



Agricultural Marketing Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Regional Food System Partnerships

Fiscal Year 2025 Request for Applications

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-AMS-TM-RFSP-G-25-0002

Publication Date: May 09, 2025

Application Due Date: 11:59 PM Eastern Time on June 27, 2025

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0	Basic Information	4
1.1	Executive Summary	4
1.2	2025 Highlights and Changes	4
1.3	Available Funding.....	5
1.4	Federal Award Period Duration and Size	5
1.5	Tips for Applicants.....	5
1.6	Timing to Obtain & Submit Grants.gov Required Elements	6
1.7	Agency Contact Information	6
1.8	Stakeholder Input.....	7
2.0	Eligibility.....	7
2.1	Eligible Applicants - Partnerships.....	7
2.2	Eligible Entities	7
2.3	Eligible Partners	9
2.4	Limit on Number of Awards.....	9
2.5	Cost Sharing	10
3.0	Program Description.....	11
3.1	Legislative Authority	11
3.2	Purpose	11
3.3	Project Types.....	12
3.4	RFSP Partnership Functions	13
3.5	Projects and Activities Not Eligible for Funding	13
3.6	Priority Areas.....	13
3.7	Performance Measures.....	14
3.8	Allowable and Unallowable Cost and Activities.....	14
3.9	Indirect Costs	14
3.10	Subawards.....	15
3.11	Coordinator Meeting Travel.....	15
4.0	Application Contents and Format	16
4.1	Application Checklist.....	16
4.2	SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance	16
4.3	SF-424 Budget information for Non-Construction Programs	17
4.4	Project Abstract Summary	18
4.5	Project Narrative	18
4.6	Letters of Verification for Cost Sharing.....	18
4.7	Letters of Commitment From Partners and Collaborators.....	19
4.8	Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA)	20
5.0	Submission Requirements and Deadlines	20
5.1	Electronic Application Package	20
5.2	Submission and Receipt Procedures and Requirements	20
5.3	Additional Submission Details.....	22
5.4	Submission Date and Time.....	23
5.5	Intergovernmental Review	23
6.0	Application Review Information	23

6.1	Initial Review (Initial Screening).....	23
6.2	Review Criteria (Technical Review).....	23
6.3	Administrative Review (Selection Process and Risk Review).....	25
7.0	Award Notices	26
7.1	Successful Applicants	26
7.2	Unsuccessful Applicants.....	26
8.0	Post-Award Requirements and Administration	26
8.1	Administrative and National Policy Requirements	26
8.2	Reporting Requirements.....	26
8.3	Acknowledgment of USDA Support	27
9.0	Other Information	27
9.1	Definitions.....	27
9.2	Non-discrimination Statement.....	28
9.3	Freedom of Information Act Requests.....	28
9.4	Paperwork Reduction.....	28

1.0 BASIC INFORMATION

Federal Agency: Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)

Funding Opportunity Title: Regional Food System Partnerships

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-AMS-TM-RFSP-G-25-0002

Assistance Listing Number: [10.177](#)

Type of Federal Assistance: AMS will use a Grant Agreement to provide a federal award to successful applicants.

Type of Application: New Application. New applications will be evaluated competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in [section 6.0](#).

Application Deadline: Thursday, June 27, 2025, through [Grants.gov](#) at 11:59 pm Eastern Time.

1.1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), offers a grant program called the Regional Food System Partnerships (RFSP) for the 2025 fiscal year. The purpose of this program is to support partnerships that connect public and private resources to plan and develop local and regional food systems.

RFSP is part of the [Local Agriculture Market Program \(LAMP\)](#) umbrella program. AMS welcomes applications that meet LAMP goals (see [section 3.1](#)) 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.

AMS will award these grants competitively to eligible applicants proposing high quality projects that meet the purpose and requirements of the program. All applications will be reviewed using merit and evaluation procedures.

In the FY 2024 application cycle, AMS funded 10 (13%) of the 79 applications received awarding a total of \$5,224,700.22.

1.2 2025 HIGHLIGHTS AND CHANGES

Below are highlights of major changes to the program since last year.

- This Request for Applications (RFA) was reorganized following the recent changes to the Uniform Guidance, [Appendix I to Part 200, Title 2](#). The reorganization lists basic program information upfront and application submission requirements at the end.
- The RFA was updated to remove language encouraging applications that “...benefit smaller farms and ranches, new and beginning farmers and ranchers, underserved producers, veteran producers, and/or underserved communities...”.
- The [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#) were updated to reflect recent changes to the Uniform Guidance (2 CFR Part 200).
- A new section [6.3.1 Risk Review](#) was added to describe the factors used by AMS to evaluate the risk posed by applicants before making an award.

1.3 AVAILABLE FUNDING

Anticipated Available Funding: \$4.5 million. Enactment of a continuing resolution, appropriations act, or other legislation may affect the availability or level of funding for this program.

Anticipated Number of Awards: Approximately 10 awards.

Cost Share Requirement: A 25% cash cost share is required.

1.4 FEDERAL AWARD PERIOD DURATION AND SIZE

AMS expects applicants to complete their projects within the required performance period. AMS encourages applicants to use the full performance period to allow enough time to complete projects. However, a project may be completed before the scheduled performance period end date. The applicant must indicate the start date and end date on Block 17 of the SF-424 "Application for Federal Assistance".

Award size varies by project type. Applicants may not request less than or more than the respective minimum/maximum award amounts. Applicants must justify the requested award funding amounts within the [RFSP Project Narrative](#).

