



Local Food Promotion Program

**Fiscal Year 2020 Request for Applications, Version 2 (updated March 26, 2020)¹
Application deadline was extended from May 11, 2020 to May 26, 2020**

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-AMS-TM-LFPP-G-20-0001

Publication Date: March 09, 2020

Application Due Date: 11:59 PM Eastern Time on May 26, 2020

¹ On March 26, 2020, the application deadline was extended from May 11, 2020 to May 26, 2020.

Program Solicitation Information

Funding Opportunity Title: Local Food Promotion Program

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-AMS-TM-LFPP-G-20-0001

Announcement Type: Initial

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: [10.175](#)

Dates: Applications must be received before 11:59 pm Eastern Time May 26, 2020, through [Grants.gov](#). Applications received after this deadline will not be considered for funding.

Executive Summary: The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), requests applications for the fiscal year (FY) 2020 Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP). LFPP's purpose is to support the development, coordination, and expansion of local and regional food business enterprises to increase access to and availability of locally and regionally produced agricultural products. AMS will competitively award grants to eligible applicants for projects that meet the purpose of the grant program.

Approximately \$13.5 million will be available to fund applications under this solicitation. In the FY 2019 application cycle, AMS received 216 applications and was able to fund 41 (19%) of the applications. To be competitive, applications must meet all program requirements and be of high quality.

LFPP planning projects range from \$25,000 to \$100,000. LFPP implementation projects range from \$100,000 to \$500,000. A 25 percent match of total Federal funds is required.

This announcement provides information regarding the eligibility criteria for applicants and projects, and the application forms and instructions needed to apply for an award.

Stakeholder Input: AMS welcomes your comments about this Request for Applications (RFA). We will consider the comments in developing the next RFA. Email written stakeholder comments within one year of the publication date of this RFA to: AMSGrants@usda.gov. (This e-mail address is intended only for receiving comments regarding this RFA and not requesting information or forms.) In your comments, please state that you are commenting on the **Local Food Promotion Program RFA**.

2020 Highlights and Changes

- The AD-3030, AD-3031 and SF-424B forms are no longer required and have been removed from the RFA.
- The *Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities* table in [section 4.6.4](#) and reporting and closeout details in [section 6.4](#) of this document have been revised to refer to the most recent version of the [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#).

Application Checklist

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

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

- Form SF-424 – Application for Federal Assistance (in Grants.gov)
- Project Narrative (PDF Attachment)
- Signed Letters Verifying Matching Funds for EACH cash and/or in-kind resource (PDF or MS Word Attachment)
- Signed Letters of Commitment from Partner and Collaborator Organizations (PDF or MS Word Attachment)

When applicable, application packages are required to include the following documents:

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

Applicants are encouraged to combine all required documents into a single PDF file before submitting their application.

Timing to Obtain and Submit Grants.gov Required Elements

Required Action	<i>Timing to Obtain/Submit</i>
AMS Deadline to receive final application and all supporting materials	May 26, 2020 – 11:59 p.m. [Eastern Time]
Obtaining Your Organization’s DUNS Number (if you do not already have one)	1-2 business days
Establishing an <i>Active</i> SAM.gov Account (if you do not already have one)	7-10 business days
Obtaining a TIN/EIN (if you do not already have one)	Up to 2 weeks
Creating your Grants.gov profile and registering your Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) authorization	Up to 2 weeks

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1.0 FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

1.1 LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP), is authorized by subtitle A of the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 (7 U.S.C. § 1621 et seq.) as amended under section 10102 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, Public Law 115-334 (2018 Farm Bill). LAMP supports the development, coordination, and expansion of direct producer-to-consumer marketing, local and regional food markets and enterprises, and value-added agricultural products. The primary goals are to:

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

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

1.2 PURPOSE

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

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

1.3 PROJECT TYPES

LFPP offers **Planning** and **Implementation** project types.

1.3.1 PLANNING PROJECTS

Planning projects are used in the planning stages of developing, coordinating, or expanding a food business that supports locally and regionally produced agricultural products and food system infrastructure.

Activities include developing, coordinating, and expanding such businesses. Projects may include, but are not limited to:

- Completing a feasibility study for a new intermediary food channel (i.e., food hub), to analyze market potential, capacity, and potential competitors and partners in the region.
- Hiring experts for technical assistance to implement a local/regional food transportation system.
- Hiring experts for training on managing a local/regional food storage or processing facility.
- Devising a business development plan associated with the processing/marketing of local/regional agricultural products, including value-added agricultural products.

