Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program (MPPEP)—Phase 3 Round 2 Invasive, Wild-Caught Catfish

Fiscal Year 2026

Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

Funding Opportunity Number: RD-RBS-26-03-MPPEP

Publication Date: September 8, 2026

Application Due Date: 11:59 PM Eastern Time on December 7, 2026

Victoria Collin Digitally signed by Victoria Collin
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Victoria Collin
Acting Administrator
Rural Business-Cooperative Service

BASIC INFORMATION

Funding Opportunity Title: Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program - Phase 3 Round 2 - Invasive, Wild-Caught Catfish
Funding Opportunity Number: RD-RBS-26-03-MPPEP
Announcement Type: Fiscal Year 2026 Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)
Assistance Listing Number: 10.381
Dates: Applications must be received by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on December 7, 2026, through Grants.gov. Applications received after this deadline will not be considered for evaluation or funding.
Executive Summary: The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Rural Development (RD) Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBCS or Agency), requests applications for the Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program (MPPEP) - Phase 3 Round 2 - Invasive, Wild-Caught Catfish. MPPEP Phase 3 Round 2 is authorized under Section 1001(b)(4) of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), which provides funding to make "loans and grants and provide other assistance to maintain and improve food and agricultural supply chain resiliency." Funding in the aggregate amount of $6 million is being made available as authorized by the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024 (Public Law No, 118-42), the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025 (Public Law No. 119-4), the Continuing Appropriations, Agriculture, Legislative Branch, Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and Extensions Act, 2026 (Public Law No. 119-37).

Pursuant to this authority, USDA is making competitive grant funding available for construction of a new Facility, purchase of an inoperable Facility, including the purchase of the real estate for a Facility, renovations or retrofits to an existing Facility, and purchase of equipment and upgrades to increase processing capacity of Invasive, Wild-Caught Catfish and overall volume of Processing at a Facility. This will not only increase capacity and efficiency at Processing Facilities but also help to reduce Invasive Species populations that are decimating marine ecosystems and threatening the economy of the fishing industry.

Eligible applicants include for-profit and nonprofit entities, producer-owned Cooperatives and corporations, certified benefit corporations, Tribes and Tribal Entities, State or local government entities, and other business types (regardless of legal structure). Private entities must be Independently Owned and Operated, and all entities must be Domestically Owned. Additionally, the applicant's Processing facilities must be physically located and operating in the United States (U.S.) or its territories. There is no rural area requirement for the program.

Applicants must also:

(1) Currently process Seafood or Wild-Caught Catfish for commercial markets and have been in business for more than a year;
(2) Operate or plan to operate under a Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) grant of inspection from USDA to process Invasive, Wild-Caught Catfish subject to the Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA);
(3) Plan to increase processing capacity for Invasive, Wild-Caught Catfish, at their existing Facility; and
(4) Have a State Aquatic Nuisance Species, or Invasive Species, management plan that specifically identifies catfish as an Invasive or Aquatic Nuisance Species in the State where the Facility operates.

The maximum award is the lesser of (i) $2 million or (ii) 80 percent of total project costs. The minimum award is $50,000. A cost share of at least 20 percent of the total project cost is required.

Document	Details
☐ SF424	Maximum period of performance is 48 months
☐ Project Narrative Application	Grant Purpose and Project Details. Narrative is limited to 20 pages, not including application template and Supporting Documents.
☐ SF424B	B “Assurances - Non-Construction Programs,” if the project does not involve construction;
☐ SF424C	Budget Information – Construction Programs
☐ SF424D	Assurances for Construction Programs
☐ Form AD 2106	“Questionnaire to Assist in the Assessment of USDA Compliance with Civil Rights Laws.” Submission of this form is optional.
☐ Environmental Information	Environmental checklist, or information covered in the checklist
☐ Supporting Documents	See section 4.2 for more information on required supporting documentation.

Applicants will be required to identify in their applications the funding sources and amounts that will fund the total project cost.

The Agency may also award discretionary points to maximize diversity among awards on the basis of geography and species, including the prioritization of projects involving processing of Apex Predators.

This NOFO provides eligibility criteria for applicants and projects, details on cost share requirements, and the forms and instructions required to apply for an award.

