



MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF  
**AGRICULTURE  
& COMMERCE**

# Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program (RFSI) Grant

Request for Applications

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Application Due Date: March 15, 2024

at 5:00p.m. CST

Commissioner Andy Gipson

Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce

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# Funding Opportunity Description

## Introduction

The Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce (MDAC) has entered into a cooperative agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to administer the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure (RFSI) Program for the State of Mississippi. This program, funded through Section 1001(b)(4) of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021 (Pub. L. 117— 2), as amended, authorizes the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), to make grants and agreements to maintain and improve food and agricultural supply chain resiliency.

## Purpose

The purpose of this program is to assist states in building resilience in the middle-of-the-supply-chain and strengthening local food systems by creating new revenue streams for producers. The goal of the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program is to create additional and better processing options for local producers across the state's food supply chain.

The State of Mississippi will make subawards in the form of Infrastructure Grants to middle-of-the-supply businesses to create more diverse local and regional market options and create more economic opportunities for communities, allowing them to retain more of the value chain dollar. RFSI investments aim to create a food systems infrastructure to support competitive and profitable market access for domestic farm products.

Through the RFSI Program, the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce (MDAC) will make available over \$5.8 million in funding from USDA that will be sub awarded to eligible entities in the form of Infrastructure Grants and Equipment-Only Grants to middle-of-the-supply-chain businesses. Infrastructure grants will be awarded at the minimum of \$100,000 and a maximum of \$3,000,000. Equipment-Only Grants will be awarded at a minimum of \$10,000 and a maximum of \$100,000.

**Applicants may only apply for one grant (either the Infrastructure Grant or the Equipment-Only Grant). An applicant may not apply for both grants.**

This program aims to:

- Support development of value-added products available to consumers;
- Support proposals that provide fair prices, fair wages and new and safe job opportunities that keep profit in rural communities; and
- Increase diversity in processing options in terms of business model approaches, geography, and availability to underserved communities.

This program is also aligned with USDA's efforts to:

- Ensure equitable access to USDA programs and benefits from USDA-funded projects and support the policies of Executive Order 13985 (Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government).
- Contribute to the resilience of the food and agricultural supply chains through support for diversified, value-added agriculture and support the policies of Executive Order 14017 (executive Order on America's Supply Chains).
- Promote competition in the food system and support policies of Executive Order 14036 (Executive Order on Promoting Competition in the American Economy).
- Implement the Build America, Buy America (BABA) Act. [Guidance on BABA Requirements for USDA award recipients is available here.](#)

RFSI is intended to serve middle-of-the-supply-chain needs to add value and provide more, new, and better markets for locally or regionally produced food. This program is to support food system crops and products meant for human consumption (excluding meat and poultry products, which are funded through other USDA programs).

**Ineligible products include: meat and poultry, wild-caught seafood, exclusively animal feed and forage products, fiber, landscaping products, tobacco, or dietary supplements.**

## Program Description

Infrastructure Grants must be used for the purpose of expanding middle-of-the-food-supply-chain capacity for locally and regionally produced foods and offer more and better market opportunities and new streams of revenue to small and mid-sized agricultural producers, including those who may not have access to value-added opportunities or processing to meet market demand for premium or value-added products, such as underserved producers.

The RFSI program will focus on funding Infrastructure Grant activities that:

- Expand capacity for processing, aggregation, and distribution of agricultural products to create more and better markets for producers;
- Modernize manufacturing, tracking, storage, and information technology systems;
- Enhance worker safety through adoption of new technologies or investment in equipment or facility improvements;
- Improve the capacity of entities to comply with federal, state, and local food safety requirements;
- Improve operations through training opportunities;
- Support construction of a new facility;
- Modernize or expand an existing facility (including expansion and modifications to existing buildings and/or construction of new buildings at existing facilities);
- Construction of wastewater management structures, etc.;
- Modernize processing and manufacturing equipment; and
- Develop, customize, or install equipment that reduces greenhouse gas emissions, increases efficiency in water use, improves air and/or water quality, and/or meets one or more of USDA's climate action goals.