Project Type	Duration (Months)	Start Date	End Date	Minimum Award	Maximum Award
Planning & Design	24	September 30, 2025	September 29, 2027	\$100,000	\$250,000
Implementation & Expansion	36	September 30, 2025	September 29, 2028	\$250,000	\$1,000,000

1.5 TIPS FOR APPLICANTS

- **To submit your application electronically in [Grants.gov](#), you must:**
 - Have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and a Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN);
 - Be registered in [SAM.gov](#);
 - Provide your UEI number and TIN on your application; and
 - Maintain an active and current SAM registration.
- **Allow time for Registration Completion:**
 - The organization registration process can take as long as four weeks.
 - Complete registration as early as possible to meet all deadlines. See [section 5.0](#) for more information.
- **Review General Terms and Conditions:**
 - Review the [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#) to understand allowable and unallowable costs.
- **Ensure File Compatibility:**
 - Use latest version of Adobe Reader that it is compatible with [Grants.gov software](#).
- **File Naming and Size:**
 - Limit file names to 50 characters or fewer.
 - Avoid special characters in file names (e.g. \$, %, &, *, Spanish "ñ", etc.).

- **Attachment Upload:**
 - Use the “Add Attachments” button in Grants.gov for upload.
 - Do not use the paperclip icon in Adobe Reader.
- **File Security and Formatting:**
 - Do not password-protecting files.
 - Accept all tracked changes in documents in document before submission.
- **Accurate Data Entry:**
 - Verify that your UEI number is correctly entered on the SF-424 form cover page.
- **Grants.gov Resources for Support:**
 - [Applicant FAQs](#)
 - [Workspace Overview](#)

By following these steps and recommendations, applicants can reduce errors, meet deadlines, and ensure compliance with submission requirements.

1.6 TIMING TO OBTAIN & SUBMIT GRANTS.GOV REQUIRED ELEMENTS

Required Action	Timing to Obtain/Submit
AMS Deadline to receive final application and all supporting materials through Grants.Gov	June 27, 2025 – 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time
Obtaining Your Organization’s UEI Number (if you do not already have one)	7-10 business days
Establishing an Active SAM.gov Account (if you do not already have one)	Up to 4 weeks
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 4 weeks

1.7 AGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

1.7.1 AMS PROGRAM CONTACTS

After closely reviewing this RFA in its entirety, applicants and other interested parties that have questions are encouraged to contact the RFSP program staff by e-mail at IPPGGrants@usda.gov.

AMS provides resources and information on the RFSP website (<https://www.ams.usda.gov/rfsp>) that may be helpful to applicants, including [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#), descriptions of funded projects, and required application forms. AMS staff is available to provide timely technical assistance.

Regional Food System Partnerships

USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service
 1400 Independence Avenue, SW
 Room 1510-S South Building
 Stop 0264
 Washington, DC 20250-0264
<https://www.ams.usda.gov/rfsp>

1.7.2 GRANTS.GOV CONTACT INFORMATION

All questions regarding Grants.gov technical assistance must be directed to [Applicant Support](#). Applicants may also call the 24/7 toll-free support number 1-800-518-4726 or email support@grants.gov.

1.8 STAKEHOLDER INPUT

AMS seeks comments about this Request for Applications (RFA) and considers comments to the extent possible when developing RFAs. Written comments may be submitted 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 email subject line, please state that you are responding to the **Regional Food System Partnerships RFA**.

2.0 ELIGIBILITY

2.1 ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS - PARTNERSHIPS

Only eligible partnerships may apply to RFSP. A partnership is an agreement between one or more eligible entities (see [section 2.2](#)) and one or more eligible partners (see [section 2.3](#)). The partnership agreement can be in the form of any official documentation such as a contract or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

The application may be submitted either by an eligible entity or an eligible partner on behalf of the partnership. The application must specify which organization within the partnership is responsible for receiving and managing the award.

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.

2.2 ELIGIBLE ENTITIES

Eligible entities include:

Entity Type	Description
Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Network or Association	Formal group 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.
Economic Development Corporation	Organization whose mission is to improve, maintain, develop, and/or market or promote a specific geographic area.
Farmer or Rancher Cooperative	A business or service organization (1) that is owned and democratically controlled by the people who use its services and (2) whose benefits (services received and earnings allocations) are distributed to the user-owners based on how much they use the cooperative.

Entity Type	Description
Food Council	Food policy council or food and farm system network that represents multiple organizations involved in the production, processing, and consumption of food and local, Tribal or State governments that addresses food and farm-related issues and needs within city, county, State, Tribal region, multicounty region, or other region designated.
Local Government	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, or public transportation agency; 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, intra-state, or local government.
Majority-Controlled Producer-Based Business Venture	A venture with greater than 50 percent of the ownership and control held by one or more producers or one or more entities that are wholly owned and controlled by one or more producers. Entities described here include legal partnerships, limited liability corporations, limited liability partnerships, and corporations.
Nonprofit Corporation	Any organization or institution, including nonprofit 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.
Producer	An owner-operator or tenant that produces a crop or handles livestock and is entitled to a share of the farm income.
Producer Network 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 of the owners, as well as organizations or other businesses that assist, represent, or serve producers or producer networks.
Public Benefit Corporation	Corporation 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.
Regional Farmers Market Authority	Entity that establishes and enforces State, regional, 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.

Entity Type	Description
Tribal Government	Governing body or governmental agency 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.