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

The application must include the documents in the checklist located below. Failure to submit all required documents will result in your application being deemed ineligible for the grant program. Please review Section 4.2 for more information and details on the required documents and supporting information.

TIPS FOR APPLICANTS

- To do business with the Federal Government and 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 https://sam.gov (System for Award Management), the Government's primary registrant database;
  - Provide your UEI number and TIN on your application; and
  - Maintain an active SAM registration with current information throughout the application review period and, if you are awarded a grant, during the project period.
- Register and submit applications early. DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE DAY OF THE APPLICATION DEADLINE.
- Thoroughly read this Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) and follow all the instructions.
- Thoroughly review the guidelines and policies as outlined in this NOFO to ensure the application is received and eligible for consideration, and to understand allowable and unallowable costs.
- Apply for the correct grant program
  - Assistance Listing number **"10.381"** and Funding Opportunity Number **"RD-RBS-26-03-MPPEP"**

    Note: A cost share of at least 20 percent of the total project cost is required.
- Make sure you have the most recent copy of Adobe Reader installed on your computer and that it is compatible with Grants.gov software. Grants.gov supports Adobe Reader version 9.0.0 and higher.
- Limit Application File Name Characters (50 or less).
- When uploading attachments, click the "Add Attachments" button (do NOT use the "paperclip" icon in Adobe Reader). Acceptable file types include .doc, .docx, .pdf, .jpg, .jpeg, .png, .gif, .xls, .xlsx, .txt, .ppt, and .pptx. If you would like to submit another file type, please contact the program office first for approval.
- Do not password-protect your documents and make sure all tracked-changes are "accepted".
- Avoid Special Characters in File Names ($, %, &, *, Spanish "ñ", etc.).
- Input the correct UEI number on the SF-424 cover page.
- Review the Grants.gov Applicant User and Registration Guides:
  - http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-faqs.html
  - https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/workspace-overview.html

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1.0 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

1.1 Purpose of the Program

The purpose of the MPPEP program is to provide new, better, and more processing options to meat and poultry producers, in the applicant's market. It has been part of the broader USDA initiative to improve food and agricultural supply chain resiliency. The goal for this NOFO is to support Processors of Invasive, Wild-Caught Catfish species by increasing Processing capacity and providing greater opportunity in this sector. Strategies that can fulfill the goal of the NOFO and ensure lasting impacts include projects to increase Processing capacity; increase Processing volume; elevate incomes for both fishers and Processors; and to provide fair wages, and new, stable and safe job opportunities at Processing facilities to increase economic development in rural communities.

USDA is interested in supporting MPPEP Phase 3 Round 2 projects that are technically feasible, financially viable, and have already identified other sources of funding (e.g., Federal, State, Tribe or intertribal, local funding, or private funding) to complete projects.

1.2 Statutory and Regulatory Authority

The MPPEP Phase 3 Round 2 program is authorized by Section 1001(b)(4) of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) (Public Law No. No. 117-2). This statute provides funding "to make loans and grants and provide other assistance to maintain and improve food and agricultural supply chain resiliency." Funding specifically for MPPEP – Phase 3 Round 2 (Invasive, Wild-Caught Catfish) in the aggregate amount of $6 million is being made available as authorized by the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024 (Public Law No. 118-42), the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025 (Public Law No. 119-4), and the Continuing Appropriations, Agriculture, Legislative Branch, Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and Extensions Act, 2026 (Public Law No. 119-37) https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/5371.

1.3 Definitions

For the purpose of this Program, the following definitions will apply:

Agency. RBCS or the successor agency assigned by the Secretary of Agriculture to administer the Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program – Phase 3 Round 2.

Apex Predator. A species, including invasive Wild-Caught Catfish, at the top of a food chain, without natural predators of their own.

Aquatic Nuisance Species and/or Invasive Species. A nonindigenous species that threatens the diversity or abundance of native species or the ecological stability of infested waters, or commercial, agricultural, aquacultural or recreational activities dependent on such waters (16 U.S.C. 4702). Aquatic Nuisance Species and Invasive Species are considered synonymous for the purposes of this NOFO.

