Dairy Business Innovation Initiatives

Fiscal Year 2019 Request for Applications

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-AMS-TM-DBII-G-19-0008

Publication Date: April 16, 2019

Application Due Date: 11:59 PM Eastern Time on June 17, 2019

Program Solicitation Information

Funding Opportunity Title: Dairy Business Innovation Initiatives

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-AMS-TM-DBII-G-19-0008

Announcement Type: Initial

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 10.176

Dates: Applications must be received by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on June 17, 2019, 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 organizations to host Dairy Business Innovation (DBI) Initiatives. These initiatives serve to:

- Diversify dairy product markets to reduce risk and develop higher-value uses for dairy products,
- Promote business development that diversifies farmer income through processing and marketing innovation, and
- Encourage the use of regional milk production.

Approximately $1.5 million is available in FY 2019, less USDA administrative costs, will be available to fund applications under this solicitation. AMS expects to establish at least 3 regionally located dairy product and business innovation initiatives. Selected entities are expected to serve as initiatives between fiscal years (FY) 2019 through 2021 and are expected to submit a non-competing application for each FY the DBI Initiatives is appropriated funds during this tenure.

This announcement identifies the eligibility criteria for DBI Initiatives, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply to be a DBI Initiative.

Stakeholder Input: The AMS seeks comments about this Request for Applications (RFA). We will consider the comments when we develop the next RFA for the program. Submit written stakeholder comments by the deadline set forth in the DATES portion of this Notice via e-mail to: AMSGrants@ams.usda.gov. This e-mail address is intended only for receiving comments regarding this RFA and not requesting information or forms. In your comments, please state that you are responding to the **Dairy Business Innovation Initiatives RFA.**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

1.1 LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The Dairy Business Innovation (DBI) Initiatives are authorized by section 204(b) of the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 as supplemented by section 12513 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (Public Law 115—334), ([7 U.S.C. § 1632d](#)).

1.2 PURPOSE

This program connects AMS with eligible entities to host DBI Initiatives to manage the program by supporting dairy businesses in the development, production, marketing, and distribution of dairy products. These initiatives specifically focus on:

a. Diversifying dairy product markets to reduce risk and develop higher-value uses for dairy products;
b. Promoting business development that diversifies farmer income through processing and marketing innovation; and
c. Encouraging the use of regional milk production.

This RFA is to select the entities that will serve as initiatives from FY 2019 through 2021. See section *2.4 Federal Award Period Duration* for more information.

1.2.1 DEFINITIONS

Dairy Businesses are businesses that develop, produce, market, or distribute dairy products.

Initiatives are selected eligible entities that host this program with the purposes indicated under section *1.2*.

Dairy Products are products manufactured for use by humans which are derived from the processing of milk, and include fluid milk products. Products may include but are not limited to butter, cheese (whether natural or processed), skim milk, cream, whey or buttermilk (whether dry, evaporated, stabilized or condensed), and frozen desserts.

1.3 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Initiatives are expected to provide direct technical assistance and make grants to dairy businesses. Initiatives must be positioned to draw on existing dairy industry resources, including dairy farm density and suitability, as well as activities conducted by dairy promotion and research programs (authorized by the Dairy Production Stabilization Act of 1983 and the Fluid Milk Promotion Act of 1990), research organizations, dairy businesses, or academic or industry stakeholders. Initiatives may serve a certain product niche, such as specialty cheese, or serve dairy businesses with dairy products derived from the milk of a specific type of dairy animal, including dairy products made from cow milk, sheep milk, and goat milk.

These initiatives will also consult with any authorized dairy promotion program and AMS in carrying out the program and report on outcomes of the program as well as any related activities and opportunities to further increase dairy innovation. Selected host initiatives will adopt guidelines and procedures to prevent any conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest as required by 2 CFR § 400.2(b) while providing the direct technical assistance and grants to dairy businesses mentioned below.

1.3.1 DIRECT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Initiatives will provide direct technical assistance to dairy businesses. Direct technical assistance includes nonmonetary assistance directly to dairy businesses through either private consultation or widely available distribution. Technical assistance may be provided directly through the host Initiative or through industry experts or research institutions, including the cooperative extension services. Specific forms of assistance include:

- Business consulting, including business plan development for processed dairy products, strategic planning assistance, and distribution and supply chain innovation;

- Marketing and branding assistance, including market messaging, packaging innovation, consumer assessments, innovation in emerging market opportunities, and evaluation of regional, national, and international markets; and

- Assistance in product innovation, including the development of value-added products, innovation in byproduct reprocessing and use maximization, and dairy product production training, including in new, rare, or innovative techniques.

