Agricultural Marketing Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

# Specialty Crop Multi-State Program

## Fiscal Year 2026 Notice of Funding Opportunity

**Funding Opportunity Number:** USDA-AMS-TM-SCMP-G-26-0020

IMPORTANT UPDATE- The application deadlines have been extended. Please refer to pages 4, 7, and 24 for revised submission deadlines. All applicants should follow the updated dates provided in this version of the NOFO.

**Publication Date: August 14, 2026**

**Application Due Date (Multi-State Partners to Participating States): 5:00 PM Eastern time on October 16, 2026**

**Application Due Date (Participating States and Entities in Nonparticipating States to AMS): 11:59 PM Eastern Time on December 4, 2026**

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## 1.0 BASIC INFORMATION

**Federal Agency:** Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)

**Funding Opportunity Title**: Specialty Crop Multi-State Program (SCMP) – Farm Bill

**Announcement Type**: Initial

**Funding Opportunity Number:** USDA-AMS-TM-SCMP-G-26-0020

**Assistance Listing Number:** 10.170

**Type of Federal Assistance:** *Grant Agreements* will be used to provide federal awards to successful applicants.

**Type of Application:** *New applications* will be evaluated competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in ***section 6.0 Application Review Information***.

**Application Deadline:** The application deadline for Multi-State Partners to Participating States is 5:00 PM Eastern time on **October 16**, 2026. The application deadline for Participating States and Entities in Nonparticipating States to AMS is 11:59 PM Eastern Time on **December 4**, 2026.

Applications received after these deadlines will not be considered for funding.

### 1.1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), requests applications for the fiscal year (FY) 2026 Specialty Crop Multi-State Program (SCMP). AMS will competitively award funds to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through collaborative, multi-state projects that address the following regional or national level specialty crop issues: food safety; plant pests and disease; research; crop-specific projects addressing common issues; and marketing and promotion.

Approximately $14.3 million is available to fund applications under this solicitation. In the last application cycle in FY 2023, AMS received 88 applications and was able to fund 11 (13%) of the applications.

This announcement identifies the eligibility criteria for SCMP projects and applicants, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for a SCMP grant. 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 described in section ***6.0 Application Review Information***.

### 1.2 2026 HIGHLIGHTS AND CHANGES

Below are highlights of major changes to the program since the last program solicitation in FY23:

- This Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) (formerly known as a Request for Applications, or RFA) was reorganized following the changes to the Uniform Guidance, Appendix I to Part 200, Title 2. The reorganization lists basic program information upfront and the application submission requirements at the end.

- The NOFO makes administrative updates for FY26 and removes language that:
    - Encourages applications that "…promotes climate-resilient landscapes and rural economic systems, including tools to support agriculture, forests, grazing lands, and rural communities."
    - Indicates applicants should "consider including goals and activities related to mitigating or adapting to climate change in their project's design and implementation...".
- The AMS General Terms and Condition(AMS GT&C) have been updated to reflect changes to the Uniform Guidance (2 CFR Part 200) and with the USDA General Terms and Conditions (USDA GT&C) for Federal Awards that were published on December 31, 2025. Both sets of General Terms and Conditions set out requirements for recipients.
    - AMS' General Terms and Conditions provide 2 CFR Part 200 and USDA GT&C citations to aid recipients on requirements.
    - Specific AMS updates reflecting 2024 Uniform Guidance updates include those to section ***6.3.1 Risk Review***, ***3.5 Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities ,*** and ***8.1 Administrative and National Policy Requirements***, as included in the AMS and USDA T&Cs.
- This year's applications must include a mandatory cost share from non-Federal sources in the form of cash and/or in-kind contributions, equal to 25% of the amount of Federal funds being requested. See sections ***2.4 Cost Sharing*** and ***section 4.5 Letters of Verification for Cost Sharing Funds*** for additional guidance.
- AMS also made minor updates to streamline review criteria.

## 1.3 AVAILABLE FUNDING

**Anticipated Available Funding**: Approximately $14.3 million. Enactment of future legislation may affect the availability or levels of funding for this program. There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application, to guarantee minimum funding levels, or to make a specific number of awards.

**Cost Share Requirement**: A cost share is required, from non-Federal sources in the form of cash and/or in-kind contributions, equal to 25% of the amount of Federal funds being requested. This cost share requirement applies to each project, whether funded through a participating State or through direct application to AMS. There is no cost share requirement for State costs to manage the program as a Participating State.

## 1.4 FEDERAL AWARD PERIOD DURATION AND SIZE

AMS expects applicants to complete their projects within the required performance period of the grant. 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."

