USDA Agricultural Marketing Service

Farmers Market Promotion Program

Fiscal Year 2022 Request for Applications

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-AMS-TM-FMPP-G-22-0002

Publication Date: March 1,2022

Application Due Date: 11:59 PM Eastern Time on May 16, 2022

Funding Opportunity Title: Farmers Market Promotion Program

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-AMS-TM-FMPP-G-22-0002

Announcement Type: Initial

Assistance Listing (formerly CFDA) Number: 10.175

Dates: Applications must be received before 11:59 pm Eastern Time May 16, 2022, 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) 2022 Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP). FMPP's purpose is to support the development, coordination, and expansion of direct producer-to-consumer markets 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 this grant program.

Approximately $13.5 million is available to fund FMPP applications under this solicitation. FMPP Capacity Building projects range from $50,000 to $250,000, while Community Development Training and Technical Assistance projects range from $100,000 to $500,000. FMPP is part of the Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP), and AMS welcomes applications that meet LAMP goals to support the development, coordination, and expansion of direct producer-to-consumer marketing, local and regional food markets and enterprises, and value-added agricultural products, and thereby support pandemic recovery in the sector. Eligible entities and activities remain the same as in previous years.

In the FY 2021 application cycle, AMS funded 88 (40%) of the 220 applications received. AMS made a high number of awards in FY 2021 due to additional funding from the Consolidated Appropriations Act (Pub. L. No. 116—260).

To be competitive, applications must meet all program requirements, be of high quality, and satisfy the 25% match requirement. All applications will undergo review according to merit and customary evaluation procedures. This announcement provides information regarding eligibility criteria for applicants and projects, details on match funding, and the application forms and instructions needed to apply for an award.

AMS encourages applications that benefit smaller farms and ranches, new and beginning farmers and ranchers, underserved producers, veteran producers, and/or underserved communities. For grants intending to serve these entities, applicants should engage and involve those beneficiaries when developing projects and applications.

USDA promotes climate-resilient landscapes and rural economic systems, including tools to support agriculture, forests, grazing lands, and rural communities. AMS encourages applicants to consider including goals and activities related to reducing and stabilizing the levels of heat-trapping greenhouse gases in the atmosphere or adapting to the already occurring climate change in their project's design and implementation.

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

<div align="center">**2022 HIGHLIGHTS AND CHANGES**</div>

- AMS revised the RFA to align with its regular order requirements based on the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, Pub. L. No. 115-334 (2018 Farm Bill):

  - Section *2.4* has been updated to decrease the FY 2022 maximum award amounts for the Capacity Building project sub-type to $250,000. Also, the FY 2022 maximum award amount for the Community Development Training and Technical Assistance project subtype has decreased to $500,000.
  - Section *3.3* has been revised for FY 2022 to revert to the previous policy that current grant recipients are not eligible to receive a grant without properly closing out another active grant.
  - Section *3.4* has been updated to reflect the FY 2022 matching fund requirements established by legislation. The 2018 Farm Bill Funding requires a 25% match.
  - The pre-award costs flexibility has returned to the previous policy of up to 90 days prior to the start date of an award. For more information, refer to the AMS General Terms and Conditions.

- The AMS General Terms and Conditions have been updated to reflect changes to the AMS grants management and payment management systems.

- The application packet provides for the implementation of updated program performance measures (outcomes and indicators) as described in the Achievability section of the FMLFPP Project Narrative form (or "Evaluation Plan", etc.).

- Section *4.2* has been updated to add the SF-424A - Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs and the Project Abstract form as part of the application. Please see sections *4.2.2* and *4.2.3* for instructions.

