAILABLE FUNDING

AMS anticipates approximately $10.5 million will be available in FY 2024 for LFPP projects. The availability and level of funding may be contingent on Federal appropriations actions.

### 2.4 FEDERAL AWARD PERIOD DURATION AND SIZE

AMS expects applicants to complete their projects within the required performance period. It is acceptable to complete a project before the scheduled performance period end date. However, AMS encourages applicants to take the full grant period to allow ample time to complete projects. The applicant must indicate the start date and end date on Block 17 of the SF-424 "Application for Federal Assistance". Required project start dates and end dates are provided below.

Award size varies by project type. Applicants must not request less than the minimum or more than the maximum award amounts. Applicants must justify the requested funding amounts within the appropriate project narrative sections.

| Project Type | Duration (Months) | Start Date | End Date | Minimum Award | Maximum Award |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Planning** | 24 | September 30, 2024 | September 29, 2026 | $25,000 | $100,000 |
| **Turnkey Projects (Both Types)** | 24 | September 30, 2024 | September 29, 2026 | $50,000 | $100,000 |
| **Implementation** | 36 | September 30, 2024 | September 29, 2027 | $100,000 | $500,000 |

## 3.0 ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

### 3.1 ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

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

| Entity Type | Description |
|---|---|
| **Agricultural Businesses or Cooperatives** | Businesses or member-owned entities that provide, hold, deliver, transport, offer, or sell agricultural products or services for member benefit as well as the organization or other business that they represent. |
| **Producer Networks or Association** | Producer group- or member-owned organizations or businesses that provide, offer, or sell agricultural products or services through a common distribution system for the mutual member benefit as well as organizations or other businesses that assist, represent, or serve producers or producer networks. |
| **CSA Networks or Associations** | Formal groups of farms that work collectively to offer consumers regular shares (usually weekly) of locally-grown farm products during one or more harvest season(s) often on a subscription or membership basis. This includes organizations or other businesses that assist, serve, or represent community-supported agriculture (CSA) or CSA networks.<br><br>Customers have access to a selected share or range of farm products offered by the group of farmers based on partial or total advance payment of a subscription or membership fee. |
| **Food Council** | Food policy council or food and farm system network that represents multiple organizations that addresses food and farm-related issues and needs within city, county, State, Tribal region, multicounty region, or other regions. |
| **Local Governments** | Any unit of government within a state, including a county; borough; municipality; city; town; township; parish; local public authority, including any public housing agency under the United States Housing Act of 1937 (50 Stat. 888 (Pub. L. No. 75—412); special district; school district; intrastate district; council of governments, whether or not incorporated as a nonprofit corporation under State law; and any other agency or instrumentality of a multi-state, regional, or intra-state or local government. |
| **Nonprofit Corporations** | Any organization or institution, including nonprofits with State or IRS 501 (c) status and accredited institutions of higher education, where no part of the organization or institution's net earnings of which inure to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual. |

| Entity Type | Description |
|---|---|
| **Public Benefit Corporations** | Corporations organized to construct or operate a public improvement, the profits from which inure to the benefit of one or more State or to the people therein. |
| **Economic Development Corporations** | Organizations whose missions are to improve, maintain, develop, and/or market or promote a specific geographic area. |
| **Regional Farmers Market Authorities** | Entities that establish and enforce regional, State, or county policies and jurisdiction over State, regional, or county farmers markets. State agencies are eligible if their State's regulatory statutes identify the specific State agency as a regional farmers market authority. |
| **Tribal Governments** | Governing bodies or governmental agencies of any Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community (including any native village as defined in Section 3 of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, 85 Stat. 688 (43 U.S.C. § 1602)) certified by the Secretary of the Interior as eligible for the special programs and services provided through the Bureau of Indian Affairs. |

## 3.2 PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS

Engagement with partners and collaborators strengthens LFPP projects. Partners and collaborators may come from private or public, for-profit or nonprofit entities.

- A *partner* is in a relationship involving close cooperation with the applicant and shares responsibilities in the management of the project.
- 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.

Only the applicant must meet the eligibility requirements. Project partners and collaborators do not need to meet the eligibility requirements provided in section ***3.1***.

