



Writing Your Project Narrative

Utilizing the Review Criteria to Develop
Your Project Narrative



*Farmers Market Promotion Program
and Local Food Promotion Program*



PROJECT NARRATIVE AND REVIEW CRITERIA

AMS LAMP GRANTS



Executive Summary

Tip: It can be easiest to do this last.

Alignment and Intent



NEED



GOAL



APPROACH

ALIGNMENT TO PROGRAM PURPOSE

Technical Merit



WORKPLAN

MILESTONES

TIMELINE

Achievability



MEASURE



ADAPT



DISSEMINATE

Expertise and Partners

KEY STAFF

COORDINATION



TEAM SKILLS

SUSTAINABILITY

Fiscal Plan and Resources

BUDGET AND JUSTIFICATION



ALLOWABLE COSTS



FMPP and LFPP Project Narrative and Review Criteria Guide

Instructions for Guide

This document is to be used as a guide to help prepare applications for the Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) or Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP). Use this guide as a supportive tool while developing your project narrative. Whenever you need clarification or additional detail, refer directly to the official program Notice of Funding Opportunity or NOFO ([FMPP NOFO](#) or [LFPP NOFO](#)). The program NOFOs are the primary and authoritative source for all program requirements and guidance.

Applicants MUST use the provided [FMLFPP Project Narrative Form](#), complete all sections of the Project Narrative Form, and comply with the specific instructions and format as directed within the NOFO ([FMPP NOFO](#) and [LFPP NOFO](#)).

Applicant Information

The first section of the Project Narrative Form (~2 pages), requests information about the applicant organization and project. The instructions below provide additional guidance about the information required for this section.

1. Applicant Organization

This section must be the same as Box 8 of the SF-424. This represents the legal name and information of the organization applying for the grant. Awards are made to organizations, institutions, or companies and not to individuals. Applicants must meet the eligibility requirements as described in section 2.0 of the NOFO to receive an award.

2. Authorized Organization Representative (AOR)

This section must match Box 21 of the SF-424. The AOR is the individual who is authorized to sign any document on behalf of the organization. This is the member of the organization that authorizes the submission of the application to Grants.gov on behalf of a company organization or institution. It is highly recommended that the AOR be different from the Project Coordinator or person designated by the organization to direct the project or activities being supported by the grant. Ensure the AOR listed has an active Grants.gov role and authority to submit on behalf of the organization.

3. Project Coordinator or Director (PC/PD)

This person should be a different individual than the AOR. Separating these roles helps ensure appropriate oversight and reduces risk of internal control issues within the organization. The Project Coordinator or Director is the individual leading the project and activities supported by the grant.

4. Applicant Entity Type

Select the entity type that best represents the applicant organization. Section 2.1 of the NOFO describes each entity type. If your organization is a State Agency with a Regional Farmers Market Authority, you must provide the regulatory statute(s) that identify your organization as that entity type.

5. Project Activity Category

Select all the activity categories that apply to the activities you are proposing for your project. If an activity is not listed, you may add it under other. Project activities for Turnkey Projects are preselected.

6. Project Title

This section must match Box 15 of the SF-424. Provide a descriptive and concise title that clearly describes the who, what, and intended outcome of the project (e.g. *Developing a Regional Food Hub to Expand Market Access for Small-Scale Producers in Virginia*). The title must summarize the main idea(s) of your project. If selected for funding, the title of your project and the executive summary will be made publicly available on the USDA AMS website. The title should be limited to 200 characters.

7. Grant Application Project Type

Only one project type must be selected. Applicants must review Section 3.3 of the respective NOFO (FMPP or LFPP) to understand the difference between the two program components and their respective project types. Also, you can review the [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\) document](#) for more information. If a project includes activities that fit both project types, select the type that represents the primary purpose of the project. The primary purpose should be determined based on where the majority of the project resources (e.g. budget and effort) are allocated.

8. Requested FMPP or LFPP Funds

This section must match Line 18a of the SF-424. This is the amount of total federal funds the applicant is requesting. The amount of funds requested must not be less than the minimum amount or exceed the maximum award amount. See section 1.4 on the NOFO. Applications requesting funds below the minimum or above the maximum award amount may be deemed ineligible.