Applicants may not request less than or more than the respective minimum/maximum amounts. Applicants must justify the requested funding amounts within the Project Narrative.

| Project types | Award Period | Start Date | End Date | Minimum award | Maximum award |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| All Project Area Types | 3 years | September 30, 2026* | September 29, 2029* | $250,000 | $1,000,000 |

*Dates are approximate. Start dates are set at the time of the award.

## 1.5 TIPS FOR APPLICANTS

- **To submit your application electronically using 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 the registration as early as possible to meet all deadlines. See ***section 5.0 Submission Requirements and Deadlines*** for more information.
- **Review General Terms and Conditions:**
  - Review the AMS GT&C to understand allowable and unallowable costs.
  - Review the USDA GT&C.
- **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 ($, %, &, *, 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-protect files.
  - Accept all tracked changes in documents 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 AND SUBMIT GRANTS.GOV REQUIRED ELEMENTS

| Required Action | Timing to Obtain/Submit |
|---|---|
| AMS Deadline to receive final application and all supporting materials through Grants.Gov | **December 4**, 2026 – 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 NOFO in its entirety, applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact the SCMP staff by e-mail with questions about the grant program at sagpgrants@usda.gov.

AMS provides resources and information on the SCMP website that may be helpful to applicants, including webinar information, descriptions of funded projects, and required application forms. AMS staff are available to provide timely technical assistance. Staff cannot provide feedback on the merits of an application.

**Specialty Crop Multi-State Program**
USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 1510-S South Building
Stop 0264
Washington, DC 20250-0264
sagpgrants@usda.gov

### 1.7.2 GRANTS.GOV QUESTIONS

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

### 1.7.3 STAKEHOLDER INPUT

AMS seeks comments about this Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). AMS will consider the comments in developing the next NOFO for the program. Written comments may be submitted to: AMSGrants@usda.gov. This e-mail address is intended only for receiving comments regarding this NOFO and not for requesting information or forms. In your email subject line, please state that you are commenting on the **Specialty Crop Multi-State Program NOFO**.

## 2.0 ELIGIBILITY

### 2.1 ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

All applicants must be domestic entities owned, operated, and located within the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the United States Virgin Islands, or the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Eligible applicants include:

| Entity Type | Description |
|---|---|
| **Participating States** | State Departments of Agriculture that elect to submit proposals to AMS on behalf of interested entities as well as oversee the administration of awarded agreements.<br><br>Note: AMS recognizes that some States may not have the resources for SCMP administration or have additional restrictions or requirements related to project costs, administration, or activities. Participating States may use Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) administrative funds to offset costs related to SCMP pre- and post-award activities. |
| **Nonparticipating States** | State Departments of Agriculture that do not elect to submit proposals to AMS on behalf of interested entities and will not oversee the administration of awarded agreements. |
| **Entities in Nonparticipating States** | Local governments, Indian tribes, institutions of higher education, or nonprofit organizations residing in Nonparticipating States. Entities located in a Nonparticipating State would apply directly to AMS or through the most relevant participating state |

- Entities residing in a participating state must apply through their State Department of Agriculture. Entities residing in a participating state are ineligible to apply directly to AMS.
- Entities in a non-participating state may apply to AMS directly or choose to contact the most relevant participating state to apply on behalf of the entity.
- Partnerships must include two or more states/territories.
    - The term "State," when used in this NOFO, is as it is defined in the statute ("State means the several States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the United States Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.").

## 2.2 PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS

Engagement with partners and collaborators strengthens SCMP projects. Partners and collaborators may come from private or public, for-profit or nonprofit entities. They may be subrecipients of project funding, and contractors, or may be contributing effort as an in-kind cost share or donating time to the project.

- A *partner* is in a relationship involving close cooperation with the applicant and shares responsibilities in the management of the project.
- A collaborator is a person or an organization that cooperates with the applicant in the conduct of the project and is not immediately connected to the management of the project.

Applicants must disclose in writing any potential conflicts of interest to the USDA awarding agency or pass-through entity, including organizational conflicts of interest relating to relationships with a parent company, affiliate, or subsidiary organization, shared or overlapping governance structure, or other relationship between or among the applicant and its partners and collaborators. The relationships must follow 2 CFR 400.2(b) and may be subject to AMS review and approval. See also 2 CFR § 200.112.

Regardless of whether there is a financial subcontract or subaward relationship, applications must show evidence of existing community or industry engagement (see *section **4.6 Letters of Commitment from Partner and Collaborator Organizations***).

Applications should demonstrate a commitment to engage potential project beneficiaries as active participants.

## 2.3 BENEFIT MORE THAN ONE PRODUCT OR ORGANIZATION

Applications should describe how the project potentially affects and produces measurable outcomes for the specialty crop industry and/or the public rather than a single organization, institution, or individual.

