



# Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program

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## Program Scope and Requirements

**Funding Opportunity Number:** USDA-AMS-TM-RFSI-C-23-0001

**State Plan Due Date:** August 23, 2023, at 11:59 PM Eastern Time.

## Program Solicitation Information

**Funding Opportunity Title:** Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program Cooperative Agreements

**Funding Opportunity Number:** USDA-AMS-TM-RFSI-C-23-0001

**Announcement Type:** Initial

**Assistance Listing Number:** 10.190

**Funding Authorization:** Section 1001(b)(4) of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021 (Pub. L. 117—2), as amended, authorizes the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), to make grants and agreements to maintain and improve food and agricultural supply chain resiliency.

**Eligible Entities:** Eligible entities are departments of agriculture in States and Territories. The department of agriculture in each State will serve as a Lead State agency, and AMS encourages them to partner with at least one additional relevant state agency. The term 'State' means the 50 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.

Accessing for funds under this program is a three-step process (see [section 1.4](#) for full details). After entering into the initial cooperative agreement, States must submit an initial state plan describing their program proposal, how it aligns with the program's priorities and intent, and implementation plans. Then, they will administer competitive programs for Infrastructure Grants. There is an additional option project component for States to conduct supply-chain coordination activities.

**State Plan Due Date:** August 23, 2023, by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time.

**Executive Summary:** The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), is entering into cooperative agreements with each U.S. State and Territory for Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program Cooperative Agreements (RFSI). Following execution of the agreement, states will submit State Plans to develop and administer coordinated initiatives to build resilience across the middle-of-the-food-supply-chain in their state. Funds will support expanded capacity for the aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, and distribution of locally and regionally produced 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 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 subawards to support infrastructure in the middle-of-the-supply-chain for domestic food and farm businesses and other eligible entities. States may use a limited portion of funds to develop and/or strengthen the State's supply chain coordination and targeted market development services for local and regional produced product.

Up to \$420 million in American Rescue Plan funding is available for this program.

The overall goal of RFSI is to create more and better processing options for local and regional 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 Small and Underserved Business Owners, Historically Underserved Farmers or Ranchers or for other businesses that qualify under the Small Business Administration (SBA) categories of Small Disadvantaged Business, Women Owned Small Business, and Veteran-Owned Small Businesses. 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 mitigating and adapting to climate change in their project's design and implementation.

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## 1.0 FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

### 1.1 LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Section 1001(b)(4) of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021 (Pub. L. 117—2), as amended, authorizes the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), to make grants and agreements to maintain to improve food and agricultural supply chain resiliency.

### 1.2 PURPOSE

The purpose of the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program (RFSI) 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 by creating new revenue streams for their state’s producers. States will make subawards in the form of Infrastructure Grants to middle-of-the-supply businesses to create more diverse local and regional market options and create more economic opportunities for communities, allowing them to retain more of the value chain dollar. RFSI investments aim to create a food systems infrastructure to support competitive and profitable market access for domestic farm products. States may propose that some of the funds for program management and technical assistance functions when those functions include complementary state-led supply chain coordination, in alignment with these program goals.

RFSI 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 diversified, distributed, and local.

RFSI 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 RFSI 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 in rural communities; 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).

- 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.](#)

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### 1.2.1 TARGET LOCAL AND REGIONAL AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS

RFSI is intended to serve middle-of-the-supply-chain needs to add value and provide more, new, and better markets for locally or regionally produced food. This program is to support food system crops and products meant for human consumption (excluding meat and poultry products, which are funded through other USDA programs).

Ineligible products include: meat and poultry, wild-caught seafood, exclusively animal feed and forage products, fiber, landscaping products, tobacco, or dietary supplements.

### 1.3 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Under this program, AMS is entering into cooperative agreements with each State department of agriculture. Cooperative agreements are a form of federal financial assistance that anticipate substantial involvement by the awarding federal agency (e.g., engaging with the recipient on overall project direction and implementation).

States will use the formula funds to make competitive Infrastructure Grants (i.e., subawards) for projects to expand capacity and infrastructure for the aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, or distribution of targeted local and regional agricultural products (see [section 1.2.1](#)) to entities described in [section 1.5.2](#).