2.3 ELIGIBLE PARTNERS

Eligible partners include:

Entity Type	Description
Commercial, Federal or Farm Credit System Lending Institution	An accredited financial organization such as a bank, credit union, or finance company that makes agriculture loans and may or may not also be a depository institution.
Institutions of Higher Education (IHE)	Educational institutions that meet the requirements specified at 20 U.S.C. § 1001 .
Philanthropic Organization	An independent, corporate, or private foundation established to support charitable activities serving the common welfare, primarily through grantmaking.
Private Corporation	A company that is owned by one person or a small group of people, for example a family, and whose shares are available only to specific individuals and are not traded on a stock market.
State Agencies or Regional Authority	Planning commissions, councils of governments, regional economic development organizations/districts, and similar organizations.

2.4 LIMIT ON NUMBER OF AWARDS

Applicants may submit more than one application to RFSP in this round of funding. If an applicant is selected as a finalist for more than one award, that applicant is still limited to receive **one** award per funding cycle. AMS staff will contact the applicant to discuss which application they would like to complete.

If an applicant has an active RFSP award, that applicant must close out the award to be eligible to apply for another RFSP award. For example, a Planning & Design award recipient must close out that award prior to applying for an Implementation & Expansion award. The applicant must submit all required close out documentation by the application due date mentioned in [section 5.4](#). Please refer to the applicable General Terms and Conditions, available on the “[Grant Terms and Conditions](#)” webpage, for closeout instructions.

2.5 COST SHARING

This funding opportunity requires recipients to fund their projects, in part, with cost share funds from non-Federal sources in the form of cash contributions equal to or greater than 25% of the amount of Federal funds being requested.

Cash contributions are generally defined as an actual cash contribution (not the 'value' of someone's time/effort) from the applicant's general revenue/reserves/savings/line of credit, 3rd-party partner(s), or other non-Federal grants. The applicant must be able to track and show the source of the cost share and that the funding source was dedicated entirely to the grant project and produce records to that effect (for example, taking the cash cost share in your accounting system, or from your partner, and placing it into a special 'grant project' account).

Cost sharing must be in the form of allowable direct 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 as the value of goods or services provided by the contributor for the benefit of the grant project, where no funds transferred hands. For example, a partner, such as a Tribal community member, may volunteer their professional expertise as an in-kind cost share contribution to the project as described in [2 CFR § 200.306\(e\)](#).

Any cost share amount exceeding the requirement will be considered voluntary and must be documented and secured at the time of the award. It may also count toward meeting the Priority Area for using significant non-Federal financial and technical resources (see [section 3.6](#)). Excess cost share contributions above the minimum 25% cash requirement may be in the form of cash or in-kind resources, such as a partner's cash contribution to the project or professional volunteer services as described in [2 CFR § 200.306](#).

Cost share contributions (either cash or in-kind) cannot be used for this program if they are already being used toward satisfying a cost share requirement under any other Federal grant agreement.

All cost share contributions **must be committed or secured** at the time an applicant is selected for an award. An award will not be issued unless all cost share funding over the life of the grant is secured. Additional anticipated cost share funds not in place by the time the project starts **cannot be counted** toward the cost sharing requirement.

Applicants must indicate the total cost share amount and how it will specifically align with their requested funding when completing the fiscal plan and resources sections of the [RFSP Project Narrative](#) (see [section 4.5](#)). Additionally, applicants must submit signed letter(s) verifying the cost share for EACH cash and in-kind resource (see [section 4.6](#)).

Indirect costs may count as an in-kind contribution, but not as a cash contribution (see [section 3.9.1](#)).

Applicants may not use Federal funds of any kind (as defined in [2 CFR § 200.306\(b\)\(5\)](#)) or program income as cost share. Program income is defined as income directly generated by a supported activity or earned as a result of the Federal award during the period of performance ([2 CFR § 200.1](#)). Unless otherwise stated in the Notice of Award (NOA) provisions section, AMS authorizes the use of program income through the additive method ([2 CFR § 200.307\(b\)\(2\)](#)). Any program income generated during the grant period must be used to further the objectives of the project and under the conditions of the award.

3.0 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

3.1 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 the regional food economy by bringing farmers, businesses, and communities together.
- Support the development of business plans, feasibility studies, and strategies for value-added agricultural production and local and regional food system infrastructure.
- Strengthen the capacity and development of regional food system through community collaboration and expansion of mid-tier value chains.
- Improve income and job opportunities for producers and food businesses.
- Simplify the application processes and reporting processes for the program.

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

3.2 PURPOSE

RFSP projects help connect public and private resources to plan and develop local or regional food systems. The RFSP focuses on making local or regional food economies stronger and more resilient.

Applicants must partner to promote the development of local or regional food systems. The partners will work together to set priorities, connect resources and services, and track progress towards shared goals.

Partnerships receiving a grant may:

- Determine the size and scope of the local or regional food system where their project goals and activities will take place.
- Coordinate with AMS to receive technical assistance.
- Conduct outreach and educate to get others involved in the partnership agreement and eligible activities.

Partnerships must bring a variety of innovative financial and technical capabilities, show they can work effectively and collaboratively with both public and private groups across sectors, and present sustainable and measurable ways to achieve the project's goals.

Partnerships may apply for other LAMP programs on behalf of eligible entities that wish to participate in eligible activities under the RFSP partnership agreement.

3.3 PROJECT TYPES

RFSP offers **Planning and Design** and **Implementation and Expansion** project types.