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

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

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

- ☐ Form SF-424 – Application for Federal Assistance (in Grants.gov)
- ☐ Form SF-424A – Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (in Grants.gov)
- ☐ Project Abstract (in Grants.gov)
- ☐ Project Narrative (PDF Attachment)
  - ☐ Must use required template
  - ☐ Executive Summary supports project goals and objectives and is no more than 250 words
  - ☐ Ensure it does not exceed the page limit specified in Section *4.2.4*
  - ☐ Ensure the proposal excludes unallowable costs and activities per Section *4.6.4*
- ☐ 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)

TIMING TO OBTAIN AND SUBMIT GRANTS.GOV REQUIRED ELEMENTS

Required Action	Timing to Obtain/Submit
AMS Deadline to receive final application and all supporting materials	May 16, 2022 – *11:59 p.m. [Eastern Time]*
Obtaining Your Organization's DUNS/UEI Number (if you do not already have one)	1-2 business days
Establishing an *Active* SAM.gov Account (if you do not already have one)	7-10 business days
Obtaining a TIN/EIN (if you do not already have one)	Up to 2 weeks
Creating your Grants.gov profile and registering your Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) authorization	Up to 2 weeks

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1.0 FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

1.1 LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

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

- Connect and cultivate regional food economies through public-private partnerships;
- Support the development of business plans, feasibility studies, and strategies for value-added agricultural 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 RSFP 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 FMPP.

1.2 PURPOSE

FMPP funds projects that develop, coordinate, and expand direct producer-to-consumer markets to help increase access to and availability of locally and regionally produced agricultural products. The program focuses on:

- Supporting and promoting domestic direct producer-to-consumer (including direct producer-to-retail, direct producer-to-restaurant, and direct producer-to-institutional marketing) marketing such as farmers markets, roadside stands, agritourism activities, community-supported agriculture (CSA) programs, or online sales;
- Encouraging the development of value-added agricultural products;
- Developing marketing strategies for producers of local food and value-added products;
- Facilitating regional food chain coordination and mid-tier value chain development;
- Promoting new business opportunities and marketing strategies to reduce on-farm food waste;
- Responding to changing technology needs in direct producer-to-consumer marketing; and
- Covering expenses related to costs incurred in obtaining food safety certification and improvements to food safety practices and equipment.

1.3   PROJECT TYPES

FMPP offers **Capacity Building** (CB) and **Community Development Training and Technical Assistance** (CTA) project types.

1.3.1   CAPACITY BUILDING

CB projects are intended to assist applicants' efforts to achieve their mission and build long-term organizational capacity in the development, coordination, and expansion of domestic farmers markets, roadside stands, CSA programs, agritourism activities, online sales, or other direct producer-to-consumer (including direct producer-to-retail, direct producer-to-restaurant, and direct producer-to-institutional marketing) market opportunities. CB projects should demonstrate a direct benefit to farm and ranch operations serving local markets (including new, beginning, and underserved farmers and ranchers, veteran producers and/or underserved communities) and maximize the involvement of farmers and ranchers and community organizations. Projects can include, but are not limited to:

- Developing tools, techniques or practices that can be rapidly adopted by local agriculture markets, including those that provide direct financial support to a network of markets, or other relevant organizations.
- Market analysis and strategic planning for a direct producer-to-consumer market opportunity.
- Local farmer, rancher, or market manager startup training and education.
- Farmer's market, roadside stand, CSA, agritourism or online sales activity startup, operation and/or expansion.
- Recruitment, outreach and retention of new, beginning, and underserved farmers and ranchers, as well as to consumers in support of direct producer-to-consumer markets.

1.3.2   COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

CTA projects are intended to assist applicants' efforts to provide outreach, training, and technical assistance to farm and ranch operations serving local markets, and to other interested parties for developing, coordinating, and expanding domestic farmers markets, roadside stands, CSA programs, agritourism activities, online sales, or other direct producer-to-consumer (including direct producer-to-retail, direct producer-to-restaurant and direct producer-to-institutional marketing) market opportunities. CTA projects should engage a diverse set of local and regional food stakeholders, including new, beginning, and underserved farmers and ranchers, to illustrate a substantive effect on the local and regional food system. Projects can include, but are not limited to:

- Developing and disseminating tools, techniques, or practices that can be rapidly adopted by local agriculture markets.
- Conducting statewide or regional training for farmers, ranchers, or managers (i.e., farmers market managers) to help them develop or maintain their own direct producer-to-consumer enterprise.
- Assisting farmers and ranchers in advertising and promoting their locally and regionally produced agricultural products, including value-added products, through training and technical assistance.