The applicant may subcontract or subaward with partners and collaborators (section ***5.2.7***) or may engage with them without funding. For instance, a project may have partners or collaborators who have their own funding or who are contributing to the project financially, such as by providing a cash or in-kind match. Regardless of whether there is a financial subcontract or subaward relationship, applications must show evidence of existing community or industry engagement.

Applications should demonstrate a commitment to engage potential project beneficiaries as active participants.

## 3.3 LIMIT ON NUMBER OF AWARDS

Applicants may submit multiple project proposals to LFPP. However, applicants may only receive **one** LFPP award. This means that an applicant may be awarded one Planning **OR** one Implementation **OR** one Turnkey grant, but not any combination the above, during this fiscal year.

Applicants with an active LFPP award must submit all required close-out documentation by the application due date listed in section ***5.5 Submission Date and Time*** for their application to be eligible to be considered for review. Please refer to the AMS General Award Terms and Conditions, available on the "How to Administer the Awards" webpage, for close-out instructions. Applicants must close out all active LFPP awards to be eligible to apply for a new LFPP award. For example, a Planning award recipient must close out that award prior to applying for an Implementation award.

### 3.3.1 FISCAL SPONSORS/AGENTS

Eligible applicants may use fiscal sponsors/agents in their effort to attain and administer a grant award. Such applicants seeking to implement a project may:

- Apply directly to AMS through Grants.gov and request to use funds to establish a contractual relationship with a fiscal sponsor/agent to perform administrative or financial functions on behalf of the applicant; or
- Use a fiscal sponsor/agent to apply for an award on behalf of the implementing organization. By doing so, the sponsor/agent accepts all financial and legal liabilities for that grant recipient's grant award at the time the agreement is signed. Fiscal sponsors/agents would submit the application as the applicant organization, and the AOR responsible for all grant decisions and activities, including but not limited to implementation, subcontracts, and reporting to AMS. The AOR would be an employee of the fiscal sponsor/agent. Fiscal sponsors/agents are bound by the same requirements provided in this RFA as other applicant organizations, including the limit on applications.

An applicant organization cannot accept an award and later transfer the award to another organization (including a fiscal sponsor/agent).

### 3.3.2 REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM PARTNERSHIPS (RFSP) RECIPIENT APPLICANTS

In accordance with the LAMP legislation, current RFSP grant recipients may apply for a LFPP grant on behalf of requesting producers and/or eligible entities (as listed in the Regional Food System Partnerships (RFSP) RFA). Active RFSP recipients are eligible to receive more than one FMPP or LFPP project within an award cycle to allow them to apply on behalf of those entities.

Active RFSP recipients applying to LFPP on behalf of their eligible partnerships should indicate on the "LFPP Project Narrative" or "LFPP Turnkey Marketing and Promotion Project Narrative" or "LFPP Turnkey Recruitment and Training" that they are a current RFSP recipient. They must meet all program requirements and undergo competitive peer review as do all other FMPP or LFPP applicants. Refer to section ***5.2*** for more information.

If selected for funding, active RFSP recipients signing the grant agreement as the AOR on behalf of their producers and eligible entities accept all financial and legal liabilities for that grant recipient's award at the time the agreement is signed. In addition, they are responsible for all decisions and project activities related to the grant agreement, and accountable for meeting Federal statutory requirements, regulatory requirements, and the terms and conditions of the award. An applicant organization, including RFSP recipient applicants, cannot accept an award and later transfer the award to another organization (including the producer or eligible entity associated with the active RFSP grant).

Alternatively, RFSP recipients wanting to solely provide technical assistance or administrative support to producers and/or eligible entities applying to LFPP, but not serve as the AOR, may provide that directly with no formalized agreement, and the eligible entities or producers may apply directly (noting that the project must benefit more than one producer). They could also choose to pursue the contractual relationship mentioned in section ***3.3.1*** Fiscal Sponsor/Agents.

# 4.0 FUNDING CONSIDERATIONS

## 4.1 COST SHARING AND MATCHING

This funding opportunity requires matching funds from non-Federal sources in the form of cash and/or in-kind contributions equal to 25 percent of the amount of Federal funds being requested. 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 an applicant is recommended for the 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.

Cash match contributions are generally defined as an actual cash contribution (not the 'value' of someone's time/effort) from the applicant's general revenue/reserves/savings/line of credit, or 3rd-party partner(s), or other non-Federal grants. The applicant must be able to track and show the source of the match funding and that the funding source was dedicated entirely to the grant project and produce records to that effect (for example, taking the cash match in your accounting system, or from your partner, and placing it into a special 'grant project' account).