3.3.1 PLANNING AND DESIGN PROJECTS

Planning and Design projects support partnerships in the early stages of bringing together people and organizations, envisioning a shared future, setting goals, and finding strategies for developing local or regional food systems. Specifically, these projects support food system's efforts to build connections between public and private groups in their regions. This allows the region to discover and promote opportunities for collaboration within the food system. Applicants should look for public and private partners that operate across the regional food economy and can access diverse financial and technical resources beyond just federal funding. Examples of eligible project activities for these partnerships include but are not limited to:

- Bringing together partners to define the scope and structure of the regional food system, share opportunities and challenges, and develop engaged approaches to address challenges and improve connection and success across the regional food system.
- Creating and conducting feasibility studies and data-driven implementation plans that achieve measurable goals for the partnership's work in developing the regional food system.
- Researching specific market, mid-tier value chain, or infrastructure investments (including studies analyzing the capital needs or gaps of the regional food system) to help prioritize next steps at the local, regional, state, or tribal government level.
- Connecting food value chain entities with partners and funders to engage in activities that strengthen the regional food system.
- Researching and developing metrics to measure and evaluate the partnership's early development work and establish performance benchmarks for achieving partnership goals.

3.3.2 IMPLEMENTATION AND EXPANSION PROJECTS

Implementation and Expansion projects support partnerships that build on previous or ongoing efforts within a local or regional food system. These partnerships have already completed most or all the activities discussed for Planning and Design projects. Applicants should explain how the goals, objectives, and activities in the application build on previous efforts within the food system. They should also show they will engage entities that share a commitment to the regional food system and maintain a diverse network of public-private partners to further develop the food system. Examples of eligible project activities for these partnerships include but are not limited to:

- Creating value chains where producers, manufacturers, buyers, and other related actors form collaborative, transparent partnerships share a commitment to operational values and social mission goals.
- Developing processes for ongoing engagement with the community and businesses to provide a forum for ideas, concerns, and updates across the regional food system.
- Analyzing capital needs and gaps in the regional food system and identifying resources to support it.
- Helping food system enterprises find resources, providing technical assistance to partners and stakeholders, and applying for programs and resources that align with regional food system efforts, including other LAMP programs or capital investments.

3.4 RFSP PARTNERSHIP FUNCTIONS

RFSP is designed to help fund and support partnerships that aim to improve decision making, coordination, and planning in local and regional food systems. The program is meant to build the capacity of these partners to access additional resources, plan their directions, and carry out related activities. The partnership and their member organizations are expected to use other funding sources to cover the costs of implementation where such other resources exist. RFSP partnerships are encouraged to focus on activities not typically funded by other USDA programs. This includes but is not limited to, value chain coordination, bringing together partners and stakeholders for strategic planning, grant-writing, and exploring new program ideas on behalf of the partners.

AMS recognizes that some businesses may source or market some of their food products outside of the defined locality or region. These businesses can still participate in RFSP projects as long as they meet the eligibility requirements in (see [section 2.0](#)). However, Federal funds awarded through RFSP can only be used to build the capacity of businesses to develop, improve, and/or expand supply chain activities within their local and regional food systems. Funds cannot be used to support supply chain activities for food items originating from or being sold to areas outside the defined locality or region.

3.5 PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES NOT ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

Projects are not eligible for funding if the proposed activities:

- Are for agricultural production-related expenses, like growing crops or buying farm equipment, tools, materials, supplies, and other related costs.
- Are to buy land, or for construction of a building or structure.
- Are to buy general purpose equipment; general purpose equipment can be leased, but not leased-to-own or purchased. See section 3.8.
- Benefit only one agricultural producer or individual.
- Depend upon the completion of another project or the receipt of another grant.
- Duplicate activities that are already being funded by another Federal award program.
- Provide capital for revolving loan funds or seed equity funds.

3.6 PRIORITY AREAS

AMS will prioritize applications that:

- Use significant non-Federal financial and technical resources and work together with other local, State, Tribal, or national efforts. Any cost share provided above and beyond the cost share requirement (see section 2.5) can help support the application.
- Cover areas that include distressed low-income rural or urban communities with persistent poverty. These areas should have significant opportunities for high impact investment, as demonstrated by a “distressed” or “at-risk” score on the Distressed Communities Index (DCI) developed by the Economic Innovation Group.
- Involve multiple entities and partners, even if such partners are not located within the defined region of the partnership.

Applicants are not required to meet these priorities to be eligible to apply or receive grant funds. AMS will review the applicant's Project Narrative responses and consider these priorities during the administrative review process (see [section 6.3](#)). Whenever possible, AMS will ensure geographical diversity in selecting partnership grant recipients from high-scoring applications.

3.7 PERFORMANCE MEASURES

To evaluate and report on the outcomes of the RFSP program on a national scale, AMS collects information on performance measures. Each project submitted must include target numbers for at least one outcome and at least one of the indicators listed in the Achievability section of the Project Narrative (see [section 4.5](#)). The progress of the one or more outcomes and indicators selected will need to be reported in the Annual Performance Report, and the results will be reported in the Final Performance Report. Please refer to the [Grant Performance Measures](#) webpage for more information.

3.8 ALLOWABLE AND UNALLOWABLE COST 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 [section 1.7](#).

3.9 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.

In accordance with [2 CFR § 200.414\(f\)](#), an applicant that does not have a current negotiated (including provisional) indirect cost rate, except State and Local Government and Indian Tribe Indirect Cost Proposals, may choose to charge a de minimis rate of 15 percent of Modified Total Direct Costs (MTDC). The de minimis rate can be used without providing documentation to justify it. An applicant can use the de minimis rate indefinitely for all Federal awards or choose to negotiate a rate, which they may do at any time through their cognizant agency (or the Federal Agency that provides the largest amount of funding). As described in [2 CFR § 200.403](#), costs must be consistently charged as either direct or indirect costs and may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both.