- Establishing or expanding producer-to-consumer networks and organizations on a state, regional, and national level, which includes efforts to develop sourcing channels using direct producer-to-consumer market opportunities with corporate, non-profit, and institutional buyers.
- Providing technical support for small- and mid-sized producers to become compliant with regulatory and buyer specifications and standards to increase their direct market opportunities.

1.3.3   PROJECTS/ACTIVITIES NOT ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

Projects are not eligible for consideration if the proposed activities:

- Are not related to producer-to-consumer direct marketing.
- 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*).
- Are to purchase land, or for construction of a building or structure.
- Are to purchase general purpose equipment such as freezers, walk-in coolers, commercial coolers, etc. – general purpose equipment can be leased, but not leased-to-own or purchased (section *4.6.4*).
- Intend to register, promote, train, and/or educate vendors and/or customers on Food Assistance Programs such as SNAP, WIC, etc.
- Benefit only one agricultural producer, vendor, or individual. Applicants must collaborate with others to benefit the larger community.
- Depend upon the completion of another project or the receipt of another grant.
- Duplicate activities in a project that has received funding from another Federal award program, including the Local Food Promotion Program.

For additional allowable and unallowable activities please refer to the AMS General Terms and Conditions as well as the FMLFPP Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ). Applicants that have questions concerning the allowability of costs after reviewing these documents should contact AMS staff using the contact information listed under *7.0 Agency Contacts.*

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.*

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 is available to fund applications in FY 2022. 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 AND SIZE

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 below.

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

Project Type	Duration (Months)	Start Date	Completion Date	Minimum Award	Maximum Award
CB	36	September 30, 2022	September 29, 2025	$50,000	$250,000
CTA	36	September 30, 2022	September 29, 2025	$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.
Producer Networks or Association	Producer group- or member-owned organizations or businesses that provide, offer, or sell agricultural products or services through a common distribution system for the mutual member benefit as well as organizations or other businesses that assist, represent, or serve producers or producer networks.
CSA Networks or Associations	Formal groups of farms that work collectively to offer consumers regular (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 CSAs or CSA networks. Customers have access to a selected share or range of farm products offered by the group of farmers based on partial or total advance payment of a subscription or membership fee.
Food Council	Food policy council or food and farm system network that represents multiple organizations 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.

Entity Type	Description
Local Governments	Any unit of government within a State, including a county; borough; municipality; city; town; township; parish; local public authority, including any public housing agency under the United States Housing Act of 1937 (50 Stat. 888 (Pub. L. No. 75—412); special district; school district; intrastate district; council of governments, whether or not incorporated as a nonprofit corporation under State law; and any other agency or instrumentality of a multi-state, regional, or intra-state or local government.
Nonprofit Corporations	Any organization or institution, including nonprofits with State or IRS 501 (c) status and accredited institutions of higher education, where no part of the organization's or institution's net earnings inure to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual.
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*). Only the applicant must meet the eligibility requirements. Project partners and collaborators do not need to meet the eligibility requirements provided in section *3.1*.

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

3.3   LIMIT ON NUMBER OF AWARDS

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

- For FMPP, this means that an applicant may be awarded one CB **OR** one CTA grant, but not both, during this fiscal year.
- For LFPP, this means that an applicant may be awarded one Planning **OR** one Implementation **OR** one Fam to Institution grant, but not more than one type, 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

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

- Apply directly to AMS through Grants.gov and request to use funds to establish a contractual relationship with a fiscal sponsor/agent to perform administrative or financial functions on behalf of the applicant; or

- Use a fiscal sponsor/agent to apply for an award on behalf of the implementing organization. By doing so, the sponsor/agent accepts all financial and legal liabilities for that grant recipient's grant award at the time the agreement is signed. Fiscal sponsors/agents would submit the

application as the applicant organization, and the Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) responsible for all grant decisions and activities, including but not limited to implementation, subcontracts, and reporting to AMS. The AOR would be an employee of the fiscal sponsor/agent. Fiscal sponsors/agents are bound by the same requirements mentioned in this RFA as other applicant organizations, including the limit on applications.