Business Plan. A formal statement of a set of business goals, the reasons why they are attainable, and the plan for reaching those goals, including Pro Forma Financial Statements appropriate to the term and scope of the project and sufficient to evidence the viability of the project. It may also contain background information about the organization or team attempting to reach those goals.

Complete Application. An application that contains all parts necessary for the Agency to determine applicant and project eligibility, and the financial feasibility and technical merit of the project and contains sufficient information to determine a priority score for the application as determined by the Agency.

Cooperative. An entity that is legally chartered by the State or Tribe in which it operates as a cooperatively operated business, or an entity that is not legally chartered as a cooperative but is owned and operated for the benefit of its members, with returns of residual earnings paid to such members on the basis of patronage.

Domestically Owned. An entity organized in the United States under the laws of a State, or under a Tribe's jurisdiction where the entity operates, and a majority of the entity is owned by US citizens.

Facility. A single Siluriformes Processing plant designed, built, equipped, etc., for Primary and/or Further Processing of Siluriformes.

*Financial Assistance Agreement (Form RD 4280-2) or FAA***.** The grant agreement to be executed by the Agency and the recipient establishing the terms and conditions under which the Federal Award will be administered.

Further Processing. Conversion of raw Siluriformes products, through smoking, curing, salting, fermenting, cooking, canning, refining, or rendering into cooked, cured, and preserved products. Also known as Value-Added processing.

Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP). A management system in which food safety is addressed through the analysis and control of biological, chemical, and physical hazards from raw material production, procurement and handling, to manufacturing, distribution and consumption of the finished product.

Independently Owned and Operated. Not owned by and not subject to the control, authority or direction of other legal entities, including parent corporations and affiliates.

Meat. Species amenable to USDA inspection including cattle, sheep, swine, goats, Siluriformes (catfish), and equine. Also, nonamenable species eligible for voluntary inspection including exotic species as described in 9 CFR part 352 and rabbit as described in 9 CFR part 354. This NOFO is limited to Invasive, Wild-Caught Catfish.

Primary Processing. Slaughtering, cutting and boning of raw Meat and Poultry (including catfish) for human consumption.

Processing. Includes Primary Processing and Further Processing of Siluriformes. See definitions for Primary Processing and Further Processing.

Processors. A business engaged in the Primary Processing or Further Processing of Siluriformes (See, definitions for Processing, Primary Processing, and Further Processing).

Program. Program means the Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program Phase 3 Round 2, authorized by Section 1001(b)(4) of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 and administered by the Agency.

Seafood. Edible aquatic animals, excluding mammals, but including both freshwater and ocean creatures such as catfish.

Siluriformes. *(catfish).* A scientific order of fish that includes all catfish found in brackish and freshwater. For this NOFO, Siluriformes are limited to Invasive, Wild-Caught species of catfish.

State. Any of the 50 States of the United States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Republic of Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

State Aquatic Nuisance Species Management Plan. State Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) management plans are comprehensive documents that outline how states will prevent, control, and manage the spread of non-native aquatic species that can negatively impact ecosystems, economies, and public health. These plans are developed by state agencies, often with input from federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, and industry representatives. The plans are reviewed by the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force and often include public review periods.

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. Tribal Governments of Indian Tribes as defined by the Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act (List Act) of 1994 (Pub. L. No. 103-454), their wholly owned arms and instrumentalities, and joint or multi-tribal government entities.

Value-Added. The incremental profit earned from each transaction or step in manufacture after deducting production costs, depreciation, and other relevant expenses. Each stage of production or ownership transfer typically adds value to a good, product, or service.

Wild-Caught Catfish that is caught in their natural environment, such as a lake, river, or ocean. This does not include farmed catfish, which is raised in a controlled environment such as large tanks.

Work Plan. A narrative provided by the applicant that demonstrates the feasibility of the proposed project and Facility to meet the objectives of the MPPEP Phase 3 Round 2 Program, including a set of goals, strategies, and anticipated outcomes.

1.4 Applications of Awards

The Agency will review, evaluate and score MPPEP Phase 3 Round 2 applications received based on the specific selection criteria contained in this NOFO. Awards under MPPEP Phase 3 Round 2 will be made on a competitive basis. The Agency advises all interested parties that the applicant bears the full burden in preparing and submitting an application in response to this NOFO regardless of whether or not an applicant is selected for funding.

