



## Regional Food System Partnership Program 2026 NOFO Summary

### Program Information

**RFSP Purpose:** RFSP supports partnerships that connect public and private resources to plan and develop local or regional food systems. This program focuses on building and strengthening the viability and resilience of the local or regional food economy. RFSP offers *Planning and Design* and *Implementation and Expansion* project types.

**Publication Date:** April 21, 2026

**Due Date:** 11:59 PM Eastern Time on June 5, 2026

**Funding Opportunity Number:** USDA-AMS-TM-RFSP-G-26-0006

**Assistance Listing Number/CFDA:** [10.177](#)

To find grant opportunity, visit [Grants.gov](#) and search by keyword, opportunity number or CFDA.

- Visit the [Program Website](#) for additional information

### Application Package Requirements

- Form SF-424 – Application for Federal Assistance ([Grants.gov](#))
- Form SF-424A – Budget Summary ([Grants.gov](#))
- Project Abstract Summary ([Grants.gov](#))
- [Project Narrative Form](#)
  - Must use required template.
  - Executive Summary shows how project supports RFSP goals and objectives and must not exceed 250 words.
  - Text must not exceed page limit specified in the [NOFO](#).
    - The Project Narrative must be typed and single-spaced, in an 11-point font, and **must not exceed fifteen (15)** 8.5 x 11 pages, excluding pre-existing form content (your form may be up to 30 pages in length when completed: 15 original form pages + 15 pages of applicant content).

- DO NOT modify the margins of the RFSP Project Narrative form or delete or change any text in it. Evaluation points will be deducted if the Project Narrative form is modified.
- The supporting documents (cost share funds letters of verification, letters of commitment from partner organizations and Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement) do not count toward the 15-page limit.
  - Ensure the federal funds requested do not exceed the maximum or minimum award amount.
    - Planning and Design: \$100,000 - \$250,000
    - Implementation and Expansion: \$250,000 - \$1,000,000
  - Ensure the application excludes unallowable costs and activities
- Signed [Letter\(s\) of Verification for Cost Sharing](#) for EACH resource (PDF or MS Word Attachment)
- Signed [Letter\(s\) of Commitment from Partner and Collaborator Organizations](#) (PDF or MS Word Attachment)

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

- Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (PDF Attachment)

## Things to Complete Before Writing Your Proposal

Obtain organization's UEI Number (if you do not already have one)	7-10 business days	<a href="#">UEI Quick Start Guide</a>
Obtain a TIN/EIN (if you do not already have one)	Up to 2 weeks	<a href="#">TIN/EIN Guidance</a>
Establish an active SAM.gov account	Up to 4 weeks	<a href="#">Quick Start Links</a>
Create your GRANTS.gov profile and register your organization	Up to 4 weeks	<a href="#">Register with Grants.gov</a>
AMS Deadline to receive final application and all supporting materials through Grants.gov	June 05, 2026 – 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time	<a href="#">Grants.gov</a>

## Total Program Funds: \$4.71 million

Project Type	Duration (Months)	Start Date	End Date	Minimum Award	Maximum Award
Planning and Design	24	September 30, 2026	September 29, 2028	\$100,000	\$250,000
Implementation and Expansion	36	September 30, 2026	September 29, 2029	\$250,000	\$1,000,000

## Project Types

### Option 1: Planning and Design Projects

Planning and Design projects support partnerships in the early stages of convening, envisioning, goal setting, and identifying strategies for developing local or regional food systems. Specifically, these projects support food system's efforts to build community connections (public and private) that allow a

region to drive the discovery and promotion of collaboration opportunities within the food system. Applicants should seek public and private partners that operate across the regional food economy and can access diverse non-Federal financial and technical resources.

### **Option 2: Implementation and Expansion Projects**

Implementation and Expansion projects support partnerships building on prior or ongoing efforts within a local or regional food system. Partnerships funded in this track will have already completed most or all the activities discussed for Planning and Design projects. Applicants should describe how the goals, objectives, and activities in the application build on previous efforts within the food system.

### **Examples of Eligible and Ineligible Activities**

RFSP partnerships are encouraged to focus on activities not commonly funded under other USDA programs, such as but not limited to value chain coordination, convening multiple types of partners and stakeholders for strategic planning, grant-writing, and program exploration on behalf of partners and entities.

#### **Planning and Design Projects can 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 across the regional food system.
- Conduct feasibility studies and data-driven implementation plans that achieve measurable goals for the partnership's work in developing the regional food system.
- Connecting food value chain entities with partners and funders to collaborate and engage in activities that strengthen 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.
- Developing metrics and benchmarks to measure and evaluate the partnership's early development work for achieving partnership goals.