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

3.3.2   REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM PARTNERSHIPS (RFSP) RECIPIENT APPLICANTS

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

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

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

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

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. For example, a partner, such as a tribal community member, may volunteer their professional expertise as a match contribution to the project as described in 2 CFR § 200.306(e). 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 fiscal plan and resources section of the FMLFPP Project Narrative. Additionally, applicants must submit signed letters or other documentation verifying the match for EACH cash and/or in-kind resource. Refer to section *4.2.5 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 § 200.1) 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 strongly 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 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 Recipient Procedures and Requirements*.

Applicants can find the opportunity under either the Assistance Listing number "10.175," or the FMPP Funding Opportunity Number "USDA-AMS-TM-FMPP-G-22-0002".

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 or New Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)	Applicant DUNS/UEI# for the Organization submitting the application. See D&B Request a DUNS Number. **NOTE**: Applicants that apply for a grant must be capable of managing and monitoring Federal funds and project activities and outcomes. Recipients cannot transfer the award to another recipient organization once a grant is awarded (you may not apply under one DUNS/UEI number and switch to another later). Refer to section *4.7.1 Obtain a DUNS Number* of this RFA. **Note:** On April 4, 2022, the Federal government will stop using DUNS and start using a Unique Entity Identifier created in SAM.gov. For more information, please visit gsa.gov/entityid.
#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 (Assistance Listing Number)	10.175
#12 Funding Opportunity Number	USDA-AMS-TM-FMPP-G-22-0002 Ensure you are applying for the correct grant program.
#13 Competition Identification Number	Not applicable
#14 Areas Affected by Project	Enter cities, counties, states affected by project
#15 Descriptive Title of Applicant's Project	Provide a short description of the project.
#16a Congressional Districts for Applicant	Enter the Congressional district where your main office is located.
#16b Congressional Districts for Program/Project	Enter the Congressional district where your project will be implemented. Write "All" if the projects will be implemented in more than one location.
#17 Proposed Project Start Date and End Date	The performance period cannot be more than 36 months (3 years) in length. **CB** and **CTA** projects normally begin September 30, 2022 and should be completed by no later than September 29, 2025.
#18 Estimated Funding – Federal	Total Federal award requested.
#18b Estimated Funding – Applicant	Not applicable.
#19 Is Applicant Subject to Review by State Under Executive Order 12372 Process.	See section *4.5 Intergovernmental Review*.

4.2.2 SF-424A – BUDGET INFORMATION FOR NON-CONSTRUCTION PROGRAMS

Required. The SF-424A is available via the opportunity at Grants.gov. Most information blocks on the required form are either self-explanatory or adequately explained in the form instructions. The following are supplemental instructions associated with specific blocks on the SF-424A.

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

Section A- Budget Summary

Row	Column	Instructions
1.	Grant Program Function or Activity (a)	Type "FMPP-Federal" (This title will copy to column 1 on the next page.)
1.	Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number (b)	Enter the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number (10.175)
1	Estimated Unobligated Funds (c) & (d):	These sections will be left blank.
1.	(e) Federal	Include the entire amount of funds requested from the Federal government to complete the proposed project.

Note: The 1.(g) total is a prepopulated formula that will automatically calculate the total amount of this line. |
2.	(a) Grant Function or Activity	Type "*FMPP - Non-Federal*"
2.	(b) Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number:	Type "*10.175*"
2.	Estimated Unobligated Funds (c) & (d):	These sections will be left blank.
2.	Non-Federal (f)	Include the entire amount of Matching (cash and/or in-kind) contributions that your organization and/or partner organization(s) will provide for the proposed project during the entire period of performance.

Note: The 2.(g) total is a prepopulated formula that will automatically calculate the total amount of this line. |
| **5. Totals** | (e), (f), and (g) | All of the boxes in this row have a prepopulated formula. |

Section B- Budget Categories

Row	Column	Instructions
6. a. through j.	(1)	Enter the total amounts of each Object Class Category for which you are requesting federal funds. See *4.6.1 Indirect Costs* for information.
6. a. through j.	(2)	Enter the total amounts of each Object Class Categories for which the applicant organization or partners will provide the **matching funds**. See *4.6.1 Indirect Costs* for information.