In-kind contributions are generally defined, when used as a cost share or match for a grant, as the value of goods or services provided by a third party 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).

Match contributions (either cash or in-kind) cannot be used for LFPP if they are already being 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. An award will not be issued unless all matching funds over the life of the grant are secured. Additional anticipated matching funds not in place by the time the project commences cannot be counted toward the matching requirement.

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 "LFPP Project Narrative" or "LFPP Turnkey Marketing and Promotion Project Narrative" or "LFPP Turnkey Recruitment and Training Project Narrative". 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 Letters of Verification for Matching Funds*** for more information.

Indirect costs may count toward non-Federal match. Refer to section ***4.2.1 Using Indirect Costs for Cost Sharing or Matching*** for more information.

Applicants cannot use program income (as defined in 2 CFR § 200.1) or any other Federal funds as a match or cost share.

## 4.1 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.

In accordance with 2 CFR § 200.414, any non-Federal entity that does not have a current negotiated (including provisional) indirect cost rate, except State and Local Government and Indian Tribe Indirect Cost Proposals, may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10 percent of modified total direct costs (MTDC). The de minimis rate does not require documentation to justify its use and may be used indefinitely. As described in 2 CFR § 200.403, costs must be consistently charged as either direct or indirect costs, and but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both. Once elected, this methodology must be used consistently for all Federal awards until 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 must use the MTDC as the base. MTDC are defined in 2 CFR § 200.1 as all direct salaries and wages, applicable fringe benefits, materials and supplies, services, travel, and up to the first $25,000 of each subaward (regardless of the period of performance of the subawards under the award). MTDCs exclude equipment, capital expenditures, charges for patient care, rental costs, tuition remission, scholarships and fellowships, participant support costs, and the portion of each subaward in excess of $25,000. Other items may be excluded only when necessary to avoid a serious inequity in the distribution of indirect costs, and with the approval of the cognizant agency for indirect costs.

If an applicant has a negotiated indirect cost rate approved by its cognizant agency, the applicant must submit a copy of its approved Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (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.

### 4.1.1 USING INDIRECT COSTS FOR COST SHARING OR MATCHING

The maximum indirect costs allowed for a project may be included under the Federal portion of the project budget or, alternatively, may be offered as an in-kind matching contribution if no indirect costs are requested on the Federal portion of the budget. For example, if a proposed project's maximum allowable indirect costs are $8,000, the applicant may include $8,000 on the Federal portion of the budget or $8,000 as a matching in-kind contribution, but not both.

The applicant may split the indirect cost allocation between the Federal and non-Federal portions of the budget only if the total amount of indirect costs does not exceed the maximum indirect costs allowed. Alternatively, the recipient may request any other combination that, when combined, does not exceed the maximum indirect costs allowable. Refer to 2 CFR §200.413 and §200.414 for additional information on determining if costs charged to the award are direct or indirect.

## 4.2 SUBAWARDS

The applicant is expected to perform most of the work of the project. However, the applicant may subaward or subcontract with partners, collaborators, or other parties that provide additional knowledge, expertise, or resources for the purposes of the proposed project that are not otherwise available within the applicant organization. Applicants may subaward to smaller organizations to support underserved communities or producers. In all subaward or subcontract scenarios, the primary applicant will maintain the oversight and reporting responsibility as the AOR. See section ***3.3.1 Fiscal Sponsors.*** Using grant funds to competitively "re-grant" funds in mini-grant programs or to activities that are not central to the purpose of the project or for unknown costs is unallowable.

## 4.3 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 ***8.0*** Agency Contacts.

## 4.4 COORDINATOR MEETING TRAVEL

Recipients are expected to attend an AMS sponsored grant management meeting during the project's period of performance. The proposed budget must include travel funds for an individual identified in the Key Staff section of the Project Narrative. In addition, the application may include travel costs for a second staff member.

Estimate the cost of travel including flight, hotel, per diem, ground transportation to a major city for 3-day, 2-night stay. For previous year, an example of this estimate can be around $1,700 per individual. Location and dates are to be determined with possibility of a virtual conference. If the conference is performed virtually, recipients will be able to reallocate those funds to another allowable activity.