Technical assistance may include the development or facilitation of informational websites, webinars, conferences, trainings, plant tours, and field days.

1.3.2 SUBAWARDS TO DAIRY BUSINESSES

Initiatives will facilitate and have operational responsibility to carry out a subaward program with at least 50 percent of the allotted funds (e.g., an Initiative with a $1,000,000 award amount will be expected to award $500,000 in subawards). An initiative may provide a subaward to an entity that receives direct assistance to advance the business activities recommended because of that assistance while also conducting a competitive subaward program to dairy businesses that did not seek or receive direct assistance. The subaward program will focus on:

a. Modernization, specialization, and grazing transition on dairy farms;
b. Value chain and commodity innovation and facility and process updates for dairy processors; and
c. Product development, packaging, and marketing of dairy products.

Individual subawards that Initiatives award will be to new or existing dairy businesses and will not be more than $500,000. Initiatives will prioritize entities that receive direct technical assistance referenced in section *1.3.1* and are:

- Dairy farms and dairy businesses with limited access to other forms of assistance;
- Employee-owned dairy businesses;

- Cooperatives; and
- Dairy businesses that seek to create dairy products that add substantial value in processing or marketing, such as specialty cheeses.

2.0 AWARD INFORMATION

2.1 TYPE OF FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

AMS will use a Grant Agreement to provide support to successful applications.

2.2 TYPE OF APPLICATIONS

New application. AMS will review all new applications for conformance with the criteria in section *5.0 Application Review Information* and may require the applicant to provide additional information or clarification by a specified date.

2.3 AVAILABLE FUNDING

It is anticipated that approximately $1.5 million will be available to fund applications in FY 2019, less administrative expenses. Enactment of additional Federal continuing resolutions or appropriations may affect the availability or level of funding for this program.

Selected entities will be expected to submit subsequent applications during their tenure as a host Initiative for each fiscal year that the DBI Initiatives is appropriated funds. The availability of these funds is subject to the enactment of continuing resolutions or appropriations. A separate award will be issued noncompetitively for each fiscal year and each award will be for a 3-year period.

2.4 FEDERAL AWARD PERIOD DURATION

Projects must be completed within 3 years. The grant period must begin no later than September 30, 2019, and end no later than September 29, 2022. The applicant must indicate the start and end dates on the SF-424, "Application for Federal Assistance" in block 17.

2.5 AWARD SIZE

AMS will fund no less than three DBI Initiatives of equal amounts. For example, if AMS funds three Initiatives with approximately $1.5 million, each Initiative will receive approximately $500,000.

3.0 ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

3.1 ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible entities include:

- State departments of agriculture or other state entities,
- Cooperative extension services,
- Institutions of higher education, and
- Nonprofit organizations.

Entities must have the capacity to provide consultation and expertise necessary to advance the purpose and activities of the DBI Initiatives, and expertise in grant distribution and tracking to be considered eligible for this program.

All dairy promotion programs are ineligible to host an initiative.

3.2   PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS

An applicant may subcontract or subaward with partners and collaborators. Only the applicant must meet the eligibility requirements listed in this RFA. Project partners and collaborators need not meet the eligibility requirements provided in section *3.1*.

- A *partnership* is a relationship involving close cooperation between parties having specified and joint rights and 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.

Partners and collaborators may come from private or public, for-profit or nonprofit entities. Applicants must show evidence of existing community or industry support and engagement.

3.3   COST-SHARING AND MATCHING

This RFA does not have a Federal cost-sharing or matching requirement.

4.0 APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

4.1   OBTAINING AN APPLICATION PACKAGE

Only electronic applications may be submitted via Grants.gov in response to this RFA. We urge applicants to submit early to the Grants.gov system. For an overview of the Grants.gov application process see Grants.gov's Apply for Grants webpage. This RFA contains the information needed to obtain and complete required application forms and AMS-specific attachments. More information about applying through Grants.gov can be found in section *4.6 Grants.gov Application Submission and Receipt Procedures and Requirements*.

Applicants can find the opportunity under either the CFDA number "10.176," or the DBII Funding Opportunity Number "USDA-AMS-TM-DBII-G-19-0008."