The RFSI program will focus on funding Infrastructure and Equipment-Only Grant projects that:

- Offer family-supporting job quality and treatment/safety of workers;
- Focus on small and medium-sized enterprises that add options and choices for consumers and producers (emphasis on value-added);
- Demonstrate local support for the project;
- Support underserved communities; and
- Are submitted by cooperatives, farmer- and worker-owned enterprises.

## Identified Funding Priorities

After hearing from a number of farmers within the State of Mississippi through outreach sessions and written public comments, it was determined that there is a great need for middle-of-the-supply-chain infrastructure in Mississippi.

The most immediate needs identified by Mississippi farmers, industry and stakeholders were:

- Processing equipment to increase capacity to process agricultural products;
- Post harvest transportation of agricultural products;
- Processing facilities;
- Storage, cold storage warehousing and distribution facilities;
- Traceability systems and quality control measures; and
- Expansion of markets.

In accordance with program guidelines, RFSI funds will support the expanded capacity for the aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesale, and distribution of locally and regionally produces food products, **including specialty crops, dairy, grains, for human consumption, aquaculture, and other food products, excluding meat and poultry.**

The goal of MDAC is to create more and better processing options for local and regional producers across specialty crops, dairy, grain (for food) and other eligible sectors by targeting gaps and opportunities in the pandemic assistance, Food Systems Transportation (FST) programs, and existing USDA grant programs that support the agricultural supply chain.

Priorities will be given to projects that fit the following criteria:

- Expand capacity for processing, aggregation, and distribution of agricultural products to create more and better markets for producers;
- Construct new facilities and expand existing facilities for processing, aggregating, packing, and labeling, transporting, storing (including cold storage and warehousing) and distributing agricultural products that are strategically located near production areas in order to create opportunity for value-added food production;
- Modernize equipment used in the middle-of-the-food-supply-chain activities including post-harvest washing, packing, storing, aggregation, distributing the agricultural products;
- Allow for the purchase of refrigerated trucks to improve food quality and increase shelf-life of products; and
- Modernize manufacturing, tracking, storage, and information technology systems.

The following markets will be considered priority markets for the RFSI Program as identified by farmers, industry, and stakeholders:

- Institutions (Schools, Healthcare facilities, etc.)
- Retailers and Wholesalers
- Food Hubs
- Farmers Markets, including mobile farmers markets
- Online Marketplaces and Delivery Platforms
- Food Banks
- Restaurants

# Eligibility

## Eligible Entities

- Agricultural producers or processors, or groups of agricultural producers and processors.
- Nonprofit organizations operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, distribution of targeted agricultural products.
- For-profit entities operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, or distribution of targeted agricultural products, whose activities are primarily focused for the benefit of local and regional producers, and that meet the eligibility requirements of the SBA small business size standards are eligible.
  - For-profit entities must meet the eligibility requirements of the SBA small business size standards matched to industries described in the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). For more information on these size standards, please visit [SBA's Size Standards webpage](#). For a quick check on whether your business qualifies, please use the [Size Standards Tool](#).
- Local government entities operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, distribution of targeted agricultural products.
- Tribal governments operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, distribution of targeted agricultural products.
- Institutions such as schools, universities, or hospitals bringing producers together to establish cooperative or shared infrastructure or invest in equipment that will benefit multiple producers middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, distribution of targeted agricultural product.
- All applicant businesses and organizations must be domestically owned, and applicants' facilities must be physically located within the State of Mississippi.