# 5.0 APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

## 5.1 ELECTRONIC APPLICATION PACKAGE

Applicants MUST apply to this RFA electronically via Grants.gov. No other submission method is accepted. AMS urge applicants to submit early to the Grants.gov system. For an overview of the Grants.gov application process see, Grants.gov's How to Apply for Grants webpage. This RFA contains the information needed to obtain and complete the required application forms and AMS-specific attachments. More information about applying through Grants.gov can be found in section ***5.3.***

Applicants can find the opportunity under either the Assistance Listing number "10.175," or the LFPP Funding Opportunity Number "USDA-AMS-TM-LFPP-G-24-0011".

## 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 explained in the instructions. However, applicants must use the following supplemental instructions associated with specific blocks on form SF-424.

| Block | Instructions |
|---|---|
| 1 - Type of Submission | Select Application |
| 2 - Type of Application | Select New |
| 4 through 7 | Not required |
| 8.c - Organizational Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) | Enter applicant UEI for the organization submitting the application. |
| 8.d - Address | Enter the organization street address as it appears in SAM.gov. P.O. Boxes will not be accepted. Enter a 9-digit zip code |
| 10 - Name of Federal Agency | AMS, USDA |
| 11 - Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number (Assistance Listing Number) | 10.175 |
| 12 - Funding Opportunity Number | USDA-AMS-TM-LFPP-G-24-0011<br>Ensure you are applying for the correct grant program. |
| 13 - Competition Identification Number | Not applicable |
| 14 - Areas Affected by Project | Enter cities, counties, states affected by project |
| 15 - Descriptive Title of Applicant's Project | Provide a short description of the project. |
| 16a - Congressional Districts for Applicant | Enter the Congressional district where your main office is located. |
| 16b - Congressional Districts for Program/Project | Enter the Congressional district where your project will be implemented. Write "All" if the projects will be implemented in more than one location. |

| Block | Instructions |
|---|---|
| 17 - Proposed Project Start Date and End Date | **Planning and Turnkey Projects** – Your performance period cannot be more than 24 months (2 years) in length.<br>• Enter start date: September 30, 2024, and<br>• Enter end date: September 29, 2026.<br>**Implementation Projects** – Your performance period cannot be more than 36 months (3 years) in length.<br>• Enter start date: September 30, 2024, and<br>• Enter end date: September 29, 2027. |
| 18 - Estimated Funding – Federal | Enter the Total Federal award requested. |
| 18b - Estimated Funding – Applicant | Enter the Total Match amount. |
| 19 - Is Applicant Subject to Review by State Under Executive Order 12372 Process. | See section ***5.6 Intergovernmental Review***. |

### 5.2.2 SF-424A – BUDGET INFORMATION FOR NON-CONSTRUCTION PROGRAMS

**Required.** The SF-424A is available via the opportunity at 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 blocks on the SF-424A.

Please fill in **only** sections A, B and C. **Do not** complete sections D, E, and F.

***Section A – Budget Summary***

| Box | Instructions |
|---|---|
| 1.a – Grant Program Function or Activity | Enter "LFPP – Federal" |
| 1.b – Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number | Enter "10.175" |
| 1.e – Federal | Enter the amount of Federal funding requested for the project |
| 1.f – Non-Federal | Enter the **total** match contribution amount provided for the project |

***Section B – Budget Categories***

| Box | Instructions |
|---|---|
| 6.a – 6.j – Object Class Categories | In Column 1, enter the amount of Federal funds requested for each Object Class Category. Do **not** include match funding.<br><br>For example, if you are requesting $2,000 in Federal funds for "Travel", enter 2000 in Column 1, box 6.c |

***Section C – Non-Federal Resources***

| Box | Instructions |
|---|---|
| 8.a – Grant Program | Should auto-populate from Section A, Box 1.a |
| 8.b – 8.d | Enter the match amount being provided from each source (Applicant, State, or Other) for the project |

### 5.2.3 PROJECT ABSTRACT SUMMARY

**Required**. The Project Abstract Summary form will be used as the public-facing description of any projects which receive an award, including publication on the AMS website. This is required for all project types and is separate from the "LFPP Project Narrative" or "LFPP Turnkey Marketing and Promotion Project Narrative" or "LFPP Turnkey Recruitment and Training Project Narrative". The Project Abstract Summary 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, key partner, and collaborator activities. Identify the key partners, collaborators and subrecipients you know will be part of the work and how their engagement will support the program goals.