2.0 FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

2.1 Type of Federal Assistance

MPPEP provides Federal grants to help eligible processors expand their processing capacity, which creates new, better and more processing options for meat and poultry producers. The goal for MPPEP Phase 3 Round 2 is to support Processors of Invasive, Wild-Caught Catfish species by increasing Processing capacity and providing greater opportunity in this sector. Strategies that can fulfill the goal of this NOFO and ensure lasting impacts include projects to increase Processing capacity; increase Processing volume; elevate incomes for both fishers and Processors; and to provide fair wages, and new, stable and safe job opportunities at Processing facilities to increase economic development in rural communities. RBCS will use a Financial Assistance Agreement, Form RD 4280-2, to provide Federal awards to successful applicants.

2.2 Award Funding and Award Size

Type of Awards: Grant

Fiscal Year Funds: Funding from Fiscal Year 2024, 2025 and 2026

Available Funds: $6,000,000. RBCS may, at its discretion, increase the amount of funding available under this Notice with any available funding source that is authorized to fund MPPEP Phase 3 Round 2.

Minimum Award Amount: $50,000

Maximum Award Amount: $2,000,000

Anticipated Award Date: February 8, 2027

Performance Period: The maximum period of performance is 48 months. The actual timeframe for each particular project should be based upon the complexity of the project. When developing the workplan and budget, whether it is for purchase of equipment or real estate improvements, please ensure that there is adequate time to complete the project.

Type of Assistance Instrument: Financial Assistance Agreement (Form RD 4280-2)

Approximate Number of Awards: 6

Renewal or Supplemental Awards: Not permitted.

3.0 ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

3.1 Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants include for-profit and nonprofit entities, producer-owned Cooperatives and corporations, certified benefit corporations, Tribes and Tribal Entities, State or local government entities, and other business types (regardless of legal structure). Private entities must be Independently Owned and Operated, and all entities must be Domestically Owned. Additionally, the applicant's Processing facilities must be physically located and operating in the United States (U.S.) or its territories. There is no rural area requirement for the program.

Applicants must:

(1) Currently process Seafood or Wild-Caught Catfish for commercial markets and have been in business for more than one year;

(2) Operate or plan to operate under a Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) grant of inspection from USDA to process Invasive, Wild-Caught Catfish subject to the Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA);

(3) Plan to increase Processing capacity for Invasive, Wild-Caught Catfish, at their existing Facility; and

(4) Have a State Aquatic Nuisance Species or Invasive Species management plan that includes catfish.

Private entities must be Independently Owned and Operated. All entities must be Domestically Owned, and their Processing facilities must be physically located and operated within the U.S. or its territories. There is no rural area requirement for the Program.

Applicants that engage or propose to engage in Further Processing may be eligible provided that the project expands the Primary Processing capacity of Invasive, Wild-Caught Catfish at the applicant's Facility and improves the viability of an existing Processing operation. Additionally, the inputs for Further Processing must include the products of Primary Processing (Invasive Wild-Caught Catfish) by the applicant.

Eligible applicants must be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) at the time of Application submission and must maintain SAM registration at all times while an application is active and throughout the term of an award. Please refer to Section 4.2 for instructions on how to register your entity in the SAM.

3.2 Applicants Not Eligible for Funding

An Applicant is ineligible for MPPEP Phase 3 Round 2 funding if any of the following apply:

(1) The applicant does not currently process Seafood, or does not plan to process Invasive, Wild-Caught Catfish under a Federal Grant of Inspection;

(2) The applicant does not have a State Aquatic Nuisance Species or Invasive Species management plan that includes Wild-Caught Catfish;

(3) The applicant proposes to engage in, or engages in, Further Processing that does not expand

Primary Processing capacity of Invasive, Wild-Caught Catfish at the applicant's Facility or does not improve the viability of the existing operation

(4) The applicant submits multiple applications from separate applicant entities with identical or greater than 75 percent common ownership, or from a parent, subsidiary, or affiliated organization (with "affiliation" defined by Small Business Administration regulation 13 CFR 121.103, or successor regulation);

(5) The applicant has facilities that are exclusively for non-commercial use;

(6) The applicant and its principals are debarred, suspended, or otherwise excluded from participation in USDA programs, in accordance with 2 CFR Parts 180 and 417; or

(7) The applicant is delinquent on any federal debt or is subject to an outstanding judgment obtained by the U.S. in a Federal court.