AMS will not award grant funds for projects whose products or services promote or provide profit that solely benefits a single organization, institution, or individual. In addition, recipients and subrecipients cannot use grant funds to compete unfairly with companies that provide equivalent products or services. Single organizations, institutions, and individuals are encouraged to participate as project partners.

The following are some examples of acceptable and unacceptable projects:

| Acceptable Projects | Unacceptable projects |
|---|---|
| A non-profit organization requests funds to demonstrate the viability of organic small fruit production and partners with Cooperative Extension to publicize the working model of diversification to other regional growers. | A company requests grant funds to purchase starter plants or equipment used to plant, cultivate, and grow a specialty crop to make a profit or to expand production of a single business or organization. |

| Acceptable Projects | Unacceptable projects |
|---|---|
| A single farmer implements food safety practices or models on his/her property to meet food safety requirements and conducts a field day and training services to encourage other small family farmers to adopt the methods. | A single specialty crop organization requests grant funds to market its organization so that it can increase its membership. |

## 2.4 COST SHARING

### 2.4.1 APPLICABILITY OF COST SHARE REQUIREMENTS

A participating state that applies to AMS to execute and administer a subaward competition is not subject to the cost share requirement. However, the participating state must ensure that each subaward application meets the required cost share from non-Federal sources in the form of cash and/or in-kind contributions, equal to 25% of the Federal funds being requested, *including subawards that the state intends to make to other state entities*. For applicants applying directly to AMS without a participating state as intermediary (non-participating states), the 25% cost share requirements apply directly to the applicant. All applicants must include the required cost share documentation as described in ***section 4.5 Letters of Verification for Cost Sharing Funds***.

### 2.4.2 COST SHARE REQUIREMENTS

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

Cash contributions are generally defined as actual monetary funds (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 will be 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).

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. There is no competitive advantage for an applicant to provide a cost share that exceeds the required amount. If the project is selected for funding, any exceeding amount will be considered voluntary and must be documented and secured at the time an applicant is recommended for the award.

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.

All cost sharing 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 sharing funds over the life of the grant are secured. Additional anticipated cost sharing funds not in place by the time the project starts cannot be counted toward the cost sharing requirement.

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.

Indirect costs may be counted only as in-kind contribution and may not be used to meet the required cash cost share contribution (see ***section 3.6 Indirect Costs***).

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.

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 SCMP Project Narrative (see ***section 4.4 Project Narrative)Error! Reference source not found.***. Additionally, a pplicants must submit signed letter(s) verifying the cost share for EACH cash and in-kind resource (see ***section 4.5 Letters of Verification for Cost Sharing Funds***).

# 3.0 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

## 3.1 LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Legislative authority is provided in section 101 of the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 (7 U.S.C. 1621 note) as amended.

## 3.2 PURPOSE

The SCMP supports collaborative multi-state partnerships to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through competitively-funded projects. A multi-state partnership is a project that implements activities with measurable outcomes that benefit specialty crops growers from two or more States. The focus is to address regional or national level specialty crop issues, including, but not limited to, food safety, plant pests and disease, research, crop-specific projects addressing common issues, and marketing and promotion. Projects must enhance the competitiveness of State grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets.

### 3.2.1 DEFINITION OF SPECIALTY CROPS

Specialty crops are fruits and vegetables, dried fruits, tree nuts, horticulture, and nursery crops (including floriculture). See the SCBGP website for a definition of specialty crops and processed products, including a list of eligible specialty crops and ineligible commodities that is applicable to this NOFO.

## 3.3 PROJECT AREA TYPES

Multi-state partners must develop projects that bring together teams for solutions to practical problems that cross State boundaries and address the needs of specialty crop growers in the areas described below. Projects should **lead to measurable benefits** for specialty crop growers, **encourage partnerships** among specialty crop organizations, and **reduce duplication of effort** among participating organizations. An SCMP project must:

1. Address one or more regional or national (multiple-State) issues described below;
2. Define the geographic target area of impact of the project such as the specific states or foreign markets;
3. Define the specific specialty crop(s) that are the focus of the project; and
4. Involves at least two partners located in different states.

### 3.3.1 FOOD SAFETY

Projects that address the handling, preparation, and storage of specialty crops in ways that reduce foodborne threats may include, but are not limited to:

- Improving detection, monitoring, control, and response to potential food safety hazards in the production, processing, and handling of specialty crops;
- Conducting research focused on issues related to (1) water quality; or (2) the use of biological soil amendments of animal origin on similar Agro-ecological regions or localities; and/or
- Strengthening regional and national traceback systems; promoting an outbreak response system that shortens the time between outbreak detection, resolution, and recovery; and improving methods for communicating with consumers about traceback of foodborne illness outbreaks.