Row	Column	Instructions
6. k.	(1), (2) & (5)	All of the boxes in this question have a prepopulated formula. You should have totals in columns (1) and (2) and (5). **Important**: Verify that totals in *Section A* 5.(g) and *Section B* 6.(5) k. are the same.
7.	Program Income (1)	Enter the estimated amount of income, if any, expected to be generated from this project. There is a prepopulated formula in box 7.(5).

Section C – Non-Federal Resources

Row	Column	Instructions
9.	Applicant (b)	Enter the amount of any cash and/or in-kind contribution that the <u>applicant</u> will bring as a match during the grant period, *if applicable.*
9.	State (c)	Enter the amount of any cash and/or in-kind contribution that the <u>state</u> will bring as a match during the grant period. If the applicant is a state department and would like to provide the match, should be reported in 9.(b) , *if applicable.*
9.	Other Sources (d)	Enter the amount of any cash and/or in-kind contribution that <u>other sources</u> (Example: Partners) will provide as a match during the grant period, *if applicable.*
12.	Total (b), (c), (d) & (e)	All of the boxes in this question have a prepopulated formula, so the calculation will automatically appear if you have entered information into the boxes above. **Important**: Verify that totals in *Section C* 12(e), *Section B* 6.(2)k., and *Section A* 5.(f) are the same.

4.2.3   PROJECT ABSTRACT SUMMARY

Required. The Project Abstract Summary form will be used as the award description for the overarching Federal award. This is separate from the FMLFPP Project Narrative. The Project Abstract Summary box must include:

- Project purpose
- Activities to be performed
- Deliverables and expected outcomes
- Intended beneficiary(ies): Who will benefit from this beyond the applicant organization?
- Subrecipient activities: Will the award result in subawards? If yes, who are the sub-awardees and how does the subaward support the applicant organization?

4.2.4   PROJECT NARRATIVE

Required. Applicants are required to prepare and submit a narrative using the FMLFPP Project Narrative form and FMLFPP Project Narrative Guide. The form and instructions are available on the "How do I

[Apply for an FMPP Grant](#)" webpage. The Project Narrative must clearly describe the direct or indirect producer or food business benefits intended by the applicant, objectives and goals, types of activities, applicable outcome indicators, and fiscal plan and resources information.

The Project Narrative must be typed and single-spaced, in an 11-point font, and must 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 33 pages (18 pages + 15 pages)**. DO NOT modify the margins of the FMLFPP Project Narrative form. Applicants must submit the FMLFPP Project Narrative form as a PDF and attached to the Grants.gov application package using the "Project Narrative Attachment Form" on the application package. Handwritten applications or applications in MS Word will not be accepted.

Prior to submitting the application to Grants.gov, please make sure no tracked changes or mark-up edits and comments are visible.

The supporting documents listed below do not count toward the 15-page limit.

4.2.5   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 <u>one</u> match verification letter <u>for</u> <u>EACH</u> 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 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.

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

4.2.7 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 MS Word 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.

4.2.8   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 may **not be reviewed or considered for funding** if it is:

- Received by Grants.gov after the submission deadline.
- Submitted via any method other than through Grants.gov.
- Submitted to the wrong grant program.
- Not responsive to the requirements of this RFA (eligibility, incomplete application, not providing all required documents, etc.)

See AMS' Late and/or Nonresponsive Applications Policy for more information.

4.4   SUBMISSION DATE AND TIME

Applications must be submitted electronically through Grants.gov. Ensure that all components of the application are complete before submission. Allow enough time for the application process, as it may take more than one attempt before your application is successfully submitted. AMS encourages you to submit your application at least two weeks prior to the application deadline to ensure all certifications and registrations are met.

Only applications submitted and validated by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on May 16, 2022, on Grants.gov will be accepted. See AMS' Late and/or Nonresponsive Applications Policy.

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 § 200.1) are those costs incurred for a common or joint purpose benefitting more than one cost objective, and not readily assignable to the cost objectives specifically benefitted, without effort disproportionate to the results achieved.