### 5.2.4 PROJECT NARRATIVE FOR PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION PROJECTS

**Required**. All applicants for project types OTHER THAN the Turnkey Projects MUST prepare and submit a narrative using the LFPP Project Narrative form. The form and instructions are available on the "How do I Apply for an LFPP Grant" webpage. To view the Project Narrative document, please download the files and open them from your computer, rather than the web browser. The Project Narrative must clearly describe the objectives and goals, types of activities, applicable outcome indicators, and fiscal plan and resources information. The Project Narrative Guide can assist applicants in filling out the form.

The completed Project Narrative must not exceed thirty-five (35) pages. For example, the form is 14 pages before you begin entering your project information, your form may be up to 35 pages in length when completed (14 original pages + 21 pages of applicant content).

Applicants must submit the LFPP Project Narrative form as a PDF fillable form (in its original file format), attached to the Grants.gov application package using the "Project Narrative Attachment Form" link in Grants.gov.

Handwritten applications or applications in MS Word will not be accepted.

**The supporting documents listed in Sections 5.2.6 through 5.2.9 do not count toward the 35-page limit.**

### 5.2.5 TURNKEY PROJECT NARRATIVE

**Required for all Turnkey projects.** Applicants MUST prepare and submit a narrative using the "LFPP Turnkey Marketing and Promotion Project Narrative form" or the "LFPP Turnkey Recruitment and Training Project Narrative form". The form and instructions are available on the "How do I Apply for an LFPP Grant" website. To view the Project Narrative documents, please download the files and open them from your computer, rather than the web browser. The Turnkey Project Narratives lists all the activities that may be included in the project. DO NOT propose any additional activities. Doing so will disqualify the application from consideration. The Turnkey Project Narrative must clearly describe the activities, applicable outcome indicators, and fiscal plan and resources information. The Project Narrative Guide explains how to fill the form.

The completed LFPP Turnkey Project Narrative must not exceed twenty-two (22) pages. For example, the form is 12 pages before you begin entering your project information, your form may be up to 22 pages in length when completed (12 original pages + 10 pages of applicant content).

Applicants must submit the "LFPP Turnkey Marketing and Promotion Project Narrative" or the "Turnkey Recruitment and Training Project Narrative" form as a PDF fillable form (in its original file format), attached to the Grants.gov application package using the "Project Narrative Attachment Form" link in Grants.gov.

Handwritten applications or applications in MS Word will not be accepted.

**The supporting documents listed in Sections 5.2.6 through 5.2.9 do not count toward the 22-page limit.**

### 5.2.6 LETTERS OF VERIFICATION FOR MATCHING FUNDS

**Required**. Applicants MUST have 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. Verification letters must be signed by the entity providing the matching funds. **Submit one letter verifying the match for EACH cash or in-kind resource, signed by the matching organization.** For example, if the match contribution will be provided by the applicant organization and two partners, a total of 3 match verification letters are required.

AMS has posted a Letter of Verification for Matching Funds Template on the grant program's website. We highly encourage you to use this template. If you do not use this template or if you are an applicant submitting a match, your match verification document must 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

**Instructions for organizations submitting Letter of Verification for *Matching Funds*:** Submit *Letter of Verification for Matching Funds* on letterhead and address them to the applicant (i.e., Project Director). Clearly indicate at the top of the documents that they are "LETTER OF VERIFICATION FOR MATCHING FUNDS ". **AMS will not accept unsigned letters**.

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

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

**Required**. Applicants MUST provide letters of commitment (in MS Word or PDF) from all project partners and collaborators listed in the Project Narrative. More information can be found on partners and collaborators in section ***3.2 Partners and Collaborators***. The partner or collaborator must state in the letter that they agree with the project management plan presented in the Project Narrative. Emails in lieu of letters will not be accepted.