### 3.3.2 PLANT PESTS AND DISEASE

Projects that address threats from pests and diseases may include, but are not limited to:

- Developing safe, effective, and economical pest and disease management solutions for growers of specialty crops;
- Developing monitoring systems to enhance capabilities to predict pest and disease incidence, estimate damage, and identify valid action thresholds;
- Developing treatments for quarantine pests and diseases to maintain or open healthy markets with U.S. trading partners; and/or

- Developing diagnostic tools, particularly new ones, for plant pests and diseases and for detection of pesticide resistance in pest populations, including weeds.

### 3.3.3 RESEARCH

Research projects are systematic studies directed toward fuller scientific knowledge or understanding of the subject studied. Projects may include, but are not limited to:

- Conducting research in plant breeding, genetics, and genomics to improve crop characteristics;
- Improving production, processing, storage, and distribution efficiencies for conventionally or organically grown specialty crops;
- Reducing environmental impacts; and
- Improving supply chain logistics.

### 3.3.4 CROP-SPECIFIC PROJECTS ADDRESSING COMMON ISSUES

Crop-specific projects involve collaborative efforts to address issues that affect a specific specialty crop. An acceptable project would involve a specific specialty crop that is grown commercially in several distinct and widely dispersed geographic areas or regions of the country. Projects may include, but are not limited to:

- Conducting research to determine consumer preferences, including studies of agricultural product price decision, value-added, sensory evaluations, focus groups; and
- Other evaluative research methods that will enhance the impacts of agricultural marketing and promotion efforts.

### 3.3.5 MARKETING AND PROMOTION

Marketing and promotion projects focus on multiple-state efforts to sell, advertise, promote, market, generate publicity, attract new customers, enhance food transportation, and raise customer awareness for specialty crops or a specialty crop venue.

### 3.3.6 PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES NOT ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

Projects are not eligible for funding if the proposed activities:

- Duplicate the content of food safety training curricula or any resources or materials already developed;
- Provide direct financial assistance to producers or processors to offset the cost of, or to cost share for, funding audits of production, handling, or management systems;
- Benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual, as funds cannot be used to compete unfairly with private companies that provide equivalent products or services; or
- Generate no direct, assessable benefits for the U.S. specialty crop producers or agricultural community.

## 3.4 PERFORMANCE MEASURES

AMS is required to report on the outcomes of the SCBGP, including SCMP, on a national scale to demonstrate the performance of this program. Each proposal submitted **must** include at least one outcome and at least one of the indicators listed in Specialty Crop Block Grant and Multi-State Programs performance measures. Recipients must report progress on the selected outcomes and indicators in the Annual Performance Report and provide final results in the Final Performance Report. Please refer to the Performance Measures for more information.

## 3.5 ALLOWABLE AND UNALLOWABLE COSTS AND ACTIVITIES

All AMS awards are subject to the applicable laws, federal cost principles, USDA regulations, and the AMS GT&C and the USDA GT&C. Applicants that have questions concerning the allowability of costs after reviewing these documents should contact AMS staff using the contact information listed under ***section 1.7.1 AMS Program Contacts***.

## 3.6 INDIRECT COSTS

### 3.6.1 LIMIT ON ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS

Administrative costs are defined as indirect costs and are limited to 8 percent of the total Federal funds provided under the award per section 101(k)(2) of the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 (7 U.S.C. § 1621 note), as amended. The State department of agriculture must notify sub-applicants of the limit on indirect costs in its request for proposals/applications so that indirect costs requested by sub-applicants plus indirect administrative costs requested by the State department of agriculture do not exceed 8 percent of the State's grant request. If the State department of agriculture does not take the full 8 percent of indirect costs, individual sub-applicants may claim the remaining portion of these costs at the discretion of the State. State-approved indirect costs in sub-applicant projects may not exceed 8 percent of that project's budget. See the information below on presenting direct and indirect costs consistently.

#### Presenting Direct and Indirect Costs Consistently

Applicants are responsible for presenting direct and indirect costs appropriately and consistently and must not include costs associated with their organization's indirect cost rate agreement as direct costs. In addition, a cost may not be allocated as an indirect cost if it is also incurred as a direct cost for the same purpose and vice versa.

**Direct costs** are costs are defined at 2 CFR § 200.413, and 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.

**Indirect costs** (also known as "facilities and administrative costs") are defined at 2 CFR § 200.414 and 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.

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:

1. Administrative or clerical services are integral to a project or activity;
2. Individuals involved can be specifically identified with the project or activity;
3. Such costs are explicitly included in the budget or have the prior written approval of the Federal awarding agency; and
4. The costs are not also recovered as indirect costs.