3.3 Allowable Uses of Funds

The applicant is responsible for defining the MPPEP Phase 3 Round 2 project which is limited to activities and costs associated with increasing Processing capacity. MPPEP Phase 3 Round 2 grant funds may only support costs incurred during the period of performance of the award. The period of performance starts when a Financial Assistance Agreement, Form RD 4280-2, between the applicant and RBCS is executed. The maximum period of performance is 48 months. When defining your project, you should consider what expenses you will be incurring after the anticipated award date.

Eligible activities include:

- Construction of a new Facility or purchase of an inoperable Facility, including the purchase of real estate for the Facility;
- Construction or renovation of mobile slaughter and processing units;
- Modernizing, renovating, or expanding an existing Facility (including expansion and modifications to existing buildings and/or construction of new buildings at existing Facilities, and construction of wastewater management structures);
- Purchasing or upgrading Processing and manufacturing equipment (including cutting, skinning, de-scaling, and de-boning equipment, mixers, grinders, pipes, motors, pumps, and valves);
- Developing, customizing, and installing equipment, devices, and technology that automates Processing functions to improve worker conditions and safety;
- Upgrading equipment to ensure food safety;
- Developing, customizing, and installing equipment that reduces emissions, increases efficient water use, and improves air and/or water quality to help lower operating costs at the Facility;
- Purchasing or upgrading composting equipment;
- Purchasing or upgrading packaging and labeling equipment;
- Making internal or minimal external improvements, upgrades, renovations or retrofits to an existing Facility needed to install the equipment;
- Ensuring compliance with occupational and other safety requirements under applicable law; including revising existing Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) plans to include invasive Wild-Caught Catfish; and
- Paying staffing or operational costs, including training specifically tied to implementing the proposed project.

3.4 Unallowable Uses of Funds

All RBCS awards are subject to the terms and conditions, cost principles, and other considerations described in the Financial Assistance Agreement, Form RD 4280-2. In addition, MPPEP Phase 3 Round 2 grant funds may not be used for:

- Purchase, lease, maintenance, or repair of vehicles with the exception of mobile processing units.
- Solely supporting Further Processing activities that do not include expanding Primary Processing capacity at the applicant's Facility.
- Projects that fund routine maintenance and repair of an organization's buildings and operational facilities.
- Paying for costs and activities that do not increase Processing capacity beyond pre-award levels.
- Paying for technical assistance to support the Facility or the proposed project.
- Project planning, feasibility study expenses, or research and development.
- Expenses or activities that have been or will be reimbursed by a third party, including by any federal, State, or local government funding.
- Paying for costs incurred prior to the date the Financial Assistance Agreement, Form RD 4280-2, is executed.
- Paying for indirect project costs per definition in 2 CFR 200.1.
- Subawards.
- Paying for costs that support or oppose union organizing.
- Support of an application (project) that has a proposed period of performance longer than 48 months.
- Support of an application (project) that has a grant request exceeding $2 million or exceeding 80 percent of total project costs, whichever is less, or a grant request of less than $50,000.
- Transactions or activities that involve a real or apparent conflict of interest for owners, employees, officers, agents or their immediate family members having a personal, professional, financial or other interest in the outcome of the Project, including organizational conflicts and conflicts that restrict open and free competition for unrestrained trade (see, 2 CFR 400.2(b) for an awardee's requirements and prohibitions relating to conflicts of interests).
- Purchase, lease, maintenance, or repair of unmanned aircraft systems commonly called drones.

Applicants that have questions concerning the allowability of costs after reviewing this section should contact RD staff using the contact information listed under Section 7.0 Agency Contacts.

3.5 Cost Sharing or Matching

The applicant is required to cost share at least 20 percent of the total project cost. Evidence of the cost share percentage will be verified by the Agency at the time of award. If the applicant cannot verify cost share to the satisfaction of the Agency within the time frame specified in the letter of conditions for the award, the Agency may offer funding to the next highest ranked project.