AMS has posted a Partner Organization Template Letter on the grant program's website. We highly encourage you to use this template. If you do not use this template, the Letters of Commitment must minimally include the following:

- Project Applicant
- Project Title
- A short introduction describing the partnering organization's mission and its interest in LFPP 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

**Instructions for organizations submitting Letters of Commitment:** Submit *Letters of Commitment* on letterhead and address them to the applicant (i.e., Project Director). Clearly indicate at the top of the documents that they are "LETTERS OF COMMITMENT". **AMS will not emails or unsigned letters.**

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

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

### 5.2.8 EVIDENCE OF CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

**Required if critical resources and/or infrastructure are necessary for the completion of the proposed project**. Applicants MUST 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, buildings, structures, and other critical resources must be in place and in working condition at the time of application submission. The letter must describe 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.

AMS has posted a Suggested Evidence Of Critical Resources And Infrastructure Template Letter on the LFPP application website. We highly encourage you to use this template. If you do not use this template, your Letter of Evidence of Critical Infrastructure must minimally include the following information:

- 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.

**Instructions for preparing Letters of Critical Infrastructure:** Submit Letters of Evidence of Critical Resources and Infrastructure on letterhead and address them to the applicant (i.e., Project Director). Documents should be clearly labeled **"**EVIDENCE OF CRITICAL RESOURCES AND INFRASTRUCTURE" at the top. The letters must accompany the proposal at the time of the application submission.

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

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

**Required if the applicant has a NICRA**. Refer to section ***4.2*** Indirect Costs 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.

## 5.3 APPLICATION SUBMISSION AND RECEIPT PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS

### 5.3.1 HOW TO REGISTER TO APPLY

Applicants MUST have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), an active SAM.gov account, and a Grants.gov account to submit an application. AMS recommends that applicants start the registration process in these systems immediately to allow enough time to meet application submission deadlines. Registration in these systems collectively may take **more than four weeks** to complete. The steps below provide details on how to complete each registration.

Organization applicants can find complete instructions here:
https://apply07.grants.gov/help/html/help/Register/OrganizationRegistration.htm

1. Obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI): Entities applying for funding, including renewal funding, must have a UEI from SAM.gov. Applicants must enter the UEI number in the data entry field labeled "Organizational UEI" on the SF-424. Getting a UEI requires validation steps in SAM.gov. Applicants are encouraged to start this process as early as possible, and, if applicable, this includes providing guidance to subapplicants on getting their own UEI.
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 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 renewed annually, and your organization must have an active SAM.gov account to submit your application to Grants.gov. Organizations must maintain an active SAM registration with current information throughout the application review period and, if you are awarded a grant, during the project period.**
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).
    a. Watch the video on how to Register in Grants.gov and create an institutional profile. Applicants are required to use Login.gov to sign into Grants.gov. See the Grants.gov help article for more information on logging in with Login.gov credentials. The Grants.gov validation process also includes a check for an active SAM.gov registration. Applicants without a current SAM.gov registration will be rejected.
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 may use the Grants.gov Workspace, a shared, online environment where members of a grant team may simultaneously access and edit different webforms within an application. For each funding opportunity announcement, an applicant creates individual instances of a workspace.

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

    NOTE: You may need to visit the Adobe Software Compatibility 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 via a Workspace*: Submit your application through Workspace by clicking the Sign and Submit button on the Manage Workspace page, under the Forms tab. Grants.gov recommends submitting your application package **at least 24-48 hours prior to the close date** to provide you with time to correct any potential technical issues that may disrupt the application submission.
4. 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 ***5.2*** are included correctly in the application package when submitting via Grants.gov***.****Track via a Workspace*: After successfully submitting a workspace package, Grants.gov automatically assigns a Tracking Number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) to the package, which will be listed on the Confirmation page generated after submission.

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

**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.

## 5.5 SUBMISSION DATE AND TIME

Applicants must submit applications electronically via Grants.gov by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on May 14, 2024. AMS cannot consider applications received after this deadline for funding. See AMS' Late Applications, Denials and/or Appeal Procedures Policy.

## 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 PROJECT EVALUATION CRITERIA

Each Planning or Implementation application that meets the initial qualifications screening requirements (see section ***5.2****)* will be reviewed and scored competitively using the criteria listed below.

Each Turnkey application that meets the initial qualifications screening requirements (see section ***5.2***) will be reviewed and scored competitively on each of the criteria below EXCEPT alignment and intent. Technical Merit, Achievability, Expertise and Partners, Fiscal Plan and Resources will all carry equal weight, or 25 points each.