### Typical Indirect Costs by Organization Type

| Type of Organization | Typical Indirect Costs |
|---|---|
| **Non-Profits** | General administration and general expenses, such as the salaries and expenses of executive officers, personnel administration, and accounting, depreciation or use allowances on buildings and equipment, and the costs of operating and maintaining facilities. |
| **Colleges and Universities** | Equipment and capital improvements, operation and maintenance expenses, library expenses, general administration and general expenses, departmental administration, sponsored projects administration, student administration and services, depreciation and use allowances, and interest on debt associated with certain buildings. |
| **State and Local Governments** | State and local-wide central service costs, general administration of the applicant department or agency, accounting and personnel services performed within the applicant department or agency, depreciation or use allowances on buildings and equipment, and the costs of operating and maintaining facilities. |

### Benefit of Using Indirect Costs for Grant Administration

AMS encourages all grant applicants to include the grant administrative funds, up to 8 percent of their total Federal award, in their budget narrative, which can be used for costs such as monitoring subrecipients, ensuring grant recipient and subrecipient compliance with regulations and requirements, and grant management training. Grant recipients are encouraged to conduct periodic site visits to review project accomplishments and monitor progress, to review financial and performance records, organizational procedures, and financial control systems, and to provide technical assistance to subrecipients as required. These recommended site visits are meant to support accountability, compliance with regulations and requirements, and achievements of subrecipients.

It is imperative that States consider the capacity of support staff to manage these grant funds to not only ensure that subrecipients are paid in a timely way, but also that Federal funds are managed appropriately.

### 3.6.2 SUPPLANTING

Funds must supplement the expenditure of state funds in support of specialty crops grown in that State, rather than replace state funds. Additionally, Federal funding may not replace State funding that is required under section 101(d)(3) of the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 (7 U.S.C. § 1621 note). In instances where a question of supplanting arises, the applicant or recipient will be required to substantiate that the reduction in non-Federal resources occurred for reasons other than the receipt or expected receipt of Federal funds.

**General Supplanting Definition**. A State organization reduces State funds for an activity specifically because Federal funds are available (or expected to be available) to fund that same activity.

Example: State funds are appropriated for a stated purpose and Federal funds are awarded for that same purpose. (If a State has $50.00 budgeted for a specialty crop program and the Federal government awards a $100.00 grant for the same specialty crop program, the total project must expend $150.00 – the State cannot remove the original $50.00 and use it for something else).

Note: The supplanting requirements described above applies to States Departments. This requirement does not apply to applicants that apply directly to AMS under this funding opportunity.

## 3.7 COORDINATOR MEETING TRAVEL

Recipients are expected to attend an AMS sponsored grant management meetings during the project's period of performance. The proposed budget must include travel funds for an individual identified in the Key Staff section of the Project Narrative. In addition, the application may include travel costs for a second staff member.

Estimate the cost of travel including flight, hotel, per diem, ground transportation to a major city for 3-day, 2-night stay. For previous year, an example of this estimate can be around $1,700 per individual. Location and dates are to be determined with 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 NOFO in its entirety to fully understand the program's requirements. This application checklist 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 Narrative Form (***section 4.4 Project Narrative***)
  - ☐ Must use required template.
  - ☐ Executive Summary is no more than 250 words.
  - ☐ Ensure it does not exceed the page limit specified in ***section 4.4 Project Narrative***.
  - ☐ Ensure the application excludes unallowable costs and activities per ***section 3.5 Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities***.
  - ☐ Ensure the federal funds requested do not exceed the maximum or minimum award amount per ***section 1.4 Federal Award Period Duration and Size***.
- ☐ Signed Letter(s) of Verification for Cost Sharing Funds for each cost share resource per ***section 4.5 Letters of Verification for Cost Sharing Funds*.**
- ☐ Signed Letter(s) of Commitment from Partners and Collaborators per ***section 4.6 Letters of Commitment from Partner and Collaborator Organizations***.