4.2   CONTENT AND FORM OF APPLICATION SUBMISSION

4.2.1   FORM SF-424 APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

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

Block	Instruction
#1 Type of Submission	Check Application.
#2 Type of Application	Check New.
#4 and #5	Not applicable.
# 8c Organizational Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS)	Applicant DUNS# for the Organization submitting the application. See D&B Request a DUNS Number.
#8d Address	Enter the State department of agriculture 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	Enter 10.176.
#12 Funding Opportunity Number	Enter USDA-AMS-TM-DBII-G-19-0008.
#13Competition Identification Number	Not applicable.
#14 Areas Affected by Project	Enter cities, counties, States affected by project.
#15 Descriptive Title of Applicant's Project	A detailed description of each project is not necessary.
#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 performed. Write "All" if the projects will be performed in more than one location.
#17 Proposed Project Start Date and End Date	Your grant period cannot be more than 3 years in length. Start date must begin no later than September 30, 2019 and end no later than September 29, 2022.
#18 Estimated Funding	Total Federal funds requested.
#19 Is Applicant Subject to Review by State Under Executive Order 12372 Process?	See section *4.4 Intergovernmental Review*.

4.2.2 FORM SF-424B ASSURANCES FOR NON-CONSTRUCTION PROGRAMS

Required: Form SF-424B is available via the opportunity at Grants.gov.

4.2.3 PROJECT NARRATIVE

Required: The Project Narrative must be submitted as a PDF and attached to the Grants.gov application package using the "Add Attachments" button under SF-424 item #15. Handwritten applications or applications in MS Word will not be accepted. The Project Narrative must be typed, single-spaced, in an 11-point font, not to exceed twenty (20) 8.5 x 11 pages.

Prior to submitting an application to Grants.gov, make sure that it is in final form (e.g., if you used the "track changes" function, accept all changes before submitting so that the mark-up is not visible upon final submission).

The supporting documents in subsequent sections do not count against the page limit for the Project Narrative.

(1) Executive Summary

Include a summary of 250 words or less suitable for dissemination to the public. This summary should provide a concise outline of the project's outcome(s) and a description of the general tasks to be completed during the project period to fulfill this goal.

(2) Alignment and Intent

(i) Clearly state the purpose of the project as it relates to the Program Description (section *1.3*). Describe the specific issue, problem, or need that the project will address in relation to the statutory language of the program (7 U.S.C. § 1632d). Include data and/or estimates that describe the extent of the issue, problem, or need.

(ii) List the objectives of the project. The objectives must be related to addressing the issue(s), problem(s), or need(s) mentioned in section (2)(i).

(iii) Provide a description of the benefits that are intended to be achieved as a result of engaging in the activities associated with this project, including the number of affected producers or processors.

(3) Technical Merit

(i) Provide a Work Plan that describes the activities and timeline associated with each project objective, particularly as they are associated with the direct technical assistance and subawards to dairy businesses. Include the following information for each objective mentioned in the Alignment and Intent section above: a timeline for each activity and major output including the anticipated date of completion; how and where the activities will take place; required resources; milestone(s) for assessing progress and success; the person(s) responsible for completing the activity, including collaborative arrangements or subcontractors; if conducting training and technical assistance, how participants will be recruited; and how you will help guide program development and delivery.

(ii) Provide a conflict of interest statement and process that aligns with 2 CFR § 400.2(b).

(4) Achievability

(i) Respond to each of the following outcome indicators that is relevant to the project with baseline and/or estimated target numbers. If an outcome indicator does not apply, state that it is not applicable.

Outcome 1: To Increase Consumption of and Access to Dairy Products.

Indicator	Description	Estimated Number	N/A
1.a.	Total number of project beneficiaries/stakeholders reached		☐
1.b.	Of the total number that were reached, the number that reported buying, selling, aggregating, storing, producing, and/or distributing dairy products		☐

Indicator	Description	Estimated Number	N/A
1.c.	Of the total number that were reached, the <u>number</u> that gained knowledge on how to access or produce dairy products		☐

Outcome 2: To Increase Sales of Dairy Products.

For projects that do not already have a baseline of sales in dollars or an initial customer count, one of the objectives of the project must be to determine and document the value of sales increases or percent change in customer count by the end of the project.