1.3.2 IMPLEMENTATION PROJECTS

Implementation projects are used to establish a new food business or to improve or expand an existing food business that supports locally and regionally produced agricultural products and food system infrastructure.

Activities include developing, coordinating, or expanding such businesses. Projects may include, but are not limited to:

- Developing or expanding food incubator programs or mid-tier value chains.
- Instituting group-based Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) certification for sellers of food into institutional or wholesale marketing channels, including providing financial support for making changes and upgrades to practices and equipment to improve food safety.
- Cultivating new wholesale market channels through an online portal or virtual marketplace.
- Investigating and implementing more cost-effective means of transportation for food supply chains through backhaul, route optimization, and/or other operational efficiencies.

If the applicant previously received an LFPP planning award that is directly related to the submitted proposal, the applicant must indicate how this project contributed to its proposed work in the Project Narrative (section [4.2.2 Project Narrative](#)). **PLEASE NOTE** that the previously-awarded LFPP planning grant agreement must be closed (section [3.3 Limit on Number of Applications](#)) prior to applying for fiscal year 2020 funding.

1.3.3 PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES NOT ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

Projects are not eligible for consideration if the proposed activities:

- Are not related to local and regional food system activities.

- Are to glean, purchase, or collect food or services to donate to other entities and/or individuals (section [4.6.4](#)).
- Are for production related expenses, including food production and the purchase of farm equipment, tools, materials, supplies, and other related costs (section [4.6.4](#))
- Depend on the purchase or lease-to-own of a vehicle—vehicles can be leased, but not leased-to-own or purchased (section [4.6.4](#)).
- Benefit only one agricultural producer, vendor, or individual.
- Promote general food consumption (unrelated to a specific product or service) (section [4.6.4](#)).
- Depend upon a critical component (such as land and structures) not in place at the time of application submission (section [4.2.5](#)).
- Depend upon the completion of another project or the receipt of another grant.
- Duplicate activities in a project that has received a Federal award from another Federal award program, including FMLFPP.

1.4 PRIORITY AREAS

Priority consideration will be given to projects that benefit communities located in areas of concentrated poverty with limited access to supermarkets or locally or regionally grown food as defined below. AMS does not require applicants to conduct projects in priority areas to be eligible to apply or receive grant funds.

If requesting low income/low food access (LI/LA) priority consideration, the project’s implementation address must be in a LI/LA census tract as defined by the four major map layers on the [ERS Food Access Research Atlas](#). “Implementation address” refers to the street address or census tract location within the targeted community (LI/LA census tract) at which the applicant plans to conduct or deliver approved project activities.

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

2.0 AWARD INFORMATION

2.1 TYPE OF FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

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

2.2 TYPE OF APPLICATIONS

New application. All new applications will be reviewed competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in section [5.0 Application Review Information](#).

Continuation application. These applications are submitted by applicants who have received prior FMLFPP funding, such as an LFPP planning grant or a previous FMPP grant. Such applications must contain the same information that is required for new applications, as well as a description – via the [FMLFPP Project Narrative](#) form – of how the newly proposed project builds on previous activities.

Continuation applications will be evaluated according to the same evaluation criteria as new applications, in addition to consideration of the applicant’s performance during the previous FMFLPP grants and its apparent ability to improve upon that work.

2.3 AVAILABLE FUNDING

It is anticipated that approximately \$13.5 million will be available to fund applications in fiscal year 2020. Enactment of additional continuing resolutions or an appropriations act may affect the availability or level of funding for this program.

2.4 FEDERAL AWARD PERIOD DURATION

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

Project Type	Duration (Months)	Start Date	Completion Date
Planning	18	September 30, 2020	March 31, 2022
Implementation	36	September 30, 2020	September 29, 2023

2.5 AWARD SIZE

Award size varies by project type. Applicants may not request less than or more than the respective minimum/maximum amounts.

Project Type	Minimum Award	Maximum Award
Planning	\$25,000	\$100,000
Implementation	\$100,000	\$500,000

3.0 ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

3.1 ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

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

Entity Type	Description
Agricultural Businesses or Cooperatives	Business entities, member-owned entities or businesses that provide, hold, deliver, transport, offer, or sell agricultural products or services for member benefit as well as the organization or other business that they represent.

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

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

3.2 PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS

The applicant may subcontract or subaward with partners and collaborators (section [4.6.3](#)). However, only the applicant must meet the eligibility requirements. Project partners and collaborators do not need to meet these eligibility requirements provided in section [3.1](#).