## Projects Eligible for Funding

Projects eligible for funding include:

- Expanding processing capacities, including adding product types, increasing production volumes, and supporting new wholesale/retail product lines;
- Modernizing equipment or facilities through upgrades, repairs, or retooling; (e.g., adapting product lines for institutional procurement or adding parallel processing capacity);
- Purchase and installation of specialized equipment, such as processing components, sorting equipment, packing and labeling equipment, or delivery vehicles;
- Modernizing manufacturing, tracking, storage, and information technology systems;
- Enhancing worker safety through adoption of new technologies or investment in equipment or facility improvements;
- Construction of a new facility;
- Increasing packaging and labeling capacities that meet compliance requirements under applicable laws (e.g. sealing, bagging, boxing, labeling, conveying, and product moving equipment);
- Increasing storage space, including cold storage;
- Develop, customize or install climate-smart equipment that reduces greenhouse gas emissions, increases efficiency in water use, improves air and/or water quality, and/or meets one or more of USDA's climate action goals;
- Modernize equipment or facilities to ensure food safety, including associated Hazard, Analysis, and Critical Control Points (HACCP) consultation, plan development and employee training; and
- Training on the use of all equipment purchased under the grant and associated new processes.

Allowable activities or tasks that could be a part of such projects may include:

- Hiring term-limited personnel to assist with project implementation activities;
- Purchasing special purpose equipment: defined in section 8.2 of the [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#). This includes the purchase of special purpose equipment for institutions or others that will benefit multiple producers through middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, distribution of targeted agricultural products;

- Analyzing potential facility upgrades and changes that meet regulatory requirements, obtaining design and/or architecture services, etc. (to the extent these costs are directly related to the project);
- Planning for Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) or other food safety or worker safety measures or equipment recommendations; and
- Upgrades or new facilities for processing specific agricultural products, such as:
  - On-farm post-harvest processing, preservation, and storage/cold storage;
  - Post-harvest cleaning and grading;
  - Aggregator warehouse and storage, including cooperatives;
  - Purchase of freezing equipment, freezer, or cold storage;
  - Processing, canning, preserving and pasteurization;
  - Preparation and packing;
  - Drying, hulling, shelling, and milling; and
  - Cooking, baking, juicing, distilling, fermenting.

## Projects Not Eligible for Funding

The following activities are not eligible for funding:

- Acquiring real property (including land purchases), or any interest therein;
- Projects focused on meat and poultry, wild-caught seafood, exclusively animal feed and forage products, fiber, landscaping products, tobacco, or dietary supplements;
- Activities that have received a Federal award from another Federal award program;
- Claim expenses that have been or will be reimbursed under any Federal, State, or local government funding; and
- Projects which have already received funding from another federal grant or subaward programs may not receive funding for the same activities through an Infrastructure Grant. However, Infrastructure Grants may build on the successes of prior funding, such as the USDA Regional Food Business Centers Business Builder subawards, to fund subsequent activities.

## Grant Application Options

MDAC will award over \$5.8 million in Infrastructure Grants and Equipment-Only Grants. Infrastructure Grants will be awarded at the minimum of \$100,000 and a maximum of \$3,000,000. Equipment-Only Grants will be awarded at a minimum of \$10,000 and a maximum of \$100,000.

**Applicants may only apply for one grant (either the Infrastructure Grant or the Equipment-Only Grant). An applicant may not apply for both grants.**

Applications must address all information requested on the following pages to be considered for funding. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed. Projects will be evaluated and scored based on feasibility and the potential impact they will have on their community and Mississippi's economy. Letters of support are highly recommended but not required.

**The Funds awarded through this program must increase, expand, or replace, and not duplicate, existing activities of the Lead State Agency or its partners.**

## Infrastructure Grants

[Infrastructure Grants](#) will range in value from a minimum award of \$100,000 and a maximum award of \$3,000,000. Funds will be awarded no earlier than [July 1, 2024](#), and projects must be completed by [May 31, 2027](#). Costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both.

## Evidence of Critical Infrastructure

Evidence of Critical Infrastructure is required if critical resources and/or infrastructure are necessary for the completion of the proposed grant project. Applicants must submit evidence that critical resources and infrastructure necessary to support the initiation and completion of a project are in place. Critical resources and infrastructure can be facilities, land, structure, use of

city street/parks, shared-used kitchen, and/or other resources that are essential for the proposed project activities. Land, structures, and other critical resources must be in place and in working condition at the time of application submission.

Applicants are required to submit a letter indicating the critical resources that are necessary for initiation and completion of the project and certify that they are in place and committed prior to the start date of the project using the [Evidence of Critical Resources and Infrastructure Template Letter](#). The letter must be submitted with your application.