Indicator	Description	Estimated Number	N/A
2.a.	**Sales increased as a result of marketing and/or promotion activities during the project performance period.**		
	Initial (Original) Sales Amount (in dollars)	$	☐
	Estimated Final (Resulted) Sales Amount (in dollars)	$	☐
	Percent Change ((n final – n initial)/n initial) * 100 = % change)	%	☐

Outcome 3: To Develop New Market Opportunities for Producers or Processors of Dairy Products.

Please provide estimated target numbers.

Indicator	Description	Estimated Number	N/A
	Number of new and/or existing delivery systems/access points reached that expanded and/or improved dairy products		
3.a	Number of farmers markets		☐
3.b.	Number of roadside stands		☐
3.c.	Number of agritourism activities		☐
3.d.	Number of grocery stores		☐
3.e.	Number of wholesale markets		☐
3.f.	Number of other systems/access points, not noted		☐
	Of the dairy businesses, the:		
3.g.	Number that reported an increase in revenue expressed in dollars		☐
3.h.	Number that reported an increase in dairy activities		☐
3.i.	Number that reported an increase in dairy product production and innovative marketing strategies		☐
	Number of jobs, farmers that went into production		
3.j.	Number of jobs maintained/created		☐
3.k.	Number of new beginning farmers that began producing dairy products		☐

(ii) For each completed outcome indicator, describe how you derived the numbers, how you intend to measure and achieve each relevant outcome and indicator, and any potential challenges to achieving the estimated targets and action steps for addressing them.

(iii) Describe how you will disseminate the project's results (positive and negative) to similar organizations, stakeholders, and others that may be interested in the project's results or implementing a similar project.

(5) Expertise and Partners

(i) List key staff, including personnel and external project partners and collaborators that comprise the Project Team, their roles, and their relevant experience and past successes in developing and operating projects similar to this project. Ensure that you have included Letters of Commitment from Partner and Collaborator Organizations to support the information.

(ii) Describe your management plan for coordinating, communicating, and sharing data and reports among members of the Project Team and stakeholder groups, both internally to personnel and externally to partners and collaborators.

(iii) Discuss your experience and the management processes that will be used to ensure open and fair access to direct technical assistance and grant opportunities, including solicitation and review of proposals, procedures for handling conflicts of interest, and administration of oversight of sub-awards.

(iv) Describe your experience and the management processes that will be used to ensure proper accounting and reporting for the use of Federal funds.

4.2.4   FISCAL PLAN AND RESOURCES

Required: The Fiscal Plan and Resources requirement includes a Budget Spreadsheet and Budget Narrative. The Budget Spreadsheet must show the relevant expenditure categories in the far left column. Relevant cost categories include:

- Personnel
- Fringe Benefits
- Travel
- Special Purpose Equipment
- Supplies
- Contracts/Consultants
- Other
- Indirect Costs
- Program Income

Proceeding across the page, there must be a column showing the dollar amount of Federal funds requested. Provide separate Year 1, Year 2, Year 3 and cumulative budgets.

A general line-item for "grants" may be provided under Contracts in the application's budget. The individual subaward budgets are not expected at the submission of this application; however, selected Initiatives will be expected to provide a comprehensive plan detailing each project, associated outcomes, and applicable expenses in order to draw down on the funds associated with this line item.

The Budget Narrative must breakdown and explain how the dollar amounts for each category shown on the Budget Spreadsheet were derived and what they cover. See section *4.5.2 Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities* for a full listing of allowable and unallowable costs.

4.2.5   PERSONNEL QUALIFICATIONS

Required: Provide a one- to two-page resume or summary of relevant experience and/or qualifications of the principal investigator(s) and for each of the other major project participants. Longer resumes will be disregarded.

4.2.6   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. More information can be found on partners and collaborators in section *3.2 Partners and Collaborators*. The letter must state the partner or collaborator agrees to the project management plan presented in the Project Narrative. Emails will not be accepted. 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

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**. Letters must accompany the proposal at the time of application. Unsigned letters will not be accepted.

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

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

4.2.7   RELEVANT PROGRAM EVALUATION

Optional: Applicants may submit prior program evaluations for comparable programs led or managed by the applicant organization.

4.2.8   FORM AD-3030, REPRESENTATIONS REGARDING FELONY CONVICTION AND TAX DELINQUENT STATUS FOR CORPORATE APPLICANTS

Required if the applicant is a corporation: A corporation includes, but is not limited to, any entity that has filed articles of incorporation in one of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, or the U.S. territories.