States may also allocate up to 20% of a their RFSI funding, or up to \$1 million (whichever is smaller), for Supply Chain Coordination activities to develop and/or enhance a supply chain coordination initiative that focuses on business support and market development (see [section 1.4.4](#)) to benefit local and regional food systems and contributes to the success and impact of the RFSI Infrastructure Grant investments. These funds are separate from costs associated with managing the cooperative agreement and Infrastructure Grants. States are strongly encouraged to coordinate with the USDA Regional Food Business Centers to complement technical assistance offerings, particularly where state agencies or government entities are not participating formally in the Regional Centers partnerships.

There is no match requirement for State-led Supply Chain Coordination activities (see [section 4.1](#)) or other state costs to manage the program. Infrastructure Grant sub-award recipients 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-food-supply-chain capacity for locally and regionally produced foods 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, such as underserved producers. The RFSI 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 training opportunities;
- Support construction of a new 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.;
- Modernize processing and manufacturing equipment; and
- Develop, customize, or install 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 State Plan 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 solicitation 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 district cultural markets, corner stores, etc.

## 1.4 STATE RESPONSIBILITIES

States are responsible for (1) developing an initial State Plan outlining how the state plans to conduct outreach and use the funds, (2) conducting outreach and an Infrastructure Grant competition and submitting Infrastructure Grant award recommendations to USDA in a State Infrastructure Grant Proposal, and (3) 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, Program Specific Terms and Conditions (forthcoming), and [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#).

States must ensure that their State Plans are fully responsive to the RFSI program by reviewing the Purpose ([section 1.2](#)) and Award Criteria ([section 6.1](#)). Contact a specialist listed in [section 8.0](#) Agency Contacts if there are any questions about whether a project qualifies for RFSI.

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### 1.4.1 STATE PLAN

The State Plan 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 RFSI will be fulfilled, and whether and how 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 1.4.4](#). USDA will review, inform, and approve this State Plan before approving expenditure by the State under the cooperative agreement. AMS will review all State Plans for conformance with the criteria in [section 6.1](#) and may require the applicant to provide additional information or clarification by a specified date.

By the deadline in this document, States must submit a State Plan responsive to the requirements in [section 5.2.5](#).

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### 1.4.2 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 Local and Regional Agricultural Products ([section 1.2.1](#)), 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 State Plan it submits to USDA has been developed with proven and justified public support.

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### 1.4.3 ADMINISTER INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT SUBAWARDS

After USDA approval of the State Plan, States will administer a competitive process to award Infrastructure Grants in their State, and submit Infrastructure Grant award recommendations to USDA in a State Infrastructure Grant Proposal subject to USDA approval as described in [section 1.5](#).



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#### 1.4.4 STATE-LED COMPLEMENTARY SUPPLY CHAIN ACTIVITIES

States may allocate up to 20% of their RFSI 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 RFSI program, including but not limited to Infrastructure Grant recipients. States are encouraged to conduct these activities themselves, to build state-level capacity, but may contract or enter sub-agreements for some of the activities. Coordination with the USDA Regional Food Business Centers is strongly encouraged. See [section 1.6](#) for more details.

#### 1.5 INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT SUBAWARD PROCESS

States must offer most of their RFSI 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 document. After states take their allowed indirect costs (see [section 4.2](#)) and up to 20% of the funding or \$1 million, whichever is less, for state-led complementary supply chain activities (see [section 1.6](#)), the remainder must be used for Infrastructure Grants.

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##### 1.5.1 INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT – FUNDING AMOUNTS

- The minimum award amount is \$100,000 and maximum award amount is \$3,000,000.
- **Simplified Equipment-Only Projects:** Lead State Agencies may issue Simplified Equipment-Only Projects. These projects offer a simplified application to fund smaller grants between \$10,000 and \$100,000 for equipment purchases. The Simplified Equipment-Only option is a Fixed Price Grant, meaning it will fund only equipment purchases (and not associated facility upgrades, staffing, or other costs), and the amount awarded will be equal to the cost of the equipment up to \$100,000.