## Matching Fund Requirement

Infrastructure Grant recipients are required to contribute 50% of the total proposed project cost as a match to federal funding. This applies to all applicants except those who qualify for the reduced match. For [historically underserved farmers and ranchers](#), or for other businesses that qualify under [SBA categories](#) of small, disadvantaged business, women-owned small business, or veteran-owned small business, the required match funding contribution or cost share is reduced to 25% of the project cost. MDAC will require that applicants self-certify in their Infrastructure Grant applications to be eligible for this reduced match.

In-kind contributions are defined, when used as a cost share or match for a grant, as the value of goods or services provided for the benefit of the grant program, where no funds transferred hands. For example, a partner, such as a tribal community member, may volunteer their professional expertise as a match contribution to the project. These contributions cannot satisfy a cost sharing or matching requirement for this grant program if they are used toward satisfying a match requirement under any other federal grant agreement to which the applicant is a party.

Indirect costs may count toward the Infrastructure Grant applicant's match.

Program income or any other federal funds are ineligible sources of match or cost share.

**All matching contributions must be committed or secured at the time an applicant is recommended for an award.**

Each application must include the total amount of match and how it will specifically align with their requested funding. Additionally, applicants must submit one match verification letter for each cash or in-kind resource signed by the matching organization using the Match Verification Template Letter on the MDAC website. Signed [Match Verification Letters](#) must be submitted with your application.

## Indirect and Direct Costs

Indirect costs (also known as “facilities and administrative costs”) defined at 2 C.F.R. § 200.1 are 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. Refer to 2 C.F.R. §§ 200.413 and 414 for additional information on determining if costs charged to the award are direct or indirect.

Direct costs are costs that can be identified specifically with a particular award, project or program, service, or other organizational activity or that can be directly assigned to such an activity relatively easily with a high degree of accuracy. Typically, direct costs include, but are not limited to, compensation of employees who work directly on the award to include salaries and fringe benefits, travel, equipment, and supplies directly benefiting the grant supported project or program.

The salaries of administrative and clerical staff should typically be treated as indirect costs. However, charging these costs as direct costs may be appropriate where all the following conditions are met:

- administrative or clerical services are integral to a project or activity;
- individuals involved can be specifically identified with the project or activity;
- such costs are explicitly included in the budget or have the prior written approval of the Federal awarding agency; and

- the costs are not also recovered as indirect costs.

As stated in the regulations ([2 C.F.R. §§ 200.413](#) and [414](#)), any non-Federal entity that has never received a negotiated indirect cost rate, except State and Local Government and Indian Tribe Indirect Cost Proposals, may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10 percent of modified total direct costs (MTDC) which may be used indefinitely. No documentation is required to justify the 10% de minimis indirect cost rate. As described in [2 C.F.R. § 200.403](#), costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both. If chosen, this methodology once elected must be used consistently for all Federal awards until such time as a recipient chooses to negotiate for a rate, which the recipient may apply to do at any time, and which would be applicable to future federal grant awards.

All entities who elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10 percent must use the MTDC as the base. MTDC are defined in [2 C.F.R. § 200.1](#) as all direct salaries and wages, applicable fringe benefits, materials and supplies, services, travel, and up to the first \$25,000 of each Infrastructure Grant (regardless of the period of performance of the Infrastructure Grants 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 Infrastructure Grant in excess of \$25,000. Other items may be excluded only when necessary to avoid a serious inequity in the distribution of indirect costs, and with the approval of the cognizant agency for indirect costs.

## Adherence to Federal Environmental Laws and Regulations

All activities funded under this RFA must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and related applicable agency regulations and instructions, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), the Endangered Species Act (ESA), other laws and regulations as outlined therein, and any applicable state, local, or tribal laws. A review for NEPA compliance is required prior to the award of grant funds. If selected for an award, applicants must provide all requested information to support compliance with NEPA, NHPA, ESA, and all other federal environmental laws and regulations.

**Resource:** [A Citizen's Guide to NEPA \(doe.gov\)](#) is a relatively short guide that provides an overview of NEPA requirements.