As stated in 2 CFR § 200.414, any non-Federal entity that does not have a current negotiated (including provisional) indirect cost rate, except State and Local Government and Indian Tribe Indirect Cost Proposals, may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10 percent of modified total direct costs (MTDC), which may be used indefinitely. No documentation is required to justify the 10% de minimis indirect cost rate. 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 § 200.1 as all direct salaries and wages, applicable fringe benefits, materials and supplies, services, travel, and up to the first $25,000 of each subaward (regardless of the period of performance of the subawards under the award). MTDCs exclude equipment, capital expenditures, charges for patient care, rental costs, tuition remission, scholarships and fellowships, participant support costs, and the portion of each subaward in excess of $25,000. Other items may be excluded only when necessary to avoid a serious inequity in the distribution of indirect costs, and with the approval of the cognizant agency for indirect costs.

If an applicant has a negotiated indirect cost rate approved by its cognizant agency, the applicant must submit a copy of its approved 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 § 200.1.

4.6.2   USING INDIRECT COST 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 much of the work 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's organization are allowable. Applicants may subaward to smaller organizations to support underserved communities or producers, with the applicant maintaining the oversight and reporting responsibility as the AOR. See section *3.3.1 Fiscal Sponsors*. Using grant funds to competitively "re-grant" funds in mini-grant programs or to activities that are not central to the purpose of the project or for unknown costs is unallowable.

4.6.4 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 <u>after</u> reviewing this document should contact AMS staff using the contact information listed under *7.0 Agency Contact*.

4.6.5 COORDINATOR MEETING TRAVEL

Recipients are expected to attend AMS sponsored grant management meetings during the project's period of performance. The proposed budget should include travel funds for the Project Coordinator and any additional key personnel as reasonably determined by the recipient and AMS.

Estimate the cost of travel including flight, hotel, per diem, ground transportation to a major city. For previous year, an example of this estimate can be around $1,500. Location and dates are to be determined with possibility of a virtual conference. If the conference is performed virtually, recipients will be able to reallocate those funds to another allowable item.

4.7 GRANTS.GOV APPLICATION SUBMISSION AND RECEIPT PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS

4.7.1 HOW TO REGISTER TO APPLY THROUGH GRANTS.GOV

The applicant **organization 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 or Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)*: All entities applying for funding, including renewal funding, must have a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number from Dun & Bradstreet (D&B) or a Unique Entity Identifier from SAM.gov. Applicants must enter the

DUNS number or UEI in the data entry field labeled "Organizational DUNS/UEI" on the SF-424 form.

2) *Register with SAM*: In addition to having a DUNS/UEI number, organizations applying online through Grants.gov must register with the [System for Award Management (SAM)](). Current SAM.gov registrants have already been assigned their Unique Entity Identifier (SAM) and can view it within SAM.gov. All organizations must register with SAM to apply online. Failure to register with SAM will prevent your organization from applying through Grants.gov. **SAM.gov accounts must be 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/UEI number to complete this process. Completing this process automatically triggers an email request for applicant roles to the organization's E-Business Point of Contact (EBiz POC) for review. The EBiz POC is a representative from your organization who is the contact listed for SAM. To apply for grants on behalf of your organization, you will need 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 web forms 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 the webforms, you can download individual PDF forms in Workspace so that they will appear similar to other Standard or AMS

forms. The individual PDF forms can be downloaded and saved to your local storage device, network drive(s), or external drives, and then accessed through Adobe Reader. NOTE: You may need to visit the Adobe Software Compatibility page on Grants.gov to download the appropriate version of the software. There is no cost for Adobe Reader Software.

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

c. *Complete SF-424 Fields First*: The forms are designed to fill in common required fields across other forms, such as the applicant 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 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' Late and/or Nonresponsive Applications Policy.

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 the instructions provided by AMS.

- Thoroughly read the AMS General Terms and Conditions to understand allowable and unallowable costs.

- Apply to the correct grant program:

    o Assistance Listing (formerly CFDA) number "**10.175**" and Funding Opportunity Number "**USDA-AMS-TM-FMPP-G-22-0002**."

- 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-faqs.html https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/workspace-overview.html

5.0 APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

5.1 PROJECT EVALUATION CRITERIA

Each application that meets the initial qualifications screening requirements (see section *5.2*) will be reviewed and scored competitively using the following criteria:

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 the project, and the objectives for the project.

2) The extent to which the project demonstrates how it will help develop, coordinate, and expand direct producer-to-consumer market opportunities and an agricultural local and regional food system infrastructure.