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##### 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
- For-profit entities operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, or distribution of targeted agricultural products, whose activities are primarily focused for the benefit of local and regional producers, and that meet the eligibility requirements of the SBA small business size standards are eligible.
  - For-profit entities must meet the eligibility requirements of the SBA small business size standards matched to industries described in the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). For more information on these size standards, please visit [SBA's Size Standards webpage](#). For a quick check on whether your business qualifies, please use the [Size Standards Tool](#).
- 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.

All applicant businesses and organizations must be domestically owned, and applicants' facilities must be physically located within the 50 States of the United States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Republic of Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

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### 1.5.3 INFRASTRUCTURE GRANTS – COST SHARING AND MATCHING

#### Matching Funds Requirement

Infrastructure grant recipients are required to contribute 50% of the total proposed project cost as a match to federal funding. This applies to all applicants except those who qualify for the reduced match described in the next section.

**No match is required for Simplified Equipment Only Projects.**

#### Reduced Matching Funds– Historically Underserved Groups

For historically 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. States must require that applicants self-certify in their Infrastructure Grant applications to being eligible for this reduced match.

#### 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 C.F.R. § 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 recommended for an award.

Indirect costs may count toward the Infrastructure Grant applicant's match. Refer to section 4.2, Indirect for more information.

Program income (as defined in 2 C.F.R. § 200.1) or any other Federal funds is an ineligible source of match or cost share.

## Matching Funds and Letters of Verification

Each application must include the total amount of match and how it will specifically align with their requested funding. Additionally, applicants must submit one match verification letter for EACH cash or in-kind resource signed by the matching organization. AMS highly encourages States to require or encourage Infrastructure Grant applicants to use the Suggested Match Verification Template Letter on the grant program's website. If you choose not to use the provided template, the match verification documents must minimally include the following:

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

Signed Match Verification Letters must accompany the Infrastructure Grant proposal at the time of application to the State.

Match Verification must be managed and monitored by the Lead State Agency and must be available upon request from the USDA.

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### 1.5.4 INFRASTRUCTURE GRANTS – INDIRECT COSTS

Indirect costs are any costs that are incurred for common or joint objectives that 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](#).

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### 1.5.5 INFRASTRUCTURE GRANTS – COMPETITIVE REVIEW PROCESS

States must award Infrastructure Grants through a competitive review process. State will facilitate and conduct 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; and,
- maintain guidelines and procedures to prevent any conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest as required by 2 C.F.R. § 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; and
- 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 an 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 document. This Review Board may respond to the State with questions and recommendations to adjust award recommendations.

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#### 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 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 limited duration with a definitive beginning and end. A project will also have 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; and
- 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 may include:

- Hiring term-limited personnel to assist with project implementation 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;
- Analyzing potential facility upgrades and changes that meet regulatory requirements, obtaining design and/or architecture services, etc. (to the extent these costs are directly related to the project);
- Planning for Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) or other food safety or worker safety measures or equipment recommendations; and
- 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; and
  - Cooking, baking, juicing, distilling, fermenting.

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#### 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; and
- Projects which have already received funding from another federal grant or subaward programs may not receive funding for the same activities through an Infrastructure Grant. However, Infrastructure Grants may build on the successes of prior funding, such as the USDA Regional Food Business Centers Business Builder subawards, to fund subsequent activities.

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#### 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 (forthcoming). 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 RFSI 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 RFSI 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 sub-agreements for some of the activities.

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.

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 in order to access additional technical assistance and information resources that may be available to support producers and supply chain efforts. States are to review Regional Centers’ Business Builder subaward recipients to identify entities applying to both programs. 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.

## 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 C.F.R. § 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 State Plans before approving any expenditures under these cooperative agreements, and will amend the cooperative agreements with tailored State work plans, deliverables, and budgets, and 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 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 RFSI 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 RFSI activities.
- Providing 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.

## 2.0 AWARD INFORMATION

### 2.1 TYPE OF FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

AMS is using a Cooperative Agreement to provide the Federal award to applicants.

### 2.2 AVAILABLE FUNDING, FEDERAL AWARD PERIOD DURATION, AND FUNDING FORMULA

Source	Available Funding	Award Period	Start Date	End Date
ARP	\$420 million	4 years	May 25, 2023	May 24, 2027

Please note, available funding 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.