- A *partnership* is a relationship involving close cooperation between parties with 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 LIMIT ON NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS

Applicants may submit multiple applications to FMPP and LFPP. If recommended for an award, applicants are limited to receiving **one** LFPP award and **one** FMPP award. For example:

- For LFPP, this means that an applicant may be awarded one Planning **OR** one Implementation grant, but not both during this fiscal year.

- For FMPP, this means that an applicant may be awarded one Capacity Building **OR** one Community Development Training and Technical Assistance grant, but not both during this fiscal year.

If recommended for multiple awards under both FMPP and LFPP, AMS staff will contact the applicant to discuss the options.

Applicants must close out an active (not closed-out) FMPP or LFPP grant award from a previous year to be eligible to receive an award under this fiscal year RFA. For example:

- If applying for an FMPP project, an applicant must close any active (not closed-out) grant award from a previous FMPP project to be eligible to apply for and receive an FMPP award under this fiscal year.
- If applying for an LFPP project, an applicant must close any active (not closed-out) grant award from a previous LFPP project to be eligible to apply for and receive an LFPP award under this fiscal year.

The applicant must submit all required close-out documentation by the application due date mentioned in section [4.4 Submission Date and Time](#). Please refer to the respective General Award Terms and Conditions, available on the [“How to Administer the Awards”](#) webpage, for close out instructions.

3.3.1 FISCAL SPONSORS/AGENTS

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

- Apply directly to AMS through Grants.gov and request to use funds to establish a contractual relationship with a fiscal sponsor/agent to perform administrative or financial functions on behalf of the applicant; or
- Utilize a fiscal sponsor/agent to apply for an LFPP award on behalf of the implementing organization. By doing so, the sponsor/agent accepts all financial and legal liabilities for that organization at the time the award is made. In the case of LFPP applications, fiscal sponsors/agents would submit the application as the applicant organization, and the AOR responsible for all grant decisions would be an employee of the fiscal sponsor/agent. Fiscal sponsors/agents are bound by the same requirements mentioned in this RFA as other applicant organizations.

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

3.4 COST SHARING AND MATCHING

This funding opportunity requires matching funds from non-Federal sources in the form of cash and/or in-kind contributions in an amount equal to 25 percent of the total Federal portion of the grant. There is no competitive advantage for an applicant to provide a cost share or match that exceeds the required

amount. If the project is selected for funding, any exceeding amount will be considered voluntary and must be documented and secured at the time of the award.

Cost sharing or the required match must be in the form of allowable direct or indirect costs. Refer to [2 CFR § 200.306](#) for additional Federal requirements and definitions, including the basis for determining the value of cash and in-kind contributions.

In-kind contributions are generally defined, when used as a cost share or match for a grant, as the value of goods or services provided by a third party for the benefit of the grant program, where no funds transferred hands. These contributions cannot satisfy a cost sharing or matching requirement for this grant program if they are used toward satisfying a match requirement under any other Federal grant agreement to which the applicant is a party.

All matching contributions **must be committed or secured** at the time an applicant is recommend for an award. An award will not be issued unless all matching funds over the life of the grant are secured. Additional anticipated matching funds not in place by the time the project commences cannot be counted toward the matching requirement.

Applicants must indicate the total amount of match and how it will specifically align with their requested funding when completing the budget section of the [FMLFPP Project Narrative](#). Additionally, applicants must submit letters or other documentation verifying the match for EACH cash and/or in-kind resource. Refer to section [4.2.3 Matching Funds and Letters of Verification](#) for more information.

Indirect costs may count toward your match. Refer to section [4.6.2 Using Indirect Costs for Cost Sharing or Matching](#) for more information.

Applicants cannot use program income (as defined in [2 CFR § 200.80](#)) or any other Federal funds as a match or cost share.

4.0 APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

4.1 ELECTRONIC APPLICATION PACKAGE

Only electronic applications may be submitted via Grants.gov in response to this RFA. AMS encourages applicants to submit early to the Grants.gov system. For an overview of the Grants.gov application process see Grants.gov's [Apply for Grants](#) webpage. This RFA contains the information needed to obtain and complete the required application forms and AMS-specific attachments. More information about applying through Grants.gov can be found in section [4.7 Grants.gov Application Submission and Receipt Procedures and Requirements](#).

Applicants can find the opportunity under either the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number "10.175," or the LFPP Funding Opportunity Number "USDA-AMS-TM-LFPP-G-20-0001".