Corporations can include both for-profit and non-profit entities. AD-3030 is a self-certification form. It is the applicant's responsibility to determine if the AD-3030 needs to be completed and submitted. The applicant must submit the version of the form in Grants.gov. This requirement does not apply to State departments of agriculture, but it may apply to State universities and State colleges. Most information blocks on the required form are self-explanatory; however, AMS is providing further clarification below.

Block	Instructions
#1 Applicant's Name	Enter the name of the individual or authorized representative-Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) who is submitting the application on behalf of the applicant organization.
#2 Applicant's Address	Enter the address of the applicant organization.
#3 Tax ID No.	Enter the last four digits of the applicant organization's Tax Identification Number.
#4A, 4B, 4C Questions	Address these questions by checking the Yes or No boxes. For question 4B, see below for what is meant by "acting on behalf" of. If the action of the official or agent resulted in a benefit to the corporation, then the official or agent was "acting on behalf" of the corporation. If the action of the official or agent resulted in a benefit to the official or agent, then the official or agent was not acting on behalf of the corporation.
#5A Applicant's Signature (By)	The individual or authorized representative who is submitting the application on behalf of the applicant organization must sign the form.
#5B Title/Relationship of the Individual if Signing in a Representative Capacity	Enter the title of the individual or authorized representative who is submitting the application on behalf of the applicant organization.
#5C Date Signed	Date the form.

4.2.9 FORM AD-3031, ASSURANCE REGARDING FELONY CONVICTION OR TAX DELINQUENT STATUS FOR CORPORATE APPLICANTS

Required if the applicant is a corporation: A corporation includes, but is not limited to, any entity that has filed articles of incorporation in one of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, or the U.S. territories. Corporations can include both for-profit and non-profit entities.

The applicant must submit the fillable PDF version of the form in Grants.gov. AD-3031 is a self-certification form. It is the applicant's responsibility to determine if the AD-3031 needs to be completed and submitted.

4.2.10 NEGOTIATED INDIRECT COST RATE AGREEMENT (NICRA)

Required if the applicant has a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA): Refer to section *4.5.1 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.

4.3   SUBMISSION DATE AND TIME

Applicants must submit applications via Grants.gov by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on June 17, 2019. AMS cannot consider applications received after this deadline for funding. See AMS' Policy on Late Applications.

4.4   INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW

This RFA is not subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." Refer to the Intergovernmental Review (Single Point of Contact List).

4.5   FUNDING RESTRICTIONS

4.5.1   INDIRECT COSTS

Indirect costs (also known as "facilities and administrative costs"—defined at 2 CFR § 200.56) are those costs incurred for a common or joint purpose benefitting more than one cost objective, and not readily assignable to the cost objectives specifically benefitted, without effort disproportionate to the results achieved.

As stated in the regulations (2 CFR §§ 200.413 and 414), any non-Federal entity that has never received a negotiated indirect cost rate, except State and Local Government and Indian Tribe Indirect Cost Proposals, may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10 percent of modified total direct costs (MTDC) which may be used indefinitely. As described in 2 CFR § 200.403, costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs, but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both. If chosen, this methodology once elected must be used consistently for all Federal awards until such time as a recipient chooses to negotiate for a rate, which the recipient may apply to do at any time.

All applicants who elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10 percent must use the MTDC as the base. MTDC are defined in 2 CFR § 200.68 as all direct salaries and wages, applicable fringe benefits, materials and supplies, services, travel, and up to the first $25,000 of each subaward (regardless of the period of performance of the subawards under the award). MTDCs exclude equipment, capital expenditures, charges for patient care, rental costs, tuition remission, scholarships and fellowships, participant support costs, and the portion of each subaward in excess of $25,000. Other items may be excluded only when necessary to avoid a serious inequity in the distribution of indirect costs, and with the approval of the cognizant agency for indirect costs.

If an applicant has a negotiated indirect cost rate approved by its cognizant agency, the applicant must submit a copy of its approved NICRA with its application. Entities that would like to negotiate an indirect cost rate must contact their cognizant agency. For assignments of cognizant agencies see 2 CFR § 200.19.

4.5.2   ALLOWABLE AND UNALLOWABLE COSTS AND ACTIVITIES

All AMS awards are subject to the terms and conditions, cost principles, and other considerations described in the *AMS General Terms and Conditions*.

4.5.3   SUBAWARD ALLOCATION

At least 50 percent of the funds of a grant to a host Initiative must be allocated to subawards.