All applicants who elect to charge a de minimis rate must use the MTDC as the base. MTDC 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 \$50,000 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 above \$50,000. Other items may be excluded only when necessary to avoid a serious inequity in the distribution of indirect costs, and with the approval of the cognizant agency for indirect costs.

If an applicant has a negotiated indirect cost rate approved by its cognizant agency, the applicant must submit a copy of its approved NICRA with its application. Entities that would like to negotiate an indirect cost rate must contact their cognizant agency. For assignments of cognizant agencies, see [2 CFR § 200.1](#).

3.9.1 USING INDIRECT COSTS FOR COST SHARING

The maximum indirect costs allowed for a project may be included in different ways:

1. They can be part of the Federal portion of the budget. For example, if the maximum indirect cost is \$8,000, the applicant can include the full amount in the federal part of the budget.
2. Alternatively, the full \$8,000 may be offered as an in-kind cost share contribution if no indirect costs are requested on the Federal portion of the budget. The applicant cannot include the maximum allowable indirect cost as both.
3. 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. For example, they could include \$4,000 in the Federal budget and \$4,000 as an in-kind contribution. Alternatively, the applicant may request any other combination that, when combined, does not exceed the maximum indirect costs allowable.

Refer to [2 CFR §§ 200.413](#) and [200.414](#) for additional information on determining if costs charged to the award are direct or indirect.

Note: For this program, indirect costs can only be used as an in-kind contribution, not to meet the required 25% cash cost share.

3.10 SUBAWARDS

The applicant can work with eligible partners through a subaward and/or contractors ([2 CFR § 200.331](#)) to complete the proposed project.

The applicant is not allowed to use Federal grant funds to create its own smaller grant programs (or re-grant/mini grant) to give money to other groups. The applicant also cannot use Federal grant funds for activities not related to the project or for costs that are unknown at the time of application. However, the applicant may use its cost share funds to offer mini-grants if so desired, as long as they help achieve the project's purposes, are for program-eligible activities, and comply with Federal cost share requirements at [2 CFR § 200.306](#). If the applicant chooses to offer mini grants with non-Federal funds that do not comply with these regulations, those funds should not be included as part of the required cost share for this grant. For more information, refer to [section 2.5](#).

3.11 COORDINATOR MEETING TRAVEL

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

To estimate these costs in the budget section, please account for flight, hotel, per diem, and ground transportation expenses for a 3-day, 2-night stay. Location and dates are to be determined with a possibility of a virtual conference. If the conference is virtual, recipients will be able to reallocate those funds to another allowable item.

4.0 APPLICATION CONTENTS AND FORMAT

Applicants **MUST** submit the required documentation in the appropriate format as listed in this section.

4.1 APPLICATION CHECKLIST

Before submitting an application, applicants must read the RFA in its entirety to fully understand the program requirements. The application checklist below provides the mandatory and, if applicable, documents for an application package.

Mandatory Documents:

- ☐ SF-424 – Application for Federal Assistance (Grants.gov)
- ☐ SF-424A – Budget Information Non-Construction Programs (Grants.gov)
- ☐ Project Abstract Summary (Grants.gov)
- ☐ Project Narrative Form ([section 4.5](#))
 - ☐ Must use required template
 - ☐ Executive Summary is no more than 250 words
 - ☐ Ensure it does not exceed the page limit
 - ☐ Ensure the application excludes unallowable costs and activities per [section 3.8](#)
- ☐ Signed Letter(s) of Verification for Cost Sharing Funds for each cost share resource per [section 4.6](#)
- ☐ Signed Letter(s) of Commitment from Partners and Collaborators per [section 4.7](#)

If applicable, packages may also be required to include the following document:

- ☐ Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA)

AMS recommends submitting applications at least **two weeks before the deadline** to account for any issues.

4.2 SF-424 APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

Required: Form SF-424 is available via the application package in Grants.gov. Applicants may use the following supplemental instructions to properly fill the SF-424.

Box	Instructions
1 - Type of Submission	Select Application
2 - Type of Application	Select New
8.c - Organizational Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)	Enter applicant UEI number for the organization submitting the application.
8.d – Address	Enter the organization street address as it appears in SAM.gov. P.O. Boxes will not be accepted. Enter a 9-digit zip code
10 - Name of Federal Agency	AMS, USDA

Box	Instructions
11 - Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number (Assistance Listing Number)	Enter 10.177
12 - Funding Opportunity Number	Enter USDA-AMS-TM-RFSP-G-25-0002
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 descriptive title of the project
16a - Congressional Districts for Applicant	Enter the Congressional district where the applicant is located
16b - Congressional Districts for Program/Project	Enter the Congressional district where your project will be implemented, or "All" if the project will be implemented in more than one location
17 - Proposed Project Start Date and End Date	Enter Start Date: September 30, 2025 Enter End date: No later than September 29, 2027 (for Planning projects) or September 29, 2028 (for Implementation projects)
18.a - Estimated Funding - Federal	Enter the total Federal amount requested
18.b – 18.f Estimated Funding – Applicant	Enter the total c amount from the applicant organization and/or other partners
19 - Is Applicant Subject to Review by State Under Executive Order 12372 Process?	See section 5.5 .