3) The extent to which the applicant identifies and engages the intended beneficiaries, including the number of beneficiaries and how they will benefit. The application demonstrates a commitment to engage potential project beneficiaries as active participants in partnership activities.

4) The application describes the project's proposed geographic focus area and why it is the most appropriate place to conduct project activities.

5) The application complies with all written instructions and requirements described within the RFA and Project Narrative Template.

Technical Merit ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ **25 Points**

1) The extent to which the application presents a clear, well-conceived, and overall suitable work plan for fulfilling the goals and objectives of the proposed project.

2) The extent to which the application presents a realistic work plan 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 selected outcomes and indicator(s) are appropriate for the scale and scope of the project, including:

   a. How indicator numbers were derived with a clear means to collect feedback to evaluate and achieve each relevant outcome indicator; and

   b. The anticipated key factors that are predicted to contribute to or restrict progress toward the applicable indicators, including action steps for addressing identified restricting factors.

2) The 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 distribute 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 substantial, effective, diverse, and strong qualifications of the applicant (individual and team) and the relevant partnerships and collaborators to

accomplish the project's goals and objectives and to meet the needs of the intended beneficiaries including:

    a. Commitment from the key partners and/or collaborators demonstrated through Letters of Commitment from Partner and Collaborator Organizations;

    b. The key staff who will be responsible for managing the projects and names and titles of the individuals who comprise the Project Team; and

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

2) The 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 a commitment to collaboration and engagement among partners to ensure high levels of participation or provides a clear and concise plan for how such engagement will occur, particularly including historically underserved entities such as underserved, beginning, and/or limited resource entities.

4) The 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

Each application is initially reviewed for overall completeness, as well as compliance with eligibility and program requirements as set forth in this RFA. If an application does not meet these requirements, it is removed from consideration. Please see section *4.3* and AMS' Late and/or Non-Responsive Applications Policy for more information.

Step 2: Technical Review

Each application that passes initial screening (Step 1) is evaluated by a panel of independent peer reviewers. AMS makes every attempt to match reviewers with applications in their areas of expertise. Each reviewer signs a conflict of interest and confidentiality agreement regarding any assigned proposals. The peer review panels evaluate their assigned proposals using instructions prepared by AMS officials. Individual reviewers 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 § 200.206(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 (NOA) to each recipient for signature by the appropriate official. The NOA will be signed by AMS and the AOR.

The NOA will provide pertinent instructions and information including, at a minimum, the information described in 2 CFR § 200.211 and reference to the AMS General Terms and Conditions.

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 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 FMPP staff by e-mail with questions about the grant program at FMLFPPGrants@usda.gov.

For additional information, please visit the FMPP Website: https://www.ams.usda.gov/fmpp

7.2   AVAILABLE RESOURCES

AMS provides resources and information on its website (https://www.ams.usda.gov/fmpp) that may be helpful to applicants, including webinars information, FMLFPP FAQs, descriptions of funded projects, FMLFPP Project Narrative Guide and required application forms. AMS staff is available to provide timely technical assistance.

7.3   ADDRESS

Farmers Market Promotion Program
USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 1096 South Building
Stop 0264
Washington, DC 20250-0264
FMLFPPGrants@usda.gov

8.0 OTHER INFORMATION

8.1   DEFINITIONS

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

Direct Producer to Consumer Marketing means instances in which producers sell locally or regionally produced agricultural products directly to the consumer (including farmers markets, roadside stands, CSA programs, agritourism activities, online sales, producer-to-retail, producer-to-restaurant, and producer-to-institutional marketing) with minimal involvement of a middle-man such as an intermediary, a wholesaler, a retailer, an agent, a broker, or a reseller, in a manner calculated to lower the cost and increase the quality of food to such consumers while providing increased financial returns to the farmers.

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 eligible to apply for FMLFPP, but award recipients may use Federal award funds

only to build a business' capacity to develop, improve, and/or expand local or regional supply chain activities, and not to support supply chain activities for food items originating from or being sold to areas outside the defined locality/region.

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 1671, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-0273, Telephone: (202) 302-0650; 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.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.