9. Cost Share Funds

This section must match Line 18b of the SF-424. Applicants must provide cost sharing (cash or in-kind) in an amount equal to 25% of the total federal portion of the grant to be eligible to receive an award. If cost share contribution exceeds the required amount applicants will be voluntarily committing to it. The excess amount will need to be documented and provided if the project is awarded. Applicants must provide [Letters of Verification for Cost Sharing Funds](#) for each cost sharing contribution. See Section 2.4 on the NOFO for more information on cost-sharing.

10. Does the proposal address the Low Income/Low Access (LI/LA) Priority Consideration as described in Section 3.4 of the NOFO?

Please review section 3.4 of the NOFO's. If requesting low income/low food access priority consideration answer "Yes". If not, answer "No".

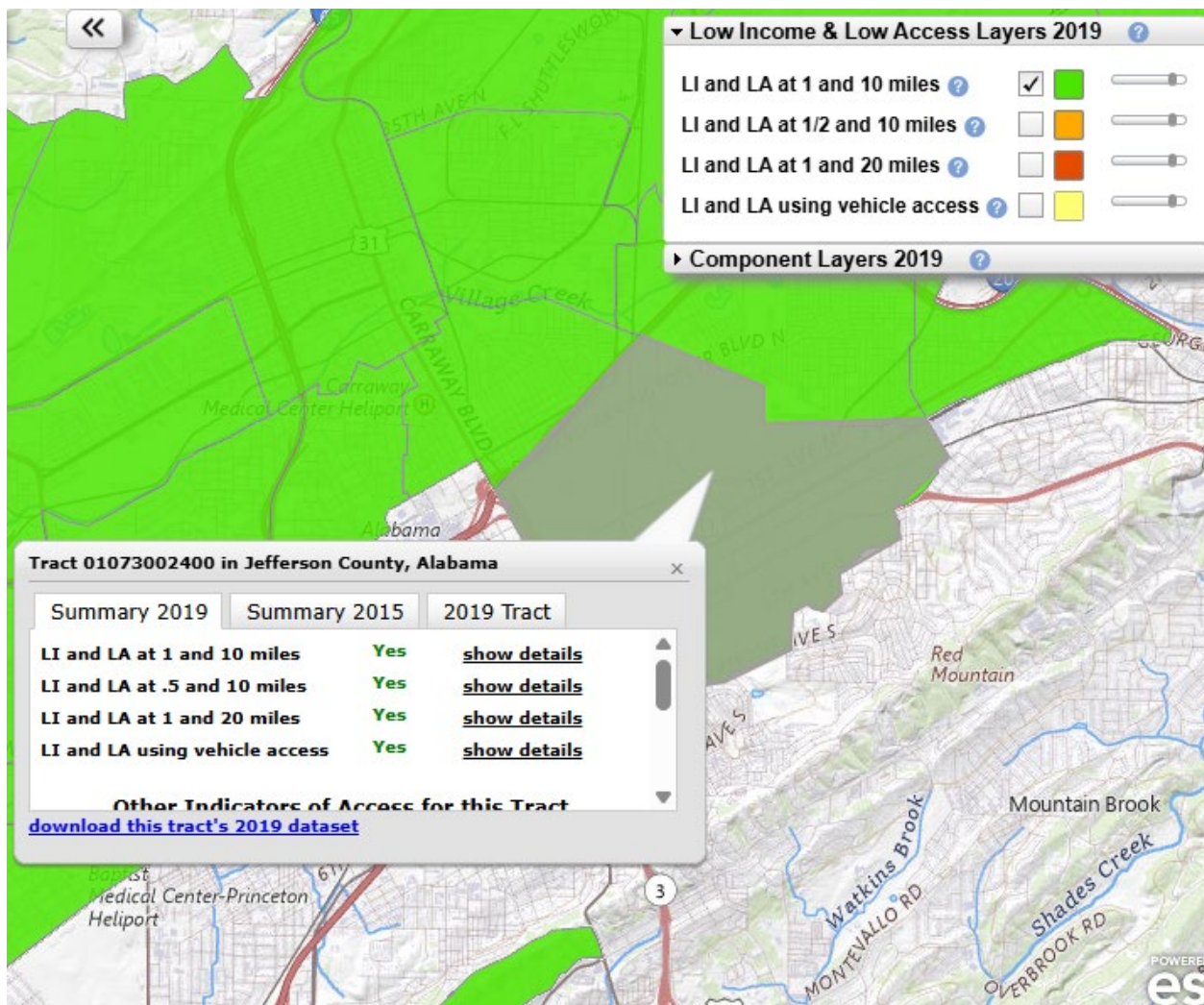
11. Project Implementation Physical Address

In the table provided, enter up to three addresses where this project will be implemented. Priority consideration is given to applicants that are implementing a project in low income/low food access areas. To confirm this,

applicants must include the census tract for the location (s) they are implementing the project. Follow the instruction below to find if a project implementation location falls in a low income, low food access area.