4.2 CONTENT AND FORM OF APPLICATION SUBMISSION

4.2.1 SF-424 APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

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

Block	Instructions
#1 Type of Submission	Application
#2 Type of Application	New or Continuation
#4 through #7	Not required
#8c Organizational DUNS	<p>Applicant DUNS# for the Organization submitting the application. See D&B Request a DUNS Number.</p> <p>NOTE: Applicants that apply for a grant must be capable of managing and monitoring Federal funds and project activities and outcomes. Recipients <u>cannot</u> transfer the award to another recipient organization once a grant is awarded (you may not apply under one DUNS number and switch to another later). Refer to section 4.7.1 Obtain a DUNS Number of this RFA.</p>
#8d Address	Enter the organization street address as it appears in SAM.gov. P.O. Boxes not accepted. Enter a 9-digit zip code.
#10 Name of Federal Agency	AMS, USDA
#11 Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number	10.175
#12 Funding Opportunity Number	<p>USDA-AMS-TM-LFPP-G-20-0001</p> <p>Ensure you are applying for the correct grant program.</p>
#13 Competition Identification Number	Not applicable
#14 Areas Affected by Project	Enter cities, counties, states affected by project
#15 Descriptive Title of Applicant’s Project	Provide a short description of the project.
#16a Congressional Districts for Applicant	Enter the Congressional district where your main office is located.
#16b Congressional Districts for Program/Project	Enter the Congressional district where your project will be implemented. Write “All” if the projects will be implemented in more than one location.
#17 Proposed Project Start Date and End Date	<p>Planning Projects - Your performance period cannot be more than 18 months in length. Planning projects normally begin September 30, 2020 and end no later than March 31, 2022.</p> <p>Implementation Projects – Your performance period cannot be more than 36 months (3 years) in length. Implementation projects normally begin September 30, 2020 and end no later than September 29, 2023.</p>
#18 Estimated Funding – Federal	Total Federal award requested.
#18b Estimated Funding – Applicant	Enter the amount of match or cost share from the applicant organization and/or other partners.

Block	Instructions
#19 Is Applicant Subject to Review by State Under Executive Order 12372 Process?	See section 4.5 Intergovernmental Review .

4.2.2 PROJECT NARRATIVE

Required. Applicants are required to prepare and submit a narrative using the [FMLFPP Project Narrative](#) form. The form and instructions are available on the program’s [“How do I Apply for an LFPP Grant”](#) webpage. The Project Narrative must clearly describe the direct or indirect producer or food business benefits intended by the applicant, applicable outcome indicators, and budget information.

All applicants must complete the FMLFPP Project Narrative form and convert it to PDF. This PDF document must be 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 narrative must be typed, single-spaced, in 11-point font, and not exceed fifteen (15) 8.5 x 11 pages (excluding existing Project Narrative form content). For example, if the Project Narrative form is 15 pages before you begin entering your project information into the form, **your narrative may be up to 30 pages (15 pages + 15 pages)**. DO NOT modify the margins of the FMLFPP Project Narrative form.

The supporting documents listed below do not count toward the 15-page limit. Prior to submitting your application, make sure that it is in final form (i.e., if you used the “track changes” function, accept all changes before converting the document to PDF for final submission so that the mark-up is not visible).

4.2.3 MATCHING FUNDS AND LETTERS OF VERIFICATION

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

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

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

- Project Applicant
- Project Title
- Cash Commitment per year (if applicable) and Total Cash Match
- In-kind Contribution per year (if applicable) and Total In-kind Match. Break down items into categories as applicable:
 - Salaries (employee name, title, duties, pay rate/hr., amount matched per year)
 - Items/Activities (fair market value per unit, how value determined, and amount matched per year)

- Explanation of how each type of match will correspond to the budget or be used by the Applicant
- Signature of Matching Organization Representative with typed name and title

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

4.2.4 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.

AMS highly encourages you to use the [Suggested Partner Organization Template Letter](#) on the grant program’s application website. If you do not use this template, your Letter of Commitment must minimally include the following:

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

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 SF-424 item #15.

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

4.2.5 EVIDENCE OF CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Required if critical resources and/or infrastructure are necessary for the completion of the proposed project. Applicants are required to submit evidence (in MSWord or PDF) that critical resources and infrastructure on which the initiation and completion of a project will depend are in place, meaning in working condition or usable, at the time of proposal submission. 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.