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. Most information blocks on the required form are either self-explanatory or are adequately explained in the instructions. However, you must use the following supplemental instructions associated with specific blocks on form SF-424.

| Block | Instructions |
|---|---|
| 1 - Type of Submission | Select Application |
| 2 - Type of Application | Select New |
| 4 through 7 | Not required |
| 8.c - Organizational Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) | Enter applicant UEI for the organization submitting the application.<br>For more information, please visit gsa.gov/entityid. |
| 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 |
| 11 - Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number (Assistance Listing Number) | 10.170 |
| 12 - Funding Opportunity Number | USDA-AMS-TM-SCMP-G-26-0020<br>Ensure you are applying for the correct grant program. |
| 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 description of the project. |

| Block | Instructions |
|---|---|
| 16a - Congressional Districts for Applicant | Enter the Congressional district where your main office is located. |
| 16b - Congressional Districts for Program/Project | Enter the Congressional district where your project will be implemented. Write "All" if the projects will be implemented in more than one location. |
| 17 - Proposed Project Start Date and End Date | Enter Start Date: September 30, 2026.<br>End date: September 29, 2029. The project period cannot be more than 36 months (3 years) in length.<br>*Dates are approximate. Start dates are set at the time of the award. |
| 18 - Estimated Funding – Federal | Enter the Total Federal award requested. |
| 18b - Estimated Funding – Applicant | Enter the Total Cost Share amount. |
| 19 - Is Applicant Subject to Review by State Under Executive Order 12372 Process. | See ***section 5.5 Intergovernmental Review***. |

## 4.3 SF-424A – BUDGET INFORMATION FOR NON-CONSTRUCTION PROGRAMS

**Required.** The SF-424A is available via the opportunity at Grants.gov. Most information blocks on the required form are either self-explanatory or adequately explained in the instructions. The following supplemental instructions associated with specific blocks on form SF-424A should be used for this NOFO. **Do not** use instructions found in Grants.gov or elsewhere on the internet for these blocks.

Please fill in **only** sections A and B. **Do not** complete sections C - F.

***Section A – Budget Summary***

| Box | Instructions |
|---|---|
| 1.a – Grant Program Function or Activity (a) | Enter "SCMP – Federal" |
| 1.b – Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number (b) | Enter "10.170" |
| 1.e – Federal | Enter the amount of Federal funding requested for the project |
| 1.f – Non-Federal | Enter the **total** cost share contribution amount for the project |

***Section B – Budget Categories***

| Box | Instructions |
|---|---|
| 6.a – 6.j – Object Class Categories | Enter the same expense types in the column headings for Section 6. Please note the Grants.gov form will auto fill these headers. For 1) Project totals, enter the total for all proposed projects under "contractual". For 2) Grant Administration, enter the total expenses for each class category (e.g., Personnel, Fringe Benefits, Travel, etc.) and sum the amounts in column 5 and row K. Note that totals will also auto fill when using the Grants.gov form. |

***Section C – Non-Federal Resources***

| Box | Instructions |
|---|---|
| 8.a – Grant Program | Field 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 NARRATIVE

**Required.** Applicants MUST prepare and submit a project narrative using the Specialty Crop Multi-State Program project narrative template. The form and instructions are available on the "How to Apply" webpage or use the direct link to the template. The Project Narrative must clearly describe the objectives and goals, types of project activities, applicable outcome indicators, and fiscal plan and resources information.

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 (excluding existing Project Narrative form content). For example, if the Project Narrative form is 15 pages before you begin entering your project information into the form, **your narrative may be up to 30 pages (15 original form pages + 15 pages of applicant content)**. DO NOT modify the SCMP Project Narrative form. Evaluation points will be deducted if the Project Narrative form is modified. Before submitting the application to Grants.gov, please make sure no tracked changes or mark-up edits and comments are visible. Handwritten applications or applications submitted in MS Word will not be accepted.

Applicants must submit the SCMP Project Narrative as a PDF and attached to the Grants.gov application package using the "Project Narrative Attachment Form" button under SF-424 item #15. Applications not submitted in the required narrative template and missing critical information will be disqualified.

**The supporting documents listed in sections 4.5 through 4.7 do not count toward the 30-page limit.**

## 4.5 LETTERS OF VERIFICATION FOR COST SHARING FUNDS

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

**Submit one letter verifying the cost share 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 cost share contribution will be provided by the applicant organization and two partners, a total of 3 cost share verification letters are required.

AMS has posted a Letter of Verification for Cost Share Template on the grant program's website. Applicants are strongly encouraged to use this template. If an applicant does not use this template, the cost share verification documentation must include the following:

- Project Applicant Name
- Project Title
- Cash Commitment per year (if applicable) and Total Cash Cost Share Contribution

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

**Instructions for organizations submitting the Letter of Verification for Cost Share Template:** Submit *Letter of Verification for Cost Share* on letterhead and address them to the applicant (i.e., Project Director). Clearly indicate at the top of the documents that they are "LETTER OF VERIFICATION FOR COST SHARING FUNDS". All letter(s) must be signed and 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**.

## 4.6 LETTERS OF COMMITMENT FROM PARTNER AND COLLABORATOR

**Required**. Applicants **MUST** provide letters of commitment, not just letters of support, from all project partners and collaborators listed in the Project Narrative.