Applicants are not required to meet these priorities to be eligible to apply or receive grant funds.

1. Open the Food Access Research Atlas: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/go-to-the-atlas>.
2. Enter the address(es) where project activities would occur.
3. Zoom in on the map to identify your community. Clicking on your targeted area will produce the census tract and additional information about the locale. In the example below, the highlighted green area qualifies as low income and low access, and the census tract would be 01073002400.
4. If the pop-up window shows “yes” as being low income, low access at any of the four levels, write “yes” in the column titled LI/LA in the table provided. If not, write “No”.
5. Add the associated census tract number to the last column in the table.



Executive Summary

Sum up your plan! The executive summary is the first impression of the project and is an opportunity to capture the reviewer's attention. In 250 words or less, talk about the purpose of the project, what you are trying to achieve, who the intended beneficiaries are, how they will benefit and how you plan to make it all happen! **It might be easiest for this to be the last step.** You must use full sentences (no bullets, use generic language that is easily understood by all audiences, and describe any subawards. The executive summary will be published on the USDA AMS website for public view.

Alignment and Intent

This section is not included in either of the Turnkey Project Narrative Forms.

Problem/Need

Talk about the problem or need you have identified and how your project will address this problem or need. This section should use key words and topics from Section 3.1 of the NOFO. When responding to this section, do not just provide statistics and data related to your project. Instead, explain why this project, executed in this way, would address the problem or need you identified. Data and statistics are helpful, but explaining your project in plain language can make your application easier to understand.

Objectives

Identify and clearly describe at least 3 project objectives (you can add additional objectives if needed). The objectives should be realistic and clearly describe what your organization hopes to accomplish with the project. The number of objectives must be realistic for the length of the grant period – listing more objectives than necessary does not strengthen your application.

Describe the objectives of the project in a way that is specific, measurable and something you can achieve. Throughout the rest of your application, you will be asked to show how your workplan, outcomes, staff and budget align with your chosen objectives, so make sure you are comfortable and confident with what you have written here. It is good to have more than one objective.

Example:

Objective 1: Increase access for at least 40 farmers and 25 agricultural value-added producers to inter-island and regional wholesale markets by expanding the managerial capacity of the food hub with part-time staff.

Beneficiaries and Impacts

Your response to this question must include a detailed description of who you plan to benefit with the proposed project and if possible, how many of these beneficiaries you expect to reach. Have you considered engaging project beneficiaries as active participants in planning and executing your project? If so, describe your plans to do so in this section. Also, describe the expected short- and long-term impacts of this project on these beneficiaries. Specifically, be sure to focus on the benefits to farms, food businesses and/or ranch operations serving local markets.

Think Like a Reviewer!

Review Criteria Checklist: Alignment and Intent

Read through your response to the “Alignment and Intent” section and go through the checklist below to ensure that your responses in this section address every question below.

Did you:

- Clearly describe what the problem is and how you want to solve it?
- Explain how the project will develop, coordinate or expand local and regional food businesses and related food system infrastructure?
- Identify who will benefit from the project and how?
- Present how the project will engage with the intended beneficiaries?
- Describe where the project is happening and why it needs to be there?
- Follow the instructions and requirements in the NOFO (§4.0–§5.0) and Project Narrative Template?

Technical Merit

Workplan

Describe in detail the plan to achieve each of the objectives described in the Alignment and Intent section. This includes:

- Description of each planned activity and how it relates to a specific objective
- Timeline for each activity including projected completion date (must be within the period of performance for your project)
- Resources required to complete each activity
- Project milestones (used to judge progress and success of each activity)
- Responsible staff for completing each activity (if someone is listed here, they must also be listed as Key Staff in the Expertise and Partners section)
 - If you plan to conduct trainings or provide technical assistance, also include how participants will be recruited and how you will help guide program development and delivery.

Previously Funded Projects

The project narrative asks the three questions below:

1. Have you received a past FMPP or LFPP Grant?
2. Have you submitted this project to another Federal grant program?
3. Are you a current RFSP recipient?