4.5.4   SUPPLANTING

The funds provided by the DBI Initiatives must supplement, and not duplicate or replace, existing dairy product research, development, and promotion activities carried out by the selected host initiatives.

4.5.5   SUPPORT FOR DOMESTIC DAIRY BUSINESSES

Technical assistance and subawards will not be made available to a foreign person making direct investment in the United States, as defined in 15 CFR § 801.2, where the assistance is provided to a specific dairy business and is not publicly available.

4.6   GRANTS.GOV APPLICATION SUBMISSION AND RECEIPT PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS

4.6.1   HOW TO REGISTER TO APPLY THROUGH GRANTS.GOV

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

If individual applicants are eligible to apply for this grant funding opportunity, refer to: https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/individual-registration.html

Organization applicants can find complete instructions here: https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html

1) *Obtain a DUNS Number*: All entities applying for funding, including renewal funding, must have a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number from Dun & Bradstreet (D&B). Applicants must enter the DUNS number in the data entry field labeled "Organizational DUNS" on the SF-424 form.

2) *Register with SAM*: In addition to having a DUNS number, organizations applying online through Grants.gov must register with the System for Award Management (SAM). All organizations must register with SAM to apply online. Failure to register with SAM will prevent your organization from applying through Grants.gov. **SAM.gov accounts must be updated annually, and your organization must have an *active* SAM.gov account to submit your application to Grants.gov.**

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 DUNS number to complete this process. Completing this process automatically triggers an email request for applicant roles to the organization's E-Business Point of Contact (EBiz POC) for review. The EBiz POC is a representative from your organization who is the contact listed for SAM. To apply for grants on

behal of your organization, the EBiz POC will need to identify and assign an individual to the AOR role.

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, which may include 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.

b. *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 as AORs. **This step is often missed and it is crucial for valid and timely submissions.**

4.6.2   HOW TO SUBMIT AN APPLICATION TO AMS VIA GRANTS.GOV

On December 31, 2017, Grants.gov officially retired the legacy PDF application package as a method to apply for a federal grant. Applicants can now apply only using Grants.gov Workspace. Workspace is 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, you can create 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 webforms you can download individual PDF forms in Workspace so that they will appear similar to other Standard or AMS forms. The individual PDF forms can be downloaded and saved to your local device storage, network drive(s), or external drives, and then accessed through Adobe Reader.

   NOTE: You may need to visit the Adobe Software Compatibility page on Grants.gov to download the appropriate version of the software.

   b. *Mandatory Fields in Forms:* Fields marked with an asterisk and a different background color are mandatory fields you must complete to successfully submit your application.

   c. *Complete SF-424 Fields First*: The forms are designed to fill in common required fields across other forms, such as the applicant name, address, and DUNS number. To trigger this feature, an applicant must complete the SF-424 form information first. Once it is completed, the information will transfer to the other forms.

3) *Submit a Workspace*: Submit your application through Workspace by clicking the Sign and Submit button on the Manage Workspace page, under the Forms tab. Grants.gov recommends submitting the application package **at least 24-48 hours prior to the due date** to provide you with time to correct any potential technical issues that may disrupt the application submission.

   SPECIAL NOTE: Grants.gov **does not** check for AMS required attachments. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all required attachments listed in section *4.2 Content and Form of Application Submission* are included.

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

Applicant Support: Grants.gov provides additional [training resources, including video tutorials](#). Applicants may also call the 24/7 toll-free support number 1-800-518-4726, or email [support@grants.gov](#). Grants.gov will issue a ticket number that you and Grants.gov can refer to if the issue is not resolved. For questions related to the specific grant opportunity, contact(s) mentioned in section *7.0 Agency Contacts*.

4.6.3   TIMELY RECEIPT REQUIREMENTS AND PROOF OF TIMELY SUBMISSION

All applications must be received by the due date established in section *4.3 Submission Date and Time*. Proof of timely submission is automatically recorded by Grants.gov using an electronic date/time stamp generated when the application is successfully received by Grants.gov. The applicant AOR will then receive an acknowledgement of receipt and a tracking number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) from Grants.gov. Applicant AORs will also receive the official date/time stamp and Grants.gov Tracking number in an email serving as proof of their timely submission.