AMS highly encourages you to use the [Suggested Evidence Of Critical Resources And Infrastructure Template Letter](#) on the LFPP application website. If you do not use this template, your Letter 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.

Submit Letters of Evidence of Critical Resources and Infrastructure on letterhead and address them to the applicant (i.e., Project Director). Clearly indicate at the top of the documents that they are **EVIDENCE OF CRITICAL RESOURCES AND INFRASTRUCTURE**. The evidence must accompany the proposal at the time of the application submission.

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

4.2.6 NEGOTIATED INDIRECT COST RATE AGREEMENT (NICRA)

Required if the applicant has a NICRA. Refer to section [4.6.1 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 SUBMITTED APPLICATION QUALIFICATION

Your application will **not be accepted** if it:

- Is received by Grants.gov after the submission deadline (see [AMS’ Policy on Late Applications](#)).
- Is submitted via any method other than through [Grants.gov](#).

Your application will be **rejected** if it:

- Is not responsive to the requirements of this RFA (See [AMS’ Policy on Non-Responsive Applications](#)).

4.4 SUBMISSION DATE AND TIME

Applicants must submit applications via [Grants.gov](#) by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on May 26, 2020. AMS cannot consider applications received after this deadline for funding. See [AMS’ Policy on Late Applications](#).

4.5 INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW

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

4.6 FUNDING RESTRICTIONS

4.6.1 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 [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 must be used consistently for all Federal awards until a recipient chooses to negotiate for a rate, which the recipient may apply to do at any time.

All applicants who elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10 percent must use the MTDC as the base. MTDCs 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 cognizant agency assignments see [2 CFR § 200.19](#).

4.6.2 USING INDIRECT COSTS FOR COST SHARING OR MATCHING

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

The applicant may split the indirect cost allocation between the Federal and non-Federal portions of the budget only if the total amount of indirect costs does not exceed the maximum indirect costs allowed. Alternatively, the recipient may request any other combination that, when combined, does not exceed the maximum indirect costs allowable. Refer to [2 CFR §§ 200.413](#) and [414](#) for additional information on determining if costs charged to the award are direct or indirect.

4.6.3 SUBAWARD RESTRICTION

The applicant is expected to perform a major portion of the project; however, subawards or subcontracts with partners, collaborators, or other parties that provide additional knowledge, expertise, or resources for the purposes of the proposed project that are not otherwise available within the applicant organization are allowable. Using grant funds to competitively “re-grant” funds in mini-grant programs or to activities that are not central to the purpose of the project or for unknown costs is not allowable.

4.6.4 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](#).

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

4.6.5 COORDINATOR MEETING TRAVEL

The proposed budget should include travel funds for at least one attendee, who should be the Project Director, to an AMS sponsored grant coordinator's meeting during the application's period of performance.

4.7 GRANTS.GOV APPLICATION SUBMISSION AND RECEIPT PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS

4.7.1 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/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) *Register with Grants.gov:* 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 behalf of your organization, you will need to request 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](#).
- 6) *Electronic Signature:* When applications are submitted through Grants.gov, the name of the organization's AOR who submitted the application is inserted into the signature line of the application, serving as the electronic signature. The EBiz POC **must** authorize individuals who are able to make legally binding commitments on behalf of the organization as an AOR; **this step is often missed, and it is crucial for valid and timely submissions.**

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

Applicants can apply using Grants.gov Workspace. Workspace is a shared, online environment where members of a grant team may simultaneously access and edit different webforms within an application. For each funding opportunity announcement (FOA), an applicant creates individual instances of a workspace.

- 1) *Create a Workspace:* This allows you to complete your Workspace online and route it through your organization for review before submitting.
- 2) *Complete a Workspace:* Add participants to the workspace, complete all the required forms, and check for errors before submission.
 - a. *Adobe Reader:* If you decide not to apply by filling out 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 Form 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 information first. Once it is completed, the information will transfer to the other forms.

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

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

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

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

4.7.3 TIMELY RECEIPT REQUIREMENTS AND PROOF OF TIMELY SUBMISSION

All applications must be received by the due date established in section [4.4 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 an email with the official date/time stamp and Grants.gov tracking number that Grants.gov assigns to your application.

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 the application on 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.