If your answer is “yes” to any of the above questions, you must provide the year, funding source and description. If you have an AMS grant, you must also include the AMS agreement number for grants received in the past five (5) years. Describe how the project is different from previous grants or how it supplements the proposed activities; and, if applicable, provide the results of the project. Include lessons learned and how these lessons will be incorporated into this project. Projects that are duplicates of a previous grant will not be selected for funding.

Think Like a Reviewer!

Review Criteria Checklist: Technical Merit

Read through your response to the “Technical Merit” section and go through the checklist below to ensure that your responses in this section address every question below.

Did you:

- Include a work plan with clear objectives, activities, resources and responsible staff?
- Present a realistic schedule for implementing project activities?
- Show that staff and contractors have a reasonable amount of time and resources to get the project done?
- Have measurable tasks to achieve your objectives?
- Share about any previous funding received for similar projects and how you would incorporate lessons you’ve learned from previously funded projects? (if applicable).

Achievability

Outcome Indicator

Six Objectives and associated Indicators that have been developed by USDA AMS are listed within this section of the Project Narrative Form. Look through the list of indicators within each of the six Objectives and choose the ones that best apply to your project. Choose at least one Outcome and Indicator from the list that will be addressed through your project. For each selected Indicator state your estimated target number (you will need to describe how you reached that estimated target number in the following “Outcomes Indicator Measurement” section). If an Outcome or Indicator does not apply, check N/A (Not Applicable).

Outcome Indicator Measurement

For each selected Outcome and Indicator, describe how you determined your estimated target number, and how/when you will evaluate your progress. Also, list any potential challenges to achieving the estimated target numbers and how you would address those challenges.

Please refer to the [FMPP and LFPP Performance Measures Data Collection Guide](#) for information on how to collect data on the outcomes and indicators. The Outcome Indicator Measurement section does not appear in the Turnkey Project Narratives.

Potential Adaptation of Project by Others

Discuss if and how this project can be adapted to other regions, communities, and/or agricultural systems. Describe what benefits and actions others may take in response to the expected project results. Reviewers will be considering if your project can be easily adapted by others when evaluating your proposal. *Note: this section was intentionally removed from the simplified Turnkey Project Narratives and does not need to be completed for Turnkey Project applications.*

Dissemination of Project Results

State how you will spread the word about the results (both positive and negative) of the project. List similar organizations, beneficiaries or other relevant parties that would be interested in your results or implementing a similar project and the methods you plan to use to share this information (in-person, publications, podcasts, etc.)

Note: this section was intentionally removed from the simplified Turnkey Project Narratives and does not need to be completed for Turnkey Project applications.

Think Like a Reviewer!

Review Criteria Checklist: Achievability

Read through your response to the “Achievability” section and go through the checklist below to ensure that your responses in this section address every question below.

Did you:

- Select at least one Outcome and Indicator that align with project objectives?
- Explain how target numbers for Outcome and Indicator(s) were decided?
- Define a way to evaluate and achieve each Outcome and Indicator?
- Describe expected challenges to achieving Indicators and plans to address those challenges?
- Show how the project can be adapted to other communities? (Not applicable to Turnkey projects).
- Explain your plan for how to distribute the project’s results? (Not applicable to Turnkey projects).

Expertise and Partners

Key Staff (Applicant Personnel and External Partner/Collaborators)

List all key project staff, including applicant organization personnel and external project partners and collaborators that comprise the Project Team, their role in the project, their relevant experience, qualifications and past successes in developing and operating projects similar to your proposed project. You must include [Letters of Commitment from Partner and Collaborator Organizations](#) to confirm the information provided in the application and their commitment to the project.

Project Management Plan

Describe your project management plan for coordination, communication, and data sharing and reporting among members of the Project Team and stakeholder groups, including both internal applicant organization personnel and external partners and collaborators.

Within this plan, explain the roles/responsibilities of the project team and how they will contribute to achieving the project’s objectives, activities and outcomes. Your plan should describe who would have day-to-day responsibility for key tasks such as: leadership of the project; monitoring the project’s ongoing progress, preparing reports; communicating with other partners. It should also describe the approach that will be used to monitor and track the progress of the project team.