#### **Implementation and Expansion Projects can include, but are not limited to:**

- Creating value chains where producers, manufacturers, buyers, and other related actors form collaborative, transparent partnerships that share a commitment to operational values and social mission goals.
- Developing systems or processes for ongoing community and business engagement to provide a forum for ideas, concerns, and updates across the regional food system.
- 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.
- Analyzing regional capital needs and gaps and identifying resources to support implementation activities.

#### **Ineligible Activities**

A project is ineligible if it benefits only one agricultural producer, vendor, or individual. For this grant opportunity, applicants must collaborate with others to benefit the larger community. Projects will also be deemed ineligible if they are dependent upon the completion of another project or the receipt of another grant.

This grant opportunity does not support agricultural production related expenses. This includes crop production and the purchase of farm equipment, tools, materials, supplies, and other related costs. It also includes training or other activities related to agricultural production, including harvesting, crop rotation, and planting techniques. For USDA programs that do support production related activities, visit the [USDA Local and Regional Food Systems Resource Guide](#).

**Other Ineligible Activities:**

- Purchasing land for production or for construction of a building or structure.
- Paying legal fees and other costs associated with establishing a business or organization.
- Are to buy general purpose equipment; general purpose equipment can be leased but not leased-to-own or purchased.
- Duplicating activities in a project that has received funding from another Federal award program.
- Providing capital for revolving loan funds or seed equity funds.

**Eligible Applicants – Partnerships**

Only eligible partnerships may apply to RFSP. A partnership must include at least one eligible entity and one or more eligible partners. The application may be submitted by an eligible entity or an eligible partner on behalf of the partnership, and must specify which organization within the partnership is responsible for receiving and managing the award.

Eligible Entities (must include at least one):	Eligible Partners (must include at least one):
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Network or Association</li> <li>▪ Economic Development Corporations</li> <li>▪ Farmer or Rancher Cooperative</li> <li>▪ Food Council</li> <li>▪ Local Governments</li> <li>▪ Majority-Controlled Producer-Based Business Venture</li> <li>▪ Nonprofit Corporations</li> <li>▪ Producer</li> <li>▪ Producer Network or Association</li> <li>▪ Public Benefit Corporations</li> <li>▪ Regional Farmers Market Authority</li> <li>▪ Tribal Governments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Commercial, Federal or Farm Credit System Lending Institution</li> <li>▪ Institutions of Higher Education (IHE)</li> <li>▪ Philanthropic Organization</li> <li>▪ Private Corporation</li> <li>▪ State Agencies or Regional Authority</li> </ul>

**Priority Consideration**

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 above and beyond the cost share requirement can help support the application.
- Serve areas that include distressed low-income rural or urban communities with areas of 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 and apply priority consideration, based on applicant narrative responses, during its administrative review process. AMS may prioritize partnerships or regions which have not received awards in the recent past.

## Subawards

The applicant may use sub-awarding and/or sub-contracting methods with eligible partners via its partnership agreement to complete the proposed project. The applicant may not use the grant to create its own smaller grant program (mini-grant programs) to competitively “re-grant” RFSP funds, or for activities that are not central to the purpose of the project, or for unknown costs.

The recipient may use its cost share funds to offer mini-grants if so desired, as long as they further the project’s purposes and comply with Federal cost share requirements at [2 CFR § 200.306](#).

## Cost Sharing

This funding opportunity requires cost sharing funds from non-Federal sources in the form of cash contributions equal to 25% of the amount of Federal funds being requested.

- [Cost sharing](#) must be in the form of allowable direct or indirect costs and align with the project goals and purposes.
- You cannot use program income (funds generated from the proposed program) as cost sharing.
- 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, or 3rd-party partner(s), or other non-Federal grants.
- Cost sharing contributions cannot be used for RFSP if they are already being used toward satisfying a cost share requirement under any other Federal grant agreement to which the applicant is a party.

If an applicant decides not to request indirect costs in the full amount they are allowed, the applicant can offer that portion as an in-kind contribution. This would not be considered as part of the required 25% cash cost share.

All cost share contributions must be committed or secured at the time an applicant is recommended for an award. An award will not be issued unless all cost share funds over the life of the grant are secured.

## Letters of Commitment

Applicants MUST provide letters of commitment, not just letters of support, from all project partners at the time of application.

AMS has posted a [Partner Organization Template Letter](#) 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
- 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 organizations agree to abide by the management plan contained in the application.

### **Contact Us and Learn More!**

For questions about these grant opportunities, after closely reviewing the [NOFO](#) and [FAQs](#), please email: [IPPGrants@usda.gov](mailto:IPPGrants@usda.gov) for questions related to the Regional Food System Partnership Program.

Visit the [AMS LAMP Grant Toolkits & Application Support Page](#) for more technical assistance resources.

For additional examples of funded grant projects, visit [RFSP Funded Awards](#).

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