4.3 SF-424 BUDGET INFORMATION FOR NON-CONSTRUCTION PROGRAMS

Required. The SF-424A is available via the application package in Grants.gov. The blocks on the required form are either self-explanatory or easily explained in the instruction of the form. However, applicants must use the following supplemental instructions associated with specific boxes on form SF-424.

Please complete **only** Sections A, B, and C. Do **not** complete Sections D, E, F.

Section A – Budget Summary

Box	Instructions
1.a – Grant Program Function or Activity	Enter "RFSP – Federal"
1.b – Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number	Enter "10.177"
1.e – Federal	Enter the amount of Federal funding requested for the project
1.f – Non-Federal	Enter the total cost share contribution amount provided for the project

Section B – Budget Categories

Box	Instructions
6.a – 6.j – Object Class Categories	In Column 1, enter the amount of Federal funds requested for each Object Class Category. Do not include cost share funding. For example, if you are requesting \$2,000 in Federal funds for "Travel", enter 2000 in Column 1, box 6.c

Section C – Non-Federal Resources

Box	Instructions
8.a – Grant Program	Should auto-populate from Section A, Box 1.a
8.b – 8.d	Enter the cost share amount being provided from each source (Applicant, State, or Other) for the project

4.4 PROJECT ABSTRACT SUMMARY

Required. The [Project Abstract Summary](#) form will be used as the award description for the overarching Federal award. This is different from the [RFSP Project Narrative](#) form. The Project Abstract Summary must include:

- Project purpose: What is the main goal or objective of the project?
- Activities to be performed: What specific tasks or actions will be carried out as part of the project?
- Deliverables and expected outcomes: What are tangible results and impacts or benefits are expected from the project?

4.5 PROJECT NARRATIVE

Required. Applicants MUST prepare and submit a narrative using the [RFSP Project Narrative](#) form. The Project Narrative must describe: 1) the partners involved in the project, 2) how the region (actual or potential) is defined 3) objectives and goals 4) types and order of project activities 5) strategies for monitoring and evaluating the proposed activities, 6) how the applicant will manage the project.

The Project Narrative must be typed and single-spaced in an 11-point font. It **MUST NOT** exceed fifteen (15) 8.5 x 11 pages, not counting any content that was already on the form. For example, if the form is 15 pages before you begin entering your project information, your form may be up to 30 pages in length when completed (15 original pages + 15 pages of applicant content). **DO NOT** modify the margins of the Project Narrative form or delete or change any text in it. Applicants must submit the RFSP Project Narrative form as a PDF and attached to the Grants.gov application package using the “Project Narrative Attachment Form”. Handwritten applications or applications submitted in MS Word will not be accepted.

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

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

4.6 LETTERS OF VERIFICATION FOR COST SHARING

Required: Applicants MUST provide written proof of the cost share commitment from every party, including the applicant, who will contribute cash or in-kind cost share contribution to the project.

Submit one letter of verification for EACH cash or in-kind resource that is being contributed. The letter must be signed by the cost sharing contributor organization. For example, if the contribution will be provided by the applicant and two partner organizations are providing cost share funds, a total of 3 cost share verification letters are required.

AMS has posted [Letter of Verification For Cost Share Template](#) on the grant program’s application website. We highly encourage you to use this template. If you do not use this template, your cost share verification document must include the following:

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

Instructions for organizations submitting Letters of Verification for Cost Share: Submit *Letters of Verification for Cost Share* on letterhead and address them to the applicant (i.e., Project Director). Clearly say at the top of the documents that they are **LETTERS OF VERIFICATION FOR COST SHARE**. Letters must be attached to the Grants.gov application package using the “Add Attachments” button under Form SF-424 item #15. **AMS will not accept unsigned letters or letters emailed separately.**

4.7 LETTERS OF COMMITMENT FROM PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS

Required: Applicants MUST provide letters of commitment, not just letters of support, from all project partners at the time of application. More information can be found on project partners in [section 2.3](#).

AMS has posted a [Letter of Commitment From Partner Organization Template](#) on the grant program’s application website. We highly encourage you to use this template. If you do not use this template, the Letters of Commitment must include at least the following information:

- Project Applicant Name
- Project Title
- A short introduction describing the partner entity’s mission and its reason(s) for joining the partnership
- The specific role(s) and responsibilities the partner organization is committing to for the project, including the participation of specific individuals, as applicable
- A statement that these individuals and the organizations agree to abide by the management plan contained in the application.

Instructions for organizations submitting Letters of Commitment: Submit letters on letterhead and address them to the applicant (i.e., Project Director). Clearly say at the top that they are **LETTERS OF COMMITMENT**. Letters must be signed by the partner and attached to the Grants.gov application package using the “Add Attachments” button under SF-424 item #15. **AMS will not accept unsigned letters or letters emailed separately.**

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

4.8 NEGOTIATED INDIRECT COST RATE AGREEMENT (NICRA)

Required if the applicant has a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA). Refer to [section 3.9](#) 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.

5.0 SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND DEADLINES

5.1 ELECTRONIC APPLICATION PACKAGE

Applicants **MUST** apply for this program electronically via Grants.gov. No other submission method is accepted. AMS urges applicants to submit early to the Grants.gov system. The [How to Apply for Grants](#) Grants.gov webpage gives an overview of the application process. This RFA has all the information needed to complete the required application forms and AMS-specific attachments. More information about applying through Grants.gov can be found in [section 5.2](#).

Applicants can find the opportunity under either the Assistance Listing number “**10.177**,” or the RFSP Funding Opportunity Number “**USDA-AMS-TM-RFSP-G-25-0002**”.