When AMS successfully retrieves the application from Grants.gov and acknowledges the download of submissions, Grants.gov will electronically acknowledge receipt of the application to the applicant AOR's email address. Again, proof of timely submission shall be the official date and time that Grants.gov receives your application. Applications received by Grants.gov after the established due date for the program will be considered late and will not be considered for funding by AMS.

AMS will not accept applications packages by fax, email, or postal mail. Applications received by Grants.gov after the established due date for the program will be considered late and will not be considered for funding by AMS. See [AMS' Policy on Late Applications](#).

Special Note for Applicants with Slow Internet Connections. Applicants using slow internet connections, such as dial-up connections, may experience significantly longer transmission times when submitting their application to Grants.gov, especially if there are large attachments contained in the upload. Again, Grants.gov will provide either an error message or a successfully received transmission notification via email to the applicant AOR.

4.6.4   TIPS FOR APPLICANTS

- Register and submit applications early. **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE DAY OF THE APPLICATION DEADLINE**.

- Thoroughly read this RFA and follow all the instructions provided by AMS.

- Make sure you have the most recent copy of Adobe Reader installed on your computer and that it is compatible with Grants.gov software. Grants.gov supports Adobe Reader version 9.0.0 and higher.

- Limit Application File Size/ File Name Characters (50 or less).

- When uploading attachments, click the "Add Attachments" button (do NOT use the "paperclip" icon in Adobe Reader).

- Do not password-protect your documents and make sure all tracked-changes are "accepted".

- Avoid Special Characters in File Names ($, %, &, *, Spanish "ñ", etc.).

- Input the correct DUNS number on the SF-424 cover page.
  Review the Grants.gov Applicant User and Registration Guides:
  http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-tools-and-tips.html and FAQs:
  http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-faqs.html
  https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/workspace-overview.html

5.0 APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

5.1 PROJECT EVALUATION CRITERIA

Each application will be reviewed competitively using the following criteria and scoring:

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

The extent to which the application:

1) Provides a clear and concise description of the problem and need.

2) Supports dairy businesses in the development, production, marketing, and distribution of dairy products, specifically focusing on:

    a. Diversifying dairy product markets to reduce risk and develop higher-value uses for dairy products;

    b. Promoting business development that diversifies farmer income through processing and marketing innovation; and

    c. Encouraging the use of regional milk production.

3) Identifies the intended beneficiaries, including the number of beneficiaries and how they will benefit.

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

The extent to which the application:

1) Presents a clear, well-conceived, and overall suitable methodology for fulfilling the goals and objectives, including both offering technical assistance and providing subawards that focus on:

   a. Modernization, specialization, and grazing transition on dairy farms;
   b. Value chain and commodity innovation and facility and process updates for dairy processors; and
   c. Product development, packaging, and marketing of dairy products.

2) Presents a realistic timeline for implementing the proposed Initiative (including subaward administration) during the award performance period.

3) Demonstrates that the applicant will implement procedures to prevent conflicts of interest.

Achievability   **15 Points**

The extent to which the application:

1) Provides outcomes and indicators that are feasible for the scale and scope of the initiative 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 and restrict progress toward the applicable indicators, including action steps for addressing identified restricting factors.

2) Can and will adapt its work to other regions, communities, or agricultural systems.

3) Provides a comprehensive plan to disseminate the Initiative's results (both positive and negative) electronically and in-person to target audiences, stakeholders, and interested parties.

Expertise and Partners   **25 Points**

The extent to which the application:

1) Presents the qualifications of the applicant (individual and team) and the relevant partnerships and collaborations to accomplish the project's goals and objectives and to meet the needs of the intended beneficiaries including:

   a. Commitment from the key staff demonstrated through Letters of Commitment from Partner and Collaborator Organizations;

   b. The key staff who will be responsible for managing the projects and the individuals (name and title) who comprise the Project Team;

   c. The expertise and experience of the Project Team necessary to successfully manage and implement the proposed project; and

   d. Ability to draw on existing dairy industry resources, including activities conducted by any authorized dairy promotion program, research capacity, academic and industry expertise, a density of dairy farms or farmland suitable for dairying, and dairy businesses.

2) Describes plans for coordination, communication, and data sharing and reporting among members of the Initiative and stakeholder groups, including both internal applicant personnel **and** external partners and collaborators.

3) Demonstrates a high-quality record of administering Federally funded programs and that the Initiative has the capacity and control systems necessary to administer the technical assistance and subawards.