4.7.4 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 of the instructions provided by AMS.
- Apply for the correct grant program
 - CFDA number “10.175” and Funding Opportunity Number “USDA-AMS-TM-LFPP-G-20-0001.”
- Make sure you have the most recent copy of Adobe Reader installed on your computer and that it is compatible with [Grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) software. Grants.gov supports Adobe Reader version 9.0.0 and higher.
- Limit Application File Size/ File Name Characters (50 or less).
- 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-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**

- 1) The extent to which the application provides a clear and concise description of the specific issue, problem, or need addressed by, and the objectives for, the project.
- 2) The extent to which the project helps develop, coordinate, and expand local and regional food businesses (including those that are not direct producer-to-consumer markets) that process, distribute, aggregate, or store locally or regionally produced food products and an agricultural local and regional food system infrastructure.
- 3) The extent to which the applicant identifies the intended beneficiaries, including the number of beneficiaries and how they will benefit.

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

- 1) The extent to which the application presents a clear, well-conceived, and overall suitable methodology for fulfilling the goals and objectives of the proposed project.
- 2) The extent to which the application presents a realistic schedule for implementing the proposed project during the award project period.

3) If the project and/or entity was previously funded, the extent to which the previous lessons learned are incorporated into the proposed project.

Achievability..... **15 Points**

- 1) The extent to which the outcomes and indicator(s) are feasible for the scale and scope of the project, including:
 - a. how indicator numbers were derived, with a clear means to collect feedback to evaluate and achieve each relevant outcome indicator; and
 - b. the anticipated key factors that are predicted to contribute to and restrict progress toward the applicable indicators, including action steps for addressing identified restricting factors.
- 2) The extent to which the proposed project can be easily adapted to other regions, communities, or agricultural systems.
- 3) The extent to which the applicant provides a comprehensive plan to disseminate the project’s results (both positive and negative) electronically and in-person to target audiences, stakeholders, and interested parties.

Expertise and Partners..... **25 Points**

- 1) The extent to which the proposed project represents qualifications of the applicant (individual and team) and the relevant partnerships and collaborators to accomplish the project’s goals and objectives and to meet the needs of the intended beneficiaries including:
 - a. Commitment from the key staff demonstrated through Letters of Commitment from Partner and Collaborator Organizations;
 - b. The key staff who will be responsible for managing the projects and names and titles of the individuals who comprise the Project Team; and
 - c. The expertise and experience of the Project Team necessary to successfully manage and implement the proposed project.
- 2) The extent to which the application describes plans for coordination, communication, and data sharing and reporting among members of the Project Team and stakeholder groups, including both internal applicant personnel **and** external partners and collaborators.
- 3) The extent to which the application describes how the project, and its partnerships and collaborations, will be sustained beyond the project’s period of performance (without grant funds).

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

- 1) The extent to which the application budget narrative or justification provides a clear, detailed, narrative description for each budget line item including:
 - a. How the budget is consistent with the size and scope of the project; and
 - b. How the budget relates logically to the narrative describing the project.

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

5.2 REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

Step 1: Initial Qualification Screening

To meet the basic eligibility requirements, applications must be responsive to the RFA. 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, allowability of budget items, available funding, geographic diversity, and USDA priorities. AMS staff will work with top-ranked applicants to negotiate any revisions as necessary. AMS will also assess an organization's ability to account for the use of Federal funds and monitor the performance associated with these monies using the guidance provided by [2 CFR § 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. Grant Agreements consist of a 1-page Agreement Face Sheet (AMS-33) that 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 reference to the [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#).

6.2 UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS

Unsuccessful applicants will be contacted by AMS via email as soon as possible after the awards are announced to inform them of the results. AMS will email unsuccessful applicants the anonymous review panel consensus comments regarding their proposals.

6.3 ADMINISTRATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS

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

6.4 REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

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

7.0 AGENCY CONTACTS

7.1 PROGRAMMATIC QUESTIONS

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

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

7.2 AVAILABLE RESOURCES

AMS provides resources and information on its website (<https://www.ams.usda.gov/lfpp>) that may be helpful to applicants, including Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's), descriptions of funded projects, final performance reports, and required application forms.

8.0 OTHER INFORMATION

8.1 DEFINITIONS

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

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

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

Locally and Regionally Produced Food means food that is raised, produced, aggregated, stored, processed, and distributed in the locality or region where the final product is marketed to consumers, so that the total distance that the product travels between the farm or ranch where the product originates

and the point of sale to the end consumer is at most 400 miles, or both the final market and the origin of the product are within the same State, territory, or tribal land.

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

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

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

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

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

8.2 EQUAL OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

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

8.3 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUESTS

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

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

8.4 PAPERWORK REDUCTION

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 ([44 U.S.C. 3501](#)), an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0581-0240.