5.2 SUBMISSION AND RECEIPT PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS

5.2.1 HOW TO REGISTER TO APPLY

Applicants **MUST** have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), an active SAM.gov account, and a Grants.gov account to submit an application. AMS recommends that applicants start the registration process in these systems immediately to allow enough time to meet application submission deadlines. Registration in these systems collectively may in some cases take **more than four weeks** to complete. The steps below provide details on how to complete each registration.

Individual applicants eligible to apply for this grant can find complete instructions here:

<https://www.grants.gov/applicants/applicant-registration>

Organization applicants can find complete instructions here:

<https://apply07.grants.gov/help/html/help/Register/OrganizationRegistration.htm>

1. Obtain [a Unique Entity Identifier \(UEI\)](#): Entities applying for funding, including renewal funding, must have a UEI from SAM.gov. Applicants must enter the UEI number in the data entry field labeled "Organizational UEI" on the SF-424. Getting a UEI requires validation steps in SAM.gov. Applicants are encouraged to start this process as early as possible, and, if applicable, this includes providing guidance to subapplicants on getting their own UEI.
2. [Register with the System for Award Management \(SAM\)](#): In addition to having a UEI number, organizations applying online through Grants.gov must register with SAM. Current SAM.gov registrants have already been assigned their Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) 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. Organizations must maintain an active SAM registration with current information throughout the application review period and, if you are awarded a grant, during the project period.**

3. [Create a Grants.gov Account](#): The next step in the registration process is to create an account with Grants.gov. Applicants must know their organization's 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 the Authorized Organization Role (AOR).
 - a. Watch the video on how to [Register in Grants.gov](#) and create an institutional profile. Applicants are required to use [Login.gov](#) to sign into [Grants.gov](#). See the [Grants.gov help article](#) for more information on logging in with Login.gov credentials. The Grants.gov validation process also includes a check for an active SAM.gov registration. Applicants without a current SAM.gov registration will be rejected.
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, including 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 to act as an AOR; **this step is often missed, and it is required for valid and timely submissions.**

5.2.2 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's name, address, and UEI 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 via 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 4.0](#) are included correctly in the application package when submitting via Grants.gov
4. *Track via a Workspace:* After successfully submitting a workspace package, Grants.gov automatically assigns a Tracking Number (GRANTXXXXXXX) to the package, which will be listed on the Confirmation page generated after submission.

Applicant Support: Grants.gov provides a [Quick Start Guide for Applicants](#) and additional [training resources, including video tutorials](#). Applicants may also call the 24/7 toll-free support number 1-800-518-4726, or email support@grants.gov. Grants.gov will issue a ticket number that you and Grants.gov can refer to if the issue is not resolved. For questions related to the specific grant opportunity, use the contact information described in [section 1.7](#).

5.3 ADDITIONAL SUBMISSION DETAILS

AMS will not consider any applications received after the deadline. In addition, AMS will not consider any applications submitted by fax, email, or postal mail, or any applications that don't meet the requirements of the RFA, such as not being eligible, having an incomplete application, or missing required documents, etc.). See [AMS' Late Applications, Denials and/or Appeal Procedures Policy](#).

Ensure that all components 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 before the application deadline to ensure all certifications and registrations are met.**

Grants.gov will automatically record the date and times when the application is successfully received by Grants.gov. The applicant AOR will then receive an email acknowledging receipt and a tracking number (GRANTXXXXXXX) from Grants.gov. Applicant AORs will also receive the official date/time stamp and in an email as proof that the application was submitted on time.

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

5.4 SUBMISSION DATE AND TIME

Applicants must submit applications electronically via [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on June 27, 2025. AMS cannot consider applications received after this deadline for funding. See [AMS' Late Applications, Denials and/or Appeal Procedures Policy](#).

5.5 INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW

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

6.0 APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

All applications will go through a review process as described in the following subsections.

6.1 INITIAL REVIEW (INITIAL SCREENING)

Each application is initially reviewed for overall completeness, as well as compliance with eligibility and program requirements described in this RFA. If an application does not meet these requirements, it is removed from consideration. Please see [section 5.3](#) and AMS' [Late Applications, Denials and/or Appeal Procedures](#) for more information.

Applications that will not be considered includes, but are not limited to:

- Those from an organization that does not meet the eligibility criteria.
- Those requesting funding above the award ceiling per the funding project type range.
- Those missing the required documentation.
- Those submitted after the deadline.

6.2 REVIEW CRITERIA (TECHNICAL REVIEW)

Applications that pass the initial review screening are evaluated on their overall merit by a panel of independent peer reviewers. AMS attempts to match reviewers with applications in their areas of expertise. Each reviewer signs a conflict of interest and confidentiality agreement regarding any assigned applications. Peer review panels evaluate assigned applications using instructions prepared by AMS officials. Individual reviewers score applications and discuss as panel members to arrive at a consensus score. AMS then uses the scores as the basis for selecting applications that will go to the administrative review.

Each application that meets the initial qualification screening requirements will be reviewed and scored competitively based on the extent to which it addresses the following criteria:

Alignment and Intent.....25 Points

1. The application identifies specific issues of the local or regional food system and describes the project's objectives and their relevance to those issues.
2. The application describes a strong history of collaboration and engagement among partners to ensure high levels of participation or provides a clear and concise plan for how such engagement will occur.
3. The application describes the project's proposed geographic focus area and why it is the most appropriate place to conduct partnership activities.
4. The application describes how the partnership adds value to the local or regional food system, as opposed to each entity/partner acting independently of one another.
5. The application identifies the intended benefits of the project and specifies how partners will be involved in achieving them (NOT required if the application is solely for a planning or feasibility project).
6. The application complies with all written instructions and requirements described within the RFA and Project Narrative Template.