## Build America, Buy America (BABA)

Any public infrastructure project funded under RFSI must coordinate with AMS to ensure adherence to BABA guidance. For such projects, the recipient must comply with the Buy America Sourcing requirements outlined in the Build America, Buy America (BABA) provisions of the [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act](#).

**For-Profit Entities:** BABA is *not applicable to for-profit entities* (either prime or subrecipient), particularly for infrastructure projects. AMS will review facilities owned by public entities to determine whether BABA requirements apply, following USDA guidance to exempt *de minimis* grant awards and other inapplicable activities. All other Infrastructure Grant entities that surpass the \$250,000 threshold of applicable procurement costs must adhere to BABA.

**Small Grants Waiver:** The small grants waiver will apply to awards with total federal funding below the Simplified Acquisition Threshold, which is currently set at \$250,000. BABA is not applicable to Equipment Only Grants as they do not surpass this threshold of \$250,000.

**Resource:** 2 CFR Part 184 - BUY AMERICA PREFERENCES FOR INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS: <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/part-184>

## Simplified Equipment-Only Grants

[Simplified Equipment-Only Grants](#) will range in value from a minimum award of \$10,000 and a maximum award of \$100,000 and do not require cost sharing or matching. The Simplified Equipment-Only Grant is a fixed price grant, meaning it will fund only equipment purchases (and not associated facility upgrades, staffing, or other costs), and the amount awarded will be equal to the cost of the equipment up to \$100,000. Funds will be awarded no earlier than [July 1, 2024](#), and projects must be completed no later than [January 30, 2026](#)

## Equipment Cost Documentation

Simplified Equipment-Only Grant applicants must submit documentation to substantiate the cost of each piece of equipment listed on their application. Documentation can include contracts, catalog pricing, or binding quotes provided by licensed commercial entities. The cost of delivery and installation can be covered by the grant if they are listed in the official bid. When soliciting bids, please make sure they will be honored at the time of the grant award which will be no earlier than [July 1, 2024](#).



## Application Process

The application window will be open from [January 8, 2024 to March 15, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. CST](#), to give applicants a sufficient amount of time to develop their projects. During the application window, MDAC will conduct statewide outreach to promote the grant opportunity. MDAC staff are available to help answer questions about the application requirements but cannot assist in the writing of project applications.

**Completed applications and additional required documents must be submitted electronically to [rfsi@mdac.ms.gov](mailto:rfsi@mdac.ms.gov).**

## Competitive Review Process

RFSI program grants will be awarded through a competitive review process. Once the application window closes, MDAC will conduct an internal review of all applications to ensure projects meet the requirements of the RFSI program.

An External Review Committee will score each application based on the appropriate project evaluation rubric provided by MDAC. This will be the same rubric that is included in this document below for transparency.

**MDAC will submit its award recommendations to the USDA for review and final approval by a USDA Review Board. Funds will be awarded no earlier than [July 1, 2024](#).**

# Rubric

Criteria	Maximum Points	Points Received
<b>Project Needs</b>		
Does the project address a need in the local food supply chain?	10	
Does the project increase capacity in the middle-of-the-supply-chain for local food products?	10	
Does the project increase economic viability of local producers and processors?	10	
<b>Feasibility</b>		
Does the project present a realistic schedule of implementation?	10	
Is the project outcome realistic to the total investment?	10	
Is the budget consistent with the size and scope of the project?	10	
<b>Distressed Community Index</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 points = Distressed (score &gt; 80)</li> <li>• 8 points = At Risk (score 79-60)</li> <li>• 6 points = Mid-tier (score 59-40)</li> <li>• 4 points = Comfortable (score 39-20)</li> <li>• 2 points = Profitable (score &lt; 19)</li> </ul>	10	
<b>Historically Underserved Status</b>		
Does the application benefit one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historically underserved farmer or rancher</li> <li>• New and beginning farmer.</li> <li>• Veteran producer/processor.</li> <li>• Other middle-of-the-supply-chain business owned by socially disadvantaged individuals as defined by the Small Business Administration</li> </ul>	10	
<b>External Support/ Impact</b>		
Is there support in the community/ local level for this project? (Please note, letters of support are highly recommended but not required)	10	
Does the project impact local producers, market outlets, etc.?	10	
<b>Review Total</b>	100	

\*Final decisions for award recipients will be made by USDA\*

# Grant Project Expectations and Reporting

Grant recipients will be expected to carry out their project, maintain clear and consistent communication with MDAC, keep detailed records, and report progress in a timely manner. Quarterly and Final reports are contractual requirements as part of the grant program.

