



**STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE**

ANDY GIPSON
COMMISSIONER

PRESS RELEASE

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\$5.8 Million Grant Opportunity Deadline Approaching to Strengthen Local Food Supply Chain

JACKSON, Miss. – The Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce (MDAC) 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. Through the RFSI Program, MDAC will make available more than \$5.8 million in funding from USDA to build resilience in the middle-of-the-supply-chain and strengthen local food systems. The deadline for applications is March 15, 2024.

The purpose of the RFSI 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.

MDAC will fund projects that expand capacity for processing, aggregation, and distribution of agricultural products; construct and expand infrastructure facilities; modernize equipment; purchase refrigerated trucks; and implement new technology systems. Eligible foods under the USDA grant guidelines include specialty crops, dairy, grains for human consumption, aquaculture, and other food products. Meat and poultry, wild-caught seafood, exclusively animal feed and forage products, fiber, landscaping products, tobacco, and dietary supplements are excluded under the USDA grant guidelines.

RFSI funds will be awarded as Infrastructure Grants or 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. Infrastructure Grants require a 50% match contribution to match federal funds. Historically underserved farmers and ranchers and other qualifying socially disadvantaged businesses are required to contribute a reduced 25% match. Equipment-Only Grants do not require a match.

Entities eligible to apply include agricultural producers or processors; institutions such as schools, universities or hospitals; and for-profit entities, nonprofit entities, local governments and tribal governments operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities. Priority will be given to projects that benefit

underserved farmers and ranchers; new and beginning farmers or ranchers; veteran producers; and processors owned by socially disadvantaged individuals. All applicant businesses and organizations must be domestically owned, and applicants' facilities must be physically located within Mississippi.

The deadline to apply for RFSI's Infrastructure Grant or Equipment-Only Grant is March 15, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. CST. All completed applications must be electronically submitted to rfsi@mdac.ms.gov. Visit <https://www.mdac.ms.gov/rfsi/> to view the Request for Applications, download applications and obtain additional information about the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program.

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