Technical Merit.....25 Points

1. The application describes technical resources that partners will be contributing to the project's development, implementation, and/or management.
2. The application presents a clear, well-conceived, and suitable Work Plan that describes how the partners will work together to achieve the goals and objectives of the proposed project.
3. The application presents a realistic schedule for implementing and completing the proposed project during the award project period.
4. The application identifies potential challenges to partner recruitment and engagement, and achievement of goals or outcomes, and describes possible strategies to address the challenges.
5. If the applicant proposes to build upon previous partnership activities, the previous lessons learned are clearly incorporated into the proposed project.

Achievability.....15 Points

1. The selected Outcome(s) and Indicator(s) are appropriate for the scale and scope of the proposed project.
2. The application describes a monitoring and evaluation plan that identifies potential feedback mechanisms and metrics that measure the results of project activities (the Outcome Indicator Measurement Plan).
3. The applicant provides a comprehensive plan to distribute the project's results (both positive and negative) electronically and/or in person to target audiences, stakeholders, and interested parties.
4. The application describes how the partnership will be sustained beyond the project's period of performance (without grant funds).

Expertise and Partners.....25 Points

1. The application represents a substantial, effective, and diverse array of relevant partners to accomplish the project's goals and objectives and meet the needs of the intended beneficiaries, including:
 - a. Commitment from the key staff, demonstrated through Letters of Commitment from Partner Organizations.
 - b. The key staff who will be responsible for managing the projects and the individuals (name and title) 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 application demonstrates a commitment from partners to perform specific roles in order to achieve project goals and outcomes.
3. The application demonstrates a commitment to engage potential project beneficiaries as active participants in partnership activities.
4. The application describes plans for coordination, communication, data sharing, and reporting among members of the partnership and other stakeholder groups.

Fiscal Plan and Resources.....10 Points

1. The Budget and Justification provides a clear description for each budget line item and is consistent with the size and scope of the project.
2. The Budget and Justification relates logically to the Project Narrative.
3. The fiscal plan clearly describes the intended use of partner resources (cash or in-kind).
4. The applicant demonstrates its partners' contributions of non-Federal cash or in-kind resources are available for the project as evidenced through the submitted Cost Share Verification Letters.

AMS may assign additional points to the overall score for applications that address program priorities as described in [section 3.6](#), provide geographic coverage/variety to the program, and benefit distressed low-income rural or urban communities with persistent poverty.

6.3 ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW (SELECTION PROCESS AND RISK REVIEW)

AMS will conduct a final administrative evaluation of each review panel's top score applications. In addition to the scores, AMS reviews each application to ensure that potential recommended projects align with the scope of the RFA, allowability of budget items, available funding, geographic coverage/variety (including across program years), and program priorities, as described in [section 3.6](#). AMS staff will work with top-scored applicants to negotiate any revisions if necessary and possible. AMS will also assess an organization's risk to account for the use of Federal funds and monitor the performance associated with these awards using the guidance provided in [section 6.3.1](#).

6.3.1 RISK REVIEW

Prior to making a Federal award, AMS will review the risk of applicants in managing federal funds. AMS will review the applicant's financial stability, the quality of their management systems and standards, current and prior performance managing federal grants, audit reports and findings, the ability to effectively implement Federal award requirements, and make sure that the applicant has policies and procedures in place to manage a federal award. AMS will review the applicant's responsibility and qualification records in SAM.gov, USA Spending, Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS) along with any comments entered by the applicant. For additional information refer to [2 CFR 200.206](#).

If the applicant is found to present significant risk, AMS may choose not to fund the application or place specific conditions ([2 CFR § 200.208](#)) on the award.

AMS will follow government-wide rules that prevent making awards to applicants that have been suspended or debarred from receiving federal awards.

7.0 AWARD NOTICES

7.1 SUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS

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 a reference to the [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#).

7.2 UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS

Unsuccessful applicants will be contacted by AMS via email as soon as possible after the RFSP awards are announced. The unsuccessful applicants will receive anonymous consensus review panel comments regarding their application.

8.0 POST-AWARD REQUIREMENTS AND ADMINISTRATION

8.1 ADMINISTRATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS

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

8.2 REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Recipients must report progress of their project on an annual basis through the electronic submission of performance reports and federal financial reports (SF-425). Final performance and financial reports, and applicable closeout documentation must be submitted after the end of the performance period. Additional detail on reporting and award closeout requirements are included in the [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#). If there are any program or award-specific terms or conditions, those will be identified in the NOA.

8.3 ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF USDA SUPPORT

Proper acknowledgement of your USDA-AMS funding in published solicitations (e.g., for state competitions), presentations, press releases, and other communications is critical for the success of the agency's programs. Grantees must meet the acknowledgement requirements outlined in the applicable [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#). Grantees must meet the acknowledgement requirements outlined in the applicable [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#).

9.0 OTHER INFORMATION

9.1 DEFINITIONS

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.

Local or Regional Food Business or Enterprise 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.

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.
- 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.

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.

9.2 NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

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

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

9.3 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUESTS

The Freedom of Information Act ([FOIA](#)) 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](#) [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 2055-S, Stop 0201, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-0201, Telephone: (202) 302-0650; or email: AMS.FOIA@usda.gov.

9.4 PAPERWORK REDUCTION

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