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

1. The application provides a clear and concise description of the specific issue, problem, or need addressed by the project, and the objectives for, the project.
2. The project helps develop, coordinate, and expand local and regional food businesses (including those that are not direct producer-to-consumer markets) that process, distribute, aggregate, or store locally or regionally produced food products and an agricultural local and regional food system infrastructure.
3. The applicant identifies and engages the intended beneficiaries, including the number of beneficiaries and how they will benefit. The application demonstrates a commitment to engage potential project beneficiaries as active participants in partnership activities.
4. The application describes the project's proposed geographic focus area and why it is the most appropriate place to conduct project activities.
5. The application complies with all written instructions and requirements described within the RFA and Project Narrative Template.

**Technical Merit** ..... **25 Points**

1. The application presents a clear, well-conceived, and overall suitable work plan for fulfilling the goals and objectives of the proposed project.
2. The application presents a realistic schedule for implementing the proposed project during the award project period.
3. If the project and/or entity was previously funded, the extent to which the previous lessons learned are incorporated into the proposed project.
4. The level of effort attributed to personnel and contractual entities detailed in the application are at a reasonable level to conduct the proposed project.
5. The application work plan contains measurable or quantifiable tasks that relate directly to the objectives of the proposed project.

**Achievability** **15 Points**

1. 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.
2. The proposed project can be easily adapted to other regions, communities, or agricultural systems.
3. The applicant provides a comprehensive plan to distribute the project's results (both positive and negative) electronically and in-person to target audiences, stakeholders, and interested parties.

**Expertise and Partners** **20 Points**

1. 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. Commitment from the key partner and/or collaborators demonstrated through Letters of Commitment from Partner and Collaborator Organizations;
    b. The key staff who will be responsible for managing the projects and names and titles of the individuals who comprise the Project Team; and
    c. The expertise and experience of the Project Team necessary to successfully manage and implement the proposed project.
2. The application describes plans for coordination, communication, and data sharing and reporting among members of the Project Team and stakeholder groups, including both internal applicant personnel **and** external partners and collaborators.
3. 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, particularly including historically underserved entities such as underserved, beginning, and/or limited resource entities.
4. The application describes how the project, and its partnerships and collaborations, will be sustained beyond the project's period of performance (without grant funds).

**Fiscal Plan and Resources** **15 Points**

1. 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 application provides evidence that critical resources and infrastructure that are necessary for the initiation and completion of the proposed project are currently in place.
3. The applicant demonstrates that its partners' or collaborators' contribution of non-Federal cash resources or in-kind contributions is available and obtainable for the project as evidenced through the submitted Letters of Verification for Matching Funds.

## 6.2 REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

***Step 1: Initial Qualification Screening***

Each application is initially reviewed for overall completeness, as well as compliance with eligibility and program requirements as set forth in this RFA. If an application does not meet these requirements, it is removed from consideration. Please see AMS' Applications, Denials Late and/or Appeals Procedure for more information.

***Step 2: Technical Review***

Each application that passes initial screening (Step 1) is evaluated by a panel of independent peer reviewers. AMS makes every attempt to match reviewers with applications in their areas of expertise. Each reviewer signs a conflict of interest and confidentiality agreement regarding any assigned proposals. The peer review panels evaluate their assigned proposals using instructions prepared by AMS officials. Individual reviewers 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 scores and recommendations. In addition to the scores, AMS reviews each application to ensure that potential recommended projects align with the scope, allowability of budget items, available funding, geographic diversity (including across program years), and program priorities, as described in Section ***1.4***. AMS staff will work with top-scored 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(b).

# 7.0 AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

## 7.1 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 reference to the AMS General Terms and Conditions.

## 7.2 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.

## 7.3 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*.

### 7.4 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.

### 7.5 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

### 8.1 PROGRAMMATIC QUESTIONS

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

**For additional information, please visit the LFPP Website:** https://www.ams.usda.gov/lfpp

### 8.2 AVAILABLE RESOURCES

AMS provides resources and information on its website (www.ams.usda.gov/lfpp), including webinars information, FAQ's, descriptions of funded projects, Project Narrative Guides, and required application forms. AMS staff is available to provide timely technical assistance.