The applicant is responsible for providing the Agency with the total project costs of the MPPEP Phase 3 Round 2 project. Financial contributions must support expanding Processing capacity as described in the application. Costs and activities that support existing Processing capacity are not eligible. Third-party in-kind donations are allowable in accordance with 2 CFR 200.306. If Program income is expected during the period as result of Project activities, it is subject to the requirements of 2 CFR 200.307 and must be managed and reported accordingly. Program Income will be documented at time of award.

Expenses must be incurred between the date of execution of the Financial Assistance Agreement, Form RD 4280-2, and the end date of the Period of Performance, or 48 months, whichever is earlier.

4.0 APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

4.1 Electronic Application Package

Only electronic applications may be submitted via Grants.gov in response to this NOFO. We urge applicants to submit applications early to the Grants.gov system. For an overview of the Grants.gov application process, see the Grants.gov How to Apply for Grants webpage found at: grants.gov/applicants/grant-applications/how-to-apply-for-grants. This NOFO contains the information needed to obtain and complete required application forms and RD-specific attachments.

Applications must be submitted via Grants.gov. Applicants should submit applications well before the deadline to avoid last minute technical issues. See Section 4.6 Grants.gov (Application Submission and Receipt Procedures and Requirements) for additional application instructions.

Applicants can find the opportunity under either the Assistance Listing number 10.381 or the Funding Opportunity Number "RD-RBS-26-03-MPPEP."

4.2 System for Award Management and Unique Entity Identifier

(a) At the time of application, each applicant must have an active registration in the System for Award Management (SAM) before submitting its application in accordance with 2 CFR part 25. In order to register in SAM, entities will be required to obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). Instructions for obtaining the UEI are available at https://sam.gov/content/entity-registration.

(b) Each applicant must maintain an active SAM registration, with current, accurate and complete information, at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application under consideration by a Federal awarding agency.

(c) Each applicant must ensure that it completes the Financial Assistance General Certifications and Representations in SAM.

(d) Each applicant must provide a valid UEI in its application, unless determined exempt under 2 CFR 25.110.

(e) The Agency will not make an award until the applicant has complied with all SAM requirements including providing the UEI. If an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time the Agency is ready to make an award, the Agency may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant.

4.3 Content and Form of Application Submission

(1) *Required Forms.*

- (a) Form SF 424, "Application for Federal Assistance;"
- (b) Form SF 424B, "Assurances - Non-Construction Programs," if the project does not involve construction;
- (c) Form SF-424C, "Budget Information-Construction Programs," if the project involves construction;
- (d) Form SF-424D, "Assurances for Construction Programs," if the project involves construction; and
- (e) Form AD-2106, "Questionnaire to Assist in the Assessment of USDA Compliance with Civil Rights Laws." Submission of this form is optional.

(2) *Project Narrative and Supporting Documents.*

- (a) Required Format. Applicants are required to prepare and submit a project narrative and are encouraged, but are not required, to use the provided template on the **MPPEP 3**

website. If an applicant uses the template, the applicant is required to answer all the questions contained in the template. The project narrative and all supporting documents must be submitted as one of the following file types: .pdf, .doc, .docx, .xls, .xlsx. and attached to the Grants.gov application package.

(b) Handwritten applications will not be accepted.

(c) The project narrative must be typed, single-spaced, and in an 11-point font, not to exceed twenty (20) 8.5 x 11" pages, not including the Application Template or supporting documents, as listed in Section 4.2.2(1)-(2). For example, if the application template is 15 pages before you begin entering your project narrative information, your application may be up to 35 pages in length when completed (15-page required application template + 20 pages of applicant content).

(d) Prior to submitting an application to Grants.gov, make sure that it is in final form (e.g., if the "track changes" function was used, accept all changes before submitting so that the mark-up is not visible in the submitted application).

(e) The forms, financials and all supporting documents in the subsequent sections do not count against the 20-page limit for the project narrative.

(3) *Application Template.*

(a) Applicants are encouraged to use the provided Application Template located at https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-