A formula was used to develop each State's percent share of the total funding allocation. The formula consists of the weighted sum of (A) State percent share of commodity by sales, plus the weighted sum of (B) State percent share of commodity by small farm sales, plus the (C) weighted State percent share of Rural populations living in distressed communities. The Weight for A, B, and C is 20 percent 60 percent, and 20% respectively. It should also be noted that each commodity is weighted by the commodity's percent of total sales for all commodities in the funding calculation.



In their State Plans, each state 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.

#### RFSI Funding State List

State Department of Agriculture	Funding Allocation
<b>Alaska</b>	\$2,217,448
<b>Alabama</b>	\$6,436,073
<b>Arkansas</b>	\$5,613,423
<b>Arizona</b>	\$4,591,878
<b>California</b>	\$38,249,701
<b>Colorado</b>	\$4,155,660
<b>Connecticut</b>	\$2,739,027
<b>Delaware</b>	\$2,151,300
<b>Florida</b>	\$8,156,691
<b>Georgia</b>	\$8,518,478
<b>Hawaii</b>	\$3,289,317
<b>Iowa</b>	\$5,239,433
<b>Idaho</b>	\$6,184,920
<b>Illinois</b>	\$6,366,499
<b>Indiana</b>	\$8,082,536
<b>Kansas</b>	\$6,459,356
<b>Kentucky</b>	\$8,688,111
<b>Louisiana</b>	\$6,234,099
<b>Massachusetts</b>	\$3,459,735
<b>Maryland</b>	\$3,803,962

<b>Maine</b>	\$3,967,502
<b>Michigan</b>	\$10,042,265
<b>Minnesota</b>	\$12,251,622
<b>Missouri</b>	\$8,140,211
<b>Mississippi</b>	\$6,235,682
<b>Montana</b>	\$4,351,352
<b>North Carolina</b>	\$7,464,022
<b>North Dakota</b>	\$4,690,280
<b>Nebraska</b>	\$3,371,973
<b>New Hampshire</b>	\$2,659,811
<b>New Jersey</b>	\$3,437,002
<b>New Mexico</b>	\$4,628,305
<b>Nevada</b>	\$2,214,973
<b>New York</b>	\$19,381,448
<b>Ohio</b>	\$12,655,155
<b>Oklahoma</b>	\$6,407,933
<b>Oregon</b>	\$5,907,194
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	\$26,537,250
<b>Rhode Island</b>	\$2,191,527
<b>South Carolina</b>	\$4,983,549
<b>South Dakota</b>	\$3,267,865
<b>Tennessee</b>	\$5,722,161
<b>Texas</b>	\$12,165,736
<b>Utah</b>	\$3,040,043

<b>Virginia</b>	\$6,584,391
<b>Vermont</b>	\$4,525,802
<b>Washington</b>	\$9,460,300
<b>Wisconsin</b>	\$28,251,555
<b>West Virginia</b>	\$4,555,774
<b>Wyoming</b>	\$2,245,206
<b>Samoa</b>	\$2,072,164
<b>District of Columbia</b>	\$2,000,000
<b>Guam</b>	\$2,117,365
<b>Northern Mariana Islands</b>	\$2,038,278
<b>Puerto Rico</b>	\$4,125,855
<b>U.S. Virgin Islands</b>	\$2,070,799

### **3.0 LEAD STATE AGENCY AND PARTNERS/COLLABORATORS**

#### **3.1 LEAD STATE AGENCY – DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

The department of agriculture in each State will serve as a Lead 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.

The Lead State Agency is encouraged to implement the program in partnership with other agencies within the state that are responsible for commercial food processing, seafood, or related food systems, distribution, economic development, or commerce activities within the State. The Lead State Agency is responsible for submitting the State Plan and should describe partnerships with any other agencies in the state who will play a significant role in implementation.

AMS expects that Lead State Agencies will consult with the Governor's Office and other relevant stakeholders before developing RFSI State Plans 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**

A Lead State Agency may establish subcontracts or subagreements with partners and collaborators for activities under this program. This may include, but is not limited to, coordination and technical

assistance activities, or to conduct outreach or other key activities for the Infrastructure Grant competition.