**If selected, each grant recipient must obtain a [Unique Entity ID \(UEI\)](#) before being awarded. A link to a [Quick Start Guide for Getting a Unique Entity ID](#) can be found here and on the MDAC Website.**

## Quarterly Reports

<b>QUARTERLY REPORT:</b>	<b>DUE DATE:</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> Quarterly Report	January 30, 2025
2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarterly Report	April 30, 2025
3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarterly Report	July 30, 2025
4 <sup>th</sup> Quarterly Report	October 30, 2025
5 <sup>th</sup> Quarterly Report	January 30, 2026
(Equipment Grants Completed)	
6 <sup>th</sup> Quarterly Report	April 30, 2026
(Equipment Grant Final Report)	
7 <sup>th</sup> Quarterly Report	July 30, 2026
8 <sup>th</sup> Quarterly Report	October 30, 2026
9 <sup>th</sup> Quarterly Report	January 30, 2027
10 <sup>th</sup> Quarterly Report	April 30, 2027
Final Report (Infrastructure Grant)	July 1, 2027

## Final Report

A final report is required after the completion of the grant project. Final reports summarize the project's activities and evaluate the project's ability to meet the desired objectives and outcomes. For Infrastructure Grant projects, the final report is due [July 1, 2027](#). For Simplified Equipment-Only Grant projects, the final report is due [90 days after project completion or April 30, 2026 \(whichever comes first\)](#).

## Award Payment

Both the Infrastructure Grants and Simplified Equipment-Only Grants are prioritized as reimbursement grants. Advanced payments will be made available upon request and in accordance to [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#).

Invoices can only include expenses already paid for by the grant recipient. Grant recipients will be required to submit receipts for all purchases as proof of payment.

RFSI Program Coordinator

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# Definitions

**Beginning Farmer or Rancher** is an individual or entity that has not operated a farm or ranch for more than 10 years and substantially participates in the operation.

**Cooperatives:** 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.

**Critical Resources:** Critical resources and infrastructure can be facilities, land, structure, use of city street/parks, shared-used kitchen, and/or other resources that are essential for the proposed project activities.

**Domestically owned:** An entity organized in the United States under the law of the State, the states, or under Tribal jurisdiction where the entity operates, and a majority of the entity is owned by US citizens.

**Food Access Considerations:** Distinct cultural markets, marginalized communities, or defined by USDA as low-income low access.

**Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP):** HACCP provides a framework for establishments to conduct science-based process controls that can be validated as effective in eliminating, preventing, or reducing to an acceptable level the food safety hazards that are reasonably likely to occur in an official establishment's particular production processes.

**Historically Underserved Farmer or Rancher:** Four groups are defined by USDA as "Historically Underserved," including farmers or ranchers who are: Beginning; Socially Disadvantaged; Veterans; and Limited Resource as described at "[Historically Underserved Farmers and Ranchers](#)" | [Natural Resources Conservation Service \(usda.gov\)](#).

**Infrastructure Grant recipients:** RFSI subaward recipients who are awarded Infrastructure Grants by the Lead State Agency, who is the primary recipient.

**Institutions:** These include organizations such schools (K-12; colleges/universities), hospitals, food banks, gleaners, food rescue, workplace cafeterias, prisons, and care centers (senior, preschools).

**Intermediaries:** Includes aggregators, distributors, food hubs, brokers, auction houses, and wholesale.

**Mid-Size Producers:** USDA defines small family farms as those with a Gross Cash Farm Income (GCFI) of less than \$350,000; mid-size farms have a GCFI of \$350,000 to \$999,999.