The letter must state the partner or collaborator agrees to the project management plan presented in the Project Narrative. Emails will not be accepted. The Letter of Commitment must include the following:

AMS has posted a **Letter of Commitment From Partner and Collaborator Template** on the grant program's website. Applicants are strongly encouraged to use this template. If an applicant does not use this template, Letters of Commitment must include the following information:

- Project Applicant Name
- Project Title
- A brief description of the partner entity's mission and its reason(s) for joining the project
- What the organization commits to participating in and supporting
- The time period of the partnership
- The specific role(s) and responsibilities of the participating individuals or partner organizations, as applicable, and any individual time commitment
- A statement that these individuals and the organization(s) 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 indicate at the top that they are "**LETTERS OF COMMITMENT."** Letters must be signed by the partner or collaborator 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**: SCMP does not require Congressional letters of support, and such letters do not carry any weight during the evaluation process.

### 4.7 NEGOTIATED INDIRECT COST RATE AGREEMENT (NICRA)

**SCMP has a statutory indirect cost cap of 8 percent. Negotiated indirect cost rates that exceed 8 percent will not be accepted.** Refer to section ***Limit on Administrative Costs*** for more information.

If the applicant prefers any indirect cost rate lower than 8 percent based on a previously negotiated indirect rate, USDA AMS requires the submission of the Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA). 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 to 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 in Grants.gov webpage gives an overview of the application process. This NOFO contains 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 4.0 Application Contents and Format.***

Applicants can find the opportunity under either the Assistance Listing number "10.170," or the SCMP Funding Opportunity Number "USDA-AMS-TM-SCMP-G-26-0020".

#### 5.1.1 PARTICIPATING STATES AND ENTITIES WITHIN THEM

Entities in Participating States must submit their applications to their respective Participating State using that State's instructions.

Participating states will submit each application received from entities that meet the requirements outlined in this NOFO as separate application packages through Grants.gov, including each applicable component listed in ***section 4.0 Application Contents and Format.***

#### 5.1.2 NONPARTICIPATING STATES AND ENTITIES WITHIN THEM

Nonparticipating states and entities within them will submit their applications through Grants.gov, including each applicable component listed in ***section 5.2 Submission and Receipt Procedures and Requirements.***

### 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 take more than four weeks to complete. The steps below provide details on how to complete each registration.

Organization applicants can find complete instructions here:
https://www.grants.gov/help/register/organizations

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 sub applicants 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 registrants have already been assigned their 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 renewed 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 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 crucial for valid and timely submissions.**

### 5.2.2 HOW TO SUBMIT AN APPLICATION TO AMS VIA GRANTS.GOV

Applicants may use the Grants.gov Workspace, a shared, online environment where members of a grant team may simultaneously access and edit different webforms within an application. For each funding opportunity announcement, 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 Comparability 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 Application Contents and Format*** 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 (GRANTXXXXXXXX) 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 (except federal holidays) toll-free support number 1-800-518-4726, or email support@grants.gov. Grants.gov will issue a ticket number to which you and Grants.gov can refer if the issue is not resolved. For questions related to the specific grant opportunity, use the contact information described in ***section 1.7.1 AMS Program Contacts***.

### 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 this NOFO such as not being eligible, having an incomplete application, or missing required attachments documents, etc.). See the Late, Nonresponsive, and Incomplete Applications Policy on the AMS Policies and Procedures page for more information.

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 time when the application is successfully received by Grants.gov. The applicant AOR will then receive an acknowledgement of receipt and a tracking number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) from Grants.gov. Applicant AORs will also receive the official date/time stamp 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 by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on December 4, 2026. AMS will not consider applications received after this deadline for funding. See the Late, Nonresponsive, and Incomplete Applications Policy on the AMS Policies and Procedures page for more information.

### 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 NOFO. If an application does not meet these requirements, it is removed from consideration. Please see ***section 5.3*** and the Late, Nonresponsive, and Incomplete Applications Policy on the AMS Policies and Procedures page for more information.

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

- Those from an organization that does not meet the eligibility criteria.
- Those requesting SCMP funds outside the funding range for the project type selected.
- 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 with panel members to arrive at a consensus score. AMS then uses the scores as the basis for selecting applications that will go to administrative review.

**Alignment and Intent** ..... **25 Points**

1. The application provides a clear and concise description of the specific issue, problem, or need the project will address, and the objectives for the project with all written instructions and requirements described within the NOFO and Project Narrative.
2. The application demonstrates how the project will enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through collaborative, multi-state projects that address the following regional or national level specialty crop focus areas: food safety, plant pests and disease, research, crop-specific projects addressing common issues, or marketing and promotion.
3. The application clearly indicates how it will engage with intended beneficiaries.
4. The application describes collaboration and engagement among partners that will ensure high levels of participation.