- A *partner* is a person or an organization unaffiliated with the applicant that cooperates with the Lead State Agency in the conduct of the project and has specified responsibilities in the management of the project. In RFSI, this may include other State agencies working with the Lead State Agency.
- A *collaborator* is a person or an organization unaffiliated with the Lead State Agency that cooperates with the Lead State Agency 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.

## 4.0 FUNDING CONSIDERATIONS

### 4.1 COST SHARING AND MATCHING

States are not required to provide match funding or cost share in this program. As described in [section 1.5.3](#), Infrastructure Grants do have a match requirement.

### 4.2 INDIRECT COSTS

*Indirect costs* (also known as “facilities and administrative costs”—defined at [2 C.F.R. § 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*

In their proposed budgets within their State Plan, Lead State Agencies 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 C.F.R. § 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 C.F.R. §§ 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:

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

As stated in the regulations ([2 C.F.R. §§ 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 C.F.R. § 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 entities who elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10 percent must use the MTDC as the base. MTDC are defined in [2 C.F.R. § 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 entity has a negotiated indirect cost rate approved by its cognizant agency, the State Plan must include a copy of the approved NICRA. Entities that would like to negotiate an indirect cost rate must contact their cognizant agency. For assignments of cognizant agencies see [2 C.F.R. § 200.1](#).

#### 4.3 SUPPLANTING

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

#### 4.4 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; or,
- 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 8.0](#).

#### 4.5 COORDINATOR MEETING TRAVEL

State recipients are expected to attend an AMS sponsored cooperative agreement 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.

### 5.0 STATE PLAN SUBMISSION INFORMATION

#### 5.1 ELECTRONIC APPLICATION PACKAGE

Only electronic State Plans may be submitted via GrantSolutions in response to this document. For an overview of the GrantSolutions Submission process see [GrantSolutions Apply for a Directed Announcement](#) webpage. This document contains the information needed to obtain and complete required forms and AMS-specific attachments.

Applicants can find the opportunity under either the Assistance Listing number “10.190,” or the RFSI Funding Opportunity Number “USDA-AMS-TM-RFSI-C-23-0001”.

#### 5.2 CONTENT AND FORM OF STATE PLAN SUBMISSION

##### 5.2.1 SF-424 APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

**Required.** Form SF-424 is available via Grants.gov and will be posted on the RFSI webpage. 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.

#### SF-424 Instructions

Box	Instruction
1 - Type of Submission	Application.
2 - Type of Application	New.

Box	Instruction
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)	10.190.
12 - Funding Opportunity Number	USDA-AMS-TM-RFSI-G-23-0001.
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: May 25, 2023 End date: No later than May 24, 2027.
18 - Estimated Funding	Total Federal funds requested.
19 - Is Applicant Subject to Review by State Under Executive Order 12372 Process?	See <a href="#">section 5.4</a> .

5.2.2 [SF-424A](#) BUDGET INFORMATION FOR NON-CONSTRUCTION PROGRAMS

**Required.** [SF-424A](#) is available via Grants.gov and will be available on the RFSI webpage. Most information blocks on the required form are either self-explanatory or adequately explained in the form instructions. However, for the State Plan submissions, 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 “RFSI– Federal”
1.b – Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number	Enter “10.190”
1.e – Federal	Enter the amount of Federal funding requested for the project

**Section B – Budget Categories**

<b>Box</b>	<b>Instructions</b>
6.a – 6.j – Object Class Categories	<p>In Column 1, enter the amount of Federal funds requested for each Object Class Category.</p> <p>For example, if you are requesting \$2,000 in Federal funds for “Travel”, enter 2000 in Column 1, box 6.c</p>

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### 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 State Plan package submission in GrantSolutions.

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### 5.2.4 PROJECT ABSTRACT SUMMARY

**Required.** The Project Abstract Summary form will be used as the award description for the overarching Federal award. The Project Abstract box must include the following:

- 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?

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### 5.2.5 STATE PLAN

**Required.** The State Plan must be completed by utilizing the provided State Plan Template (forthcoming). The State Plan 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 State Plan should include specific needs and priorities for the targeted agricultural products in the State and be responsive to the criteria listed in [section 6.1](#).