Project Sustainability

Explain how you will keep the project, its partnerships and collaborations, and the results of the project going after the grant ends and funding is no longer available. Describe the project's plans to ensure high levels of participation, collaboration and engagement among partners and beneficiaries and what work will be done to sustain this after the completion of the project. This could include but is not limited to, continued collaboration with partners, the implementation of new practices, and commitment to continuing to identify and address issues in the community. *Note: this section was intentionally removed from the simplified Turnkey Project Narratives and does not need to be completed for Turnkey Project applications.*

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Review Criteria Checklist: Expertise and Partners

Read through your response to the "Expertise and Partners" section and go through the checklist below to ensure that your responses in this section address every question below.

Did you:

- Include [Letters of Commitment](#) from all project partners and collaborators?
- Explain which key staff will manage the projects?
- Ensure that all key staff listed in your workplan are also listed in the Key Staff section?
- Provide names, job titles, and relevant work experience of all project team staff?
- Include a plan on how to collaborate with external project partners and contractors?
- Describe coordination, communication, data sharing and reporting plans for both the internal project team and external project partners?
- Show how the project and partnerships will continue without grant funds once the grant period is over?

Fiscal Plan and Resources

You must complete the Budget and Justification section and make sure that you have included [Evidence of Critical Resources and Infrastructure](#) (see section 4.8 in the NOFO) if a project is dependent on land, infrastructure, building permits, facilities not already secured, or other resources that are essential for the execution of the proposed project activities.

Applicants are also required to submit the SF-424A Budget information For Non-Construction Programs form along with completing the budget section of the Project Narrative.

Budget and Justification

Note: For more information about filling out your Budget and Justification, refer to the [Budget Toolkit Snapshot](#).

Provide the total cost of the project and the breakdown of project costs by cost categories (personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contractual/subawards, other, and indirect costs). Explain how these costs were determined and how they relate to the Project Objectives, Expected Outcomes and the project work plan.

The budget must show the total cost for the project and describe how you came up with the costs listed in each category. The budget justification must provide enough detail for reviewers to easily understand how costs were determined and how they relate to the project objectives and expected outcomes. The budget must show a relationship between the work you plan to do, and the costs listed in the budget.

You must account for both federal funds and cost share funds in the budget and be specific about the amounts for each category. The cost-share amounts listed in the table (provided within the Project Narrative Form) must match the amounts described in the matching fund letters. The total costs on the budget summary table must match the subtotals in “Requested FMPP or LFPP Funds” (Project Narrative Form page 2: question 8) and “Cost Share funds” (Project Narrative Form page 2: question 9) amounts.

Cost Share

Cost Share funds are required. Applicants must provide a minimum 25% cost share (can be cash or in-kind) of the Federal portion of the grant. You must submit signed [Letters of Verification for Cost Share Funds](#) for each cost share commitment. *Note: Only applicants with a valid Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) can use indirect cost as a source of sharing. Applicants electing to use the 15% de minimis indirect rate may NOT use indirect costs as cost share.*

Think Like a Reviewer!

Review Criteria Checklist: Fiscal Plan and Resources

Read through your response to the “Fiscal Plan and Resources” section and go through the checklist below to ensure that your responses in this section address every question below.

Did you:

- Include a clear and detailed description for each budget line item?
- Explain how the budget is consistent with the size and scope of the project?
- Explain how the budget logically relates to the project narrative?
- Show that you have the critical infrastructure to start and complete the project already and included signed [Evidence of Critical Resources and Infrastructure Letter\(s\)](#)? (if applicable).
- Include signed [Letters of Verification for Cost Share Funds](#) to show that cost-sharing funds or in-kind contributions are available?
- Budget for travel expenses for at least one Key Staff member to attend the AMS Coordinator Meeting (estimated to be around \$1,700 per person)?
- Make sure the responses to question 8 and 9 in the [FMLFPP Project Narrative Form](#) match your budget summary table?

Additional Check: Form Requirements

Did you:

- Use the [FMLFPP Project Narrative Form](#)?
- Use 11-point font, type and single space and not exceed the page limit?
 - **Fifteen (15)** 8.5 x 11 pages (excluding existing Project Narrative form content) for Capacity Building (FMPP), Community Development, Training and Technical Assistance (FMPP), Planning (LFPP), and Implementation (LFPP) Projects.
 - **Five (5)** 8.5 x 11 pages (excluding existing Turnkey Project Narrative form content) for both types of Turnkey Projects.
- Convert your project narrative to a .pdf to submit to Grants.gov? (Handwritten applications or applications in MS Word will not be accepted).