### 8.3 ADDRESS

**Local Food Promotion Program**
USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 1510-S South Building
Stop 0264
Washington, DC 20250-0264
FMLFPPGrants@usda.gov

### 8.4 GRANTS.GOV QUESTIONS

All questions regarding Grants.gov technical assistance must be directed to Grants.gov's Applicant Support. Applicants may also call the 24/7 toll-free support number 1-800-518-4726 or email support@grants.gov . Grants.gov will issue a ticket number to which the applicant and Grants.gov can refer if the issue is not immediately resolved.

Grants.gov Registration: https://www.grants.gov/applicants/applicant-registration
Applicant Support: Grants.gov provides additional training resources, including video tutorials.

## 9.0 OTHER INFORMATION

### 9.1 DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this program, the following definitions are applicable:

Critical Resources and Infrastructure means the physical and the non-physical assets necessary to start and complete a project:

- Critical Infrastructure includes physical assets such as land, structures, or equipment.
- Critical Resources includes non-physical assets such as human capital, community support and partnership, or institutional capacity.

Historically Underserved Farmer or Rancher: Four groups are defined by USDA as "Historically Underserved," including farmers or ranchers who are: Beginning; Socially Disadvantaged; Veterans; and Limited Resource as described at "Historically Underserved Farmers and Ranchers" and below:

- Beginning Farmer or Rancher means a participant who has not operated a farm or ranch, or who has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 consecutive years, and substantially participates in the operation.
- Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher means a participant with direct or indirect gross farm sales not more than the current indexed value in each of the previous two years, and Who has a total household income at or below the national poverty level for a family of four, or less than 50 percent of county median household income in each of the previous two years. A Self-Determination Tool is available to the public and may be completed on-line or printed and completed hardcopy at: https://lrftool.sc.egov.usda.gov/.
- Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher means an individual or entity who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group. A socially disadvantaged group is a group whose members have been subject to racial or ethnic prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities. This groups consist of: American Indians or Alaskan Natives, Asians, Blacks or African Americans, Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics.
- 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.

Local or Regional Food Business means an organization or business entity that functions as an intermediary between producers (farmers or growers) and buyers by carrying out one or more local or regional food supply chain activities—including aggregating, storing, processing, and/or distributing locally or regionally produced food products—to meet local and regional market demand.

Examples include but are not limited to eligible entities that serve as food hubs, food aggregators, food distributors, food wholesalers, food processors, and other value-added production enterprises, such as shared-use kitchen or kitchen incubator operations.

Locally and Regionally Produced Food means food that is raised, produced, aggregated, stored, processed, and distributed in the locality or region where the final product is marketed to consumers, so that the total distance that the product travels between the farm or ranch where the product originates and the point of sale to the end consumer is at most 400 miles, or both the final market and the origin of the product are within the same State, territory, or tribal land.

LFPP recognizes that domestic farmers' markets, roadside stands, CSA programs, agritourism activities, other direct producer-to-consumer market opportunities, and local and regional food businesses may source or market some of their food products outside of the defined locality or region. These enterprises are encouraged to consider local boundaries for projects based on existing networks, foodsheds, distance to markets for farmers within the selected area, or other relevant factors. AMS may question the reason behind the selected local or regional food system development effort.

Mid-tier Value Chain means a local or regional supply network that links independent producers with businesses and cooperatives that market value-added agricultural product in a manner that:

- Targets and strengthens the profitability and competitiveness of small and medium-size farms and ranches that are structured as a family farm; and
- Obtains agreement from an eligible agricultural producer group, farmer or rancher cooperative, or majority-controlled producer-based business venture that is engaged in the value chain on a marketing strategy.

Value-Added Agricultural Product means any agricultural commodity or product that:

- Has undergone a change in the physical state or form of the product (such as milling wheat into flour or making strawberries into jam);
- Is produced in a manner that enhances the value of the agricultural commodity or product, (such as organically produced products);
- Is physically segregated in a manner that results in the enhancement of the value of that commodity or product (such as an identity preserved product);
- Is a source of farm- or ranch-based renewable energy, including E–85 fuel; or
- Is aggregated and marketed as a locally produced agricultural food product and, as a result of the change in physical state or the manner in which the agricultural commodity or product is produced and segregated, the customer base for the commodity or product is expanded and a greater portion of revenue derived from the marketing, processing, or physical segregation is made available to the producer of the commodity or product.

## 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: 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 § 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 2055, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-0201, 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.