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

The State Plan 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 new State-provided content). DO NOT modify the margins of the template.

Lead State Agencies must submit the State Plan as a PDF and attachments to the GrantSolutions 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 if working with partners and collaborators to implement.** Lead State Agencies must provide letters of commitment from all critical 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 State Plan. 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.

#### 5.3 SUBMISSION DATE AND TIME

States must submit State Plans via Grant Solutions by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on August 23, 2023. See [AMS's Late Applications, Denials and/or Appeal Procedures](#).

#### 5.4 INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW

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

### 6.0 STATE PLAN REVIEW INFORMATION

#### 6.1 STATE PLAN REVIEW

AMS will review State Plans to ensure each State proposal meets the statutory purpose of the program, all criteria are fulfilled in accordance [section 5.0](#) State Plan 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, intention, and proposed plan to use up to 20% of funds for state supply chain coordination activities, if requested.

AMS will notify the Lead State Agency if additional information is required after the initial review of the application. AMS will work with Lead State Agencies to negotiate any revisions if necessary and possible. Failure to provide requested information in a timely manner may result in States not having access to funding and eventually, if the Lead State Agency and AMS cannot come to agreement, the cooperative agreement may be terminated.

State Plans will be reviewed and evaluated against the benchmarks for high-quality proposals described in the criteria below. State Plans that meet the quality threshold upon initial review will be processed for cooperative agreement amendment and subsequent funds disbursement. States that need to revise sections of their State Plan to meet the criteria will be able to do so. AMS will be available to work with applicants until the proposal can be approved.

Each State Plan will be evaluated using the following criteria:

- The State Plan 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.
- The State Plan presents a clear, well-conceived, and overall suitable work plan for fulfilling the goals and objectives of the program in the specific State.
- 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.
- The State Plan identifies and provides clear plans to engage the intended beneficiaries, or description of already-conducted engagement, if applicable, including the number of beneficiaries and how they will benefit.
- If the State intends to focus on a specific geographic area within the State, the State Plan describes the project’s proposed geographic focus area, and why it is the most appropriate place to conduct project activities.
- The State Plan complies with all written instructions and requirements described within the Program Scope and Requirements and State Plan Template.
- The State Plan presents a realistic schedule for implementing the proposed activities during the award project period.
- The outcomes and indicator(s) in the State Plan are appropriate for the scale and scope of the proposed approach, including:
  - How indicator numbers were derived with a clear means to collect feedback to evaluate and achieve each relevant outcome indicator; and
  - 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.
- State Plan budget narrative or justification provides a clear, detailed, narrative description for each budget line item including:
  - How the budget is consistent with the size and scope of the proposed activities; and
  - 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 must submit Infrastructure Grant recommendations to AMS utilizing the State Infrastructure Grant Proposal Template (forthcoming). This proposal must include the following information for each proposed Infrastructure Grant:

- Applicant name/Business Name
- Dollar amount requested and amount proposed by the 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 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 document.

The USDA 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 PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

### 7.1 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 (forthcoming) and the [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#), which reference applicable *Administrative and National Policy Requirements*.

### 7.2 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.

### 7.3 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. Grant recipients must meet the acknowledgement requirements outlined in the updated [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#).

## 8.0 AGENCY CONTACTS

After closely reviewing this document in its entirety, Lead State Agencies and other interested parties are encouraged to contact the AMS grants staff by e-mail with questions about the program at [RSFI@usda.gov](mailto:RSFI@usda.gov). For additional information, please visit the AMS grants website: [www.ams.usda.gov/grants](http://www.ams.usda.gov/grants).

## 8.1 AVAILABLE RESOURCES

AMS provides resources and information on the [Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program \(RFSI\) website](#) that may be helpful to the States. AMS staff is available to provide timely technical assistance. Correspondence may be directed to:

**Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program**  
USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Room 1510 South Building  
Stop 0264  
Washington, DC 20250-0264

## 8.2 GRANTSOLUTIONS QUESTIONS

All questions regarding GrantSolutions technical assistance must be directed to the GrantSolutions Help Desk at 866.577.0771 or [help@grantsolutions.gov](mailto:help@grantsolutions.gov).