Fiscal Plan and Resources .... **10 Points**

The extent to which the application:

1) Budget narrative or justification provides a clear, detailed, narrative description for each budget line item including:

      a.   The budget is consistent with the size and scope of the project; and

      b.   The budget relates logically to the narrative describing the project.

2) Provides evidence that critical resources and infrastructure that are necessary for the initiation and completion of the proposed project are currently in place.

3) Demonstrates that sufficient staff, administrative support, and other resources will be assigned to fulfill the Initiative's objectives.

5.2   REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

Step 1: Initial Qualification Screening

To meet the basic eligibility requirements, applications must be responsive to the RFA. Please see AMS' Non-Responsive Application Policy for more information.

Step 2: Technical Review

Each application is evaluated by a panel of peer reviewers. AMS will make every attempt to match reviewers with applications in their areas of expertise. Each reviewer signs a conflict of interest and confidentiality agreement regarding any assigned proposals. The peer review panels evaluate their assigned proposals using instructions prepared by AMS officials. Individual reviewers confer with other team members to derive a consensus score. The consensus review serves as the basis for awarding and allocating grant funds and focuses on strengths and weaknesses of each proposal.

Step 3: Administrative Review

AMS will conduct a final administrative evaluation of each review panel's top rankings and recommendations. In addition to the rank and scores, AMS reviews each application to ensure that potential recommended projects align with the scope of the RFA, allowability of budget items, available funding, and USDA priorities. AMS staff will work with top-ranked applicants to negotiate any revisions if necessary and possible. AMS will also assess an organization's ability to account for the use of Federal funds and monitor the performance associated with these monies using the guidance provided by 2 CFR § 205(c).

6.0 AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

6.1 AWARD NOTICES

Upon announcement of the Federal awards, AMS will prepare and send a Notice of Award and Grant Agreement to each recipient for signature by the appropriate official. The Grant Agreement Face Sheet (AMS-33) will be signed by AMS and the AOR.

The Notice of Award and Grant Agreement will provide pertinent instructions and information including, at a minimum, the information described in 2 CFR § 200.210 and a reference to the *AMS General Terms and Conditions*.

6.2 ADMINISTRATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS

All AMS grant agreements include the AMS General Terms and Conditions as part of the Notice of Award and Grant Agreement. More information is provided in the most recent version of the AMS General Terms and Conditions under the *Administrative and National Policy Requirements* section.

6.3 REPORTING

Recipients are required to submit interim reports (performance and financial) throughout the grant's period of performance as well as one final report as outlined in the AMS General Terms and Conditions.

7.0 AGENCY CONTACTS

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact:

7.1 CONTACT INFORMATION

Phone: 202-690-1300
E-Mail: AMSGrants@usda.gov

7.2 ADDRESS

Dairy Business Innovation Initiatives
USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Stop 0267
Room 4534 South Building
Washington, DC 20250-0269
www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants

7.3 GRANTS.GOV QUESTIONS

All questions regarding Grants.gov technical assistance must be directed to Grants.gov's Applicant Support.

8.0 OTHER INFORMATION

8.1 RELEASE OF APPLICATION INFORMATION

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

FOIA requests for records relating to this Federal award may be directed to USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service, FOIA/PA Officer, Room 3943-S, Mail Stop 0202, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-0273, Telephone: (202) 720-2498; or email: AMS.FOIA@usda.gov.

8.2 EQUAL OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

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

8.3 PROHIBITION ON USING FUNDS UNDER GRANTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH ENTITIES THAT REQUIRE CERTAIN INTERNAL CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENTS

By submission of its proposal or application, the applicant represents that it does not require any of its employees, contractors, or subrecipients seeking to report fraud, waste, or abuse to sign or comply with internal confidentiality agreements or statements prohibiting or otherwise restricting those employees, contractors, or subrecipients from lawfully reporting that waste, fraud, or abuse to a designated investigative or law enforcement representative of a Federal department or agency authorized to receive such information. Note that: (1) the basis for this representation is a prohibition in sections 743, 744 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016, Pub. L. 114-113, (Division E, Title VII, General Provisions Government-wide) and any successor provisions of law on making funds available through grants and cooperative agreements to entities with certain internal confidentiality agreements or statements; and (2) section 744 states that it does not contravene requirements applicable to Standard Form 312, Form 4414, or any other form issued by a Federal department or agency governing the nondisclosure of classified information.

8.4 PAPERWORK REDUCTION

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, 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.