**Lead State Agency:** Governmental agency within the State or Territory which is coordinating the application. The Lead State Agency must be the governmental agencies, commissions, or departments that is responsible for agriculture within the State or Territory and with whom AMS has entered an RFSI cooperative agreement.

**Nonprofit Corporations:** Any organization or institution, including nonprofits with State or IRS 501 (c) status and accredited institutions of higher education, where no part of the organization or institution's net earnings inure to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual.

**Retail:** Includes businesses such supermarkets, restaurants and caterers, and direct and other to retail markets (food cooperatives, small independent grocers, corner stores).

**Small Disadvantaged Business:** A business that is small according to SBA's size standards for its business type and that is 51% or more owned and controlled by one or more disadvantaged persons. The disadvantaged person or persons must be socially disadvantaged and economically disadvantaged. For the purposes of this designation, disadvantaged persons is defined per [eCFR :: 13 CFR 124.103 -- "Who is socially disadvantaged?"](#) as "Those who have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice or cultural bias within American society because of their identities as members of groups and without regard to their individual qualities. The social

disadvantage must stem from circumstances beyond their control.” See ["Small Disadvantaged Business" \(sba.gov\)](#) for more information.

**Tribal Entities:** Tribal Entities is expansive and includes all entities falling under the eligible legal structures, including but not limited to: tribal owned corporations, intertribal non-profits and associations, Alaska Native Corporations, Native entities within the State of Alaska recognized by and eligible to receive services from the U.S. Department of the Interior’s Bureau of Indian Affairs, Native Hawaiian organizations including Homestead Associations, State recognized tribes/non-profits, and individually-owned Native American entities

**Tribe:** means the term as defined in the Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act of 1994 (Public Law 103-454; 108 Stat. 4791, 4792)

**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.
- 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.

**Veteran Farmer or Rancher:** is a producer who served in the United States Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, or Coast Guard, including the reserve component thereof, was released from

service under conditions other than dishonorable, and has not operated a farm or ranch or has operated a farm or ranch for no more than 10 years or who first obtained status as a veteran during the most recent 10-year period.

**Veteran-Owned Small Business:** A small business, as defined by the SBA size standard for its business type that has no less than 51% of the business owned and controlled by one or more veterans. For those veterans who are permanently and totally disabled and unable to manage the daily business operations of their business, their business may still qualify if their spouse or appointed, permanent caregiver is assisting in that management. See "[Veteran contracting assistance programs](#)" ([sba.gov](#)) for more information.

**Women-Owned Small Business:** A small business according to SBA size standards for its business type that is at least 51% owned and controlled by women who are U.S. citizens; and have women manage day-to-day operations who also make long-term decisions. See "[Women-Owned Small Business Federal Contract program](#)" ([sba.gov](#)) for more information.

## Equal Opportunity 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, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, 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 the 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](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

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

## Freedom of Information Act Request

The [Freedom of Information Act of 1966 \(5 U.S.C. § 552\)](#) (FOIA) described at [“FOIA.gov - Freedom of Information Act: Learn”](#) and the [Privacy Act of 1974 \(5 U.S.C. § 552a\)](#), as implemented by USDA’s regulations [\(7 C.F.R. Part 1, Subpart A\)](#), govern the release or withholding of information to the public in connection with this Federal award. The release of information under these laws and regulations applies only to records held by AMS and imposes no requirement on the recipient or any subrecipient to permit or deny public access to their records.

FOIA requests for records relating to this Federal award may be directed to USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service, FOIA/PA Officer, Room 1671-S, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-0273, Telephone: (202) 302-0650; or email: [AMS.FOIA@usda.gov](mailto:AMS.FOIA@usda.gov).

## 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 0503-0028. 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.

## Equity and Trust

In alignment with E.O. 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government, and the E.O. 13175, Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments, the USDA Regional Food Center program takes a comprehensive approach to advancing equity for all, including people of color and others who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality, and meeting a Federal trust responsibility to advance programming that recognizes tribal sovereignty, policies, and standards.