## 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.

**Cooperatives:** A business or service organization (1) that is owned and democratically controlled by the people who use its services and (2) whose benefits (services received and earnings allocations) are distributed to the user-owners based on how much they use the cooperative.

**Critical Resources:** Critical resources and infrastructure can be facilities, land, structure, use of city street/parks, shared-used kitchen, and/or other resources that are essential for the proposed project activities.

**Domestically owned:** An entity organized in the United States under the law of the State, the states, or under Tribal jurisdiction where the entity operates, and a majority of the entity is owned by US citizens.

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

**Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP):** HACCP provides a framework for establishments to conduct science-based process controls that can be validated as effective in eliminating, preventing,

or reducing to an acceptable level the food safety hazards that are reasonably likely to occur in an official establishment's particular production processes.

**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" | Natural Resources Conservation Service \(usda.gov\)](#).

**Infrastructure Grant recipients:** RFSI 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.

**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.

**Lead State Agency:** Governmental agency within the State or Territory which is coordinating the application. The Lead State Agency must be the governmental agencies, commissions, or departments that is responsible for agriculture within the State or Territory and with whom AMS has entered an RFSI cooperative agreement.

**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 inure to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual.

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

**Small Disadvantaged Business:** A business that is small according to SBA's size standards for its business type and that is 51% or more owned and controlled by one or more disadvantaged persons. The disadvantaged person or persons must be socially disadvantaged and economically disadvantaged. For the purposes of this designation, disadvantaged persons is defined per [eCFR :: 13 CFR 124.103 -- "Who is socially disadvantaged?"](#) as "Those who have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice or cultural bias within American society because of their identities as members of groups and without regard to their individual qualities. The social disadvantage must stem from circumstances beyond their control." See ["Small Disadvantaged Business" \(sba.gov\)](#) for more information.

**Tribal Entities:** Tribal Entities is expansive and includes all entities falling under the eligible legal structures, including but not limited to: tribal owned corporations, intertribal non-profits and associations, Alaska Native Corporations, Native entities within the State of Alaska recognized by and eligible to receive services from the U.S. Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs, Native Hawaiian organizations including Homestead Associations, State recognized tribes/non-profits, and individually-owned Native American entities.

**Tribe:** means the term as defined in the Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act of 1994 (Public Law 103-454; 108 Stat. 4791, 4792).

**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.
- 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.

**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:** A small business, as defined by the SBA size standard for its business type that has no less than 51% of the business owned and controlled by one or more veterans. For those veterans who are permanently and totally disabled and unable to manage the daily business operations of their business, their business may still qualify if their spouse or appointed, permanent caregiver is assisting in that management. See "[Veteran contracting assistance programs](https://www.sba.gov/veteran-contracting-assistance-programs)" ([sba.gov](https://www.sba.gov)) for more information.

**Women-Owned Small Business:** A small business according to SBA size standards for its business type that is at least 51% owned and controlled by women who are U.S. citizens; and have women manage day-to-day operations who also make long-term decisions. See "[Women-Owned Small Business Federal Contract program](https://www.sba.gov/women-owned-small-business-federal-contract-program)" ([sba.gov](https://www.sba.gov)) for more information.

## 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, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the

Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

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

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

### 9.3 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUESTS

The [Freedom of Information Act of 1966 \(5 U.S.C. § 552\)](#) (FOIA) described at "[FOIA.gov - Freedom of Information Act: Learn](#)" and the [Privacy Act of 1974 \(5 U.S.C. § 552a\)](#), as implemented by USDA's regulations ([7 C.F.R. Part 1, Subpart A](#)), govern the release or withholding of information to the public in connection with this Federal award. The release of information under these laws and regulations applies only to records held by AMS and imposes no requirement on the recipient or any subrecipient to permit or deny public access to their records.

FOIA requests for records relating to this Federal award may be directed to USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service, FOIA/PA Officer, Room 1671-S, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-0273, Telephone: (202) 302-0650; or email: [AMS.FOIA@usda.gov](mailto:AMS.FOIA@usda.gov).

### 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 0503-0028. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 4 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering, and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information.

### 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.