**Technical Merit** ..... **25 Points**

1. The application presents a clear, well-conceived, and suitable work plan that includes measurable or quantifiable tasks directly tied to the project goals and objectives.
2. The application provides a realistic schedule for implementing activities within the proposed award project period.
3. If the project and/or entity was previously funded, the extent to which the previous lessons learned are incorporated into the proposed project.
4. The application clearly identifies technical resources, expertise, and partners' contributions that will support project's development, implementation, and/or management; this includes the planning, conduct, and desired outcomes for training and technical assistance.

**Achievability** **20 Points**

1. The application demonstrates that the outcomes and indicator(s) are realistic and measurable for the scale and scope of the project and aligned with the project goals, including:
    a. How target indicator numbers were derived, including a clear plan for collecting data and feedback to evaluate and achieve each relevant outcome indicator.
    b. Key factors predicted to contribute to or restrict progress toward the indicators, including action steps for addressing restrictive factors.
    c. Overall viability of outcomes and indicators to ensure that they are meaningful, accessible, and can be applied and evaluated.
2. The project design can reasonably be replicated in other regions, communities, or agricultural systems.
3. The application includes a comprehensive plan to share the project's results (both positive and negative) and to share lessons learned electronically and in-person to target audiences, stakeholders, and interested parties.

**Expertise and Partners** **20 Points**

1. The application includes substantial, effective, varied, and strong qualifications of relevant partnerships and collaborators to accomplish the project's goals and objectives and to meet the needs of the intended beneficiaries including:
    a. Commitment from the key partners and/or collaborators to achieve project goals and outcomes, as demonstrated through their Letters of Commitment.
    b. Names and titles of key staff who will be responsible for managing the project and individuals who comprise the Project Team.
    c. The project team demonstrates expertise and experience necessary to successfully manage and implement the proposed project.
2. The application describes a clear management plan for coordination, communication, data sharing, managing conflicts of interest, and reporting among members of the Project Team and stakeholder groups, including both internal applicant personnel and external partners and collaborators.
3. The application describes how the project's partnerships and collaborations will be sustained beyond the grant period, such as strategies for maintaining and leveraging additional resources (i.e., without grant funds).

**Fiscal Plan and Resources** **10 Points**

1. The application budget narrative or justification provides a clear and detailed description for each budget item including:
    a. How the budget is reasonable and proportional to the size and scope of the project; and
    b. How each cost item directly supports and aligns with activities and outcomes described in the narrative.
2. The application provides evidence that critical resources and infrastructure that are necessary for the initiation and completion of the proposed project are currently in place.

3. The applicant demonstrates its contributions of non-Federal cash or in-kind resources are available for the project as evidenced through the submitted Cost Share Verification Letters.

### 6.3 ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW (SELECTION PROCESS AND RISK REVIEW)

AMS will conduct a final administrative evaluation of each review panel's top scores applications. In addition to the scores, AMS reviews each application to ensure that potential recommended projects align with the scope of this NOFO, allowability of budget items, available funding, geographic coverage/variety and USDA priorities. AMS staff will work with top-scored applicants to negotiate any revisions as necessary and possible. AMS will also assess an organization's ability 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 Risk Review.***

#### 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 which 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 electronically 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 reference to the AMS GT&C and USDA GT&C.

### 7.2 UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS

AMS will contact unsuccessful applicants via email as soon as possible after the SCMP awards are announced. The unsuccessful applicants will receive anonymized 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 GT&C and USDA GT&C, 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). All 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 GT&C and USDA GT&C. 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 acknowledgment 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 comply with the acknowledgement requirements outlined in the AMS GT&C and referenced in USDA GT&C.

## 9.0 OTHER INFORMATION

### 9.1 CIVIL RIGHTS OBLIGATIONS/NON-DISCRIMINATION

All recipients must comply, and certify that they will comply, with all applicable Federal discrimination laws, regulations, and policies throughout the duration of their award, as specified in Section 12.2 of the USDA GT&C.

### 9.2 ACCESSIBILITY ACCOMMODATION

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, 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.

### 9.3 ACCOMMODATIONS AND COMPLAINTS

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.

## 9.4 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUESTS

FOIA requests for records relating to this Federal award may be directed to USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service, FOIA/PA Officer, Room 2055, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-0201, Telephone: (202) 302-0650; or email: AMS.FOIA@usda.gov. For additional information about the applicability of FOIA to documents, correspondence, and any products related to a Federal award, see Section 1.13 of the USDA GT&C.

## 9.5 PAPERWORK REDUCTION

Agencies are bound by the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. 3501). For more information, see AMS GT&C Section 22.