

Regional Food System Partnerships (RFSP)

Frequently Asked Questions

Program Overview:

Question: What is the purpose of the Regional Food Systems Partnerships (RFSP) program?

Answer: The purpose of the RFSP program is to support partnerships that connect public and private resources to plan and develop local or regional food systems. Eligible applicants are partnerships, made up of an official agreement between at least one eligible entity and at least one eligible partner, as described in the request for applications (RFA).

Funding Priorities:

Question: Are there priority considerations for the RFSP program?

Answer: Yes, there are three priority considerations for this program. Priority consideration will be given to applications that:

- Leverage significant non-Federal financial and technical resources and coordinate with other local, State, Tribal, or national efforts.
- Cover an area that includes communities with areas of concentrated poverty that provide significant opportunities for high impact investment; and
- Have a diverse set of relevant project partners, although such partners need not be based in the partnership's defined region.

Eligibility:

Question: Who is eligible to apply for an RFSP grant award?

Answer: Partnerships are eligible to apply for RFSP. As described in the Request for Applications, partnerships are made up of at least one eligible entity and at least one eligible partner under an official agreement. An application may be submitted by an eligible entity or an eligible partner on behalf of the partnership. The partnership must specify in its application which organization(s) in the partnership are responsible for receiving and managing the award.

Question: What is considered an eligible entity for the RFSP program?

Answer: An eligible entity for the RFSP program includes: Producers, Farmer or Rancher Cooperatives, Producer Networks or Associations, Majority-Controlled Producer-Based Business Ventures, Food Councils, CSA Networks or Associations, Local Governments, Nonprofit Corporations, Public Benefit Corporations, Economic Development Corporations, Regional Farmers Market Authorities, and Tribal Governments. Definitions for these entity types can be found in Section 3.0 of the RFA.

Question: What is considered an eligible partner?

Answer: An eligible partner for the RFSP program includes: State Agencies or Regional Authorities, Philanthropic Corporations, Private Corporations, Institutions of Higher Education, and Commercial, Federal, or Farm Credit System Lending Institutions. Definitions for these partner types can be found in Section 3.0 of the RFSP Request for Applications.

Question: What qualifications or capacities should be considered when deciding which partner should be the applicant entity?

Answer: Per the RFA, applicant entities must be partnerships consisting of at least one eligible entity and at least one eligible partner, and the applicant must specify which partner organization will receive and manage the award if selected. Therefore, the entity submitting the partnership's application must have the capacity to perform that task.

Question: Can the lead applicant on an RFSP application have an active FMPP/LFPP?

Answer: In general, this is allowable. Partnerships must apply for RFSP and must be made up of at least one eligible entity and at least one eligible partner (described in full in the RFA, Section 3.0). The RFSP application should indicate which partner organization will receive and manage the grant funds if awarded. That organization may be an active FMLFPP grant recipient as long as the work proposed in the RFSP application is not duplicating work done through the FMPP or LFPP grant project.

Question: Is an LLC or L-Corp eligible to apply for the RFSP program?

Answer: Yes, if the LLC or L-Corp is an eligible entity or partner and is applying on behalf of an eligible partnership.

Question: Can "other" entities be included in the partnership?

Answer: "Other" or "general" partners can be either an eligible entity or eligible partner listed in Section 3.0 of the RFA. For example, growers, processors or producers would be considered 'eligible entities' and could be included as members in the partnership.

Project Type:

Question: Which project types are offered through the RFSP program?

Answer: RFSP offers two grant types – Planning and Design and Implementation and Expansion. Planning and Design projects support partnerships in the early stages of convening, envisioning, and planning processes for developing local or regional food systems. Implementation and Expansion projects support partnerships building on prior or ongoing efforts within a local or regional food system.

Question: What factors should be considered when choosing a project type?

Answer: Items such as development stage, structure, partner diversity, and level of activity within the local or regional food system should be considered when choosing which project type would be the most appropriate for your partnership.

Partnerships:

Question: What is the preferred structure of the Partnership?

Answer: There is no "preferred" structure. The applicant should describe the nature of the agreement (such as an MOU or contract document) and the specific project role of each partner in the application.

Question: Who does the “recipient” refer to in the Request for Applications?

Answer: The “recipient” refers to the organization (entity or partner) primarily responsible for receiving and managing the award if selected.

Matching Funds:

Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 applicants

Questions: Are matching funds required for the RFSP program?

Answer: Yes, the 2018 Farm Bill included a 25% cash match requirement for RFSP. Further, [H.R.133 – the Consolidated Appropriations Act](#) provided additional funding for RFSP subject to a 10% match requirement that includes cash and/or in-kind contributions. For FY21, RFSP will require cost sharing or matching of either 10% or 25% of the FEDERAL portion of the grant. The match amount provided by the applicant will determine the funding source AMS uses to make an award. Applicants providing a 10% cash and/or in-kind match will be considered for H.R. 133 Stimulus Funding (\$10.3 million). Applicants providing a 25% cash match will be considered for Annual Funding (\$5 million) OR H.R. 133 Stimulus Funding (\$10.3 million). For example, if a grant requests \$500,000 in federal funds, the partnership must provide at least \$125,000 in cash contributions (25%) or \$50,000 in cash and/or in-kind contributions (10%).

Applicants are not allowed to submit the same application with a 10% match and with a 25% match. Applicants must commit to one match amount that AMS will consider if selected for funding.

The 10% match requirement will only be applicable for FY2021 applicants as part of the H.R. 133 Stimulus Funding.

Question: What is considered a cash match vs. in-kind match?

Answer: A cash match is the organization’s own funds or cash donations received from other non-federal entities or non-federal grants. Personnel, equipment, volunteer work or services, time devoted to the project, etc. are considered in-kind. For example, university faculty time spent on the grant project would be an in-kind match, whereas a \$10,000 cash donation from a partner entity to pay for someone to work on the grant project would be a cash match.

Question: Can I provide matching contributions above the requirement?

Answer: Yes. Any match resources included in the proposal above and beyond the requirement (either 10% or 25%, per above), whether cash or in-kind contributions, may lend support to the proposal.

Question: Can the match requirement be waved?

Answer: The matching requirement was established in the 2018 Farm Bill legislation, and we are not able to waive a statutory requirement. However, please keep in mind that these are partnership grant opportunities, and the idea is for partners to contribute to this requirement. It is not intended to make a single organization or partner responsible for contributing the entire match to the project.

Question: Can indirect costs be used toward the required match contribution?

Answer: Yes, indirect costs may count as an in-kind match, but not as a cash match contribution.

Prior Awards:

Question Is there a link or webpage we can review past recipients of this grant?

Answer: Descriptions of past recipient projects can be found on the "[RFSP Awarded Grants](#)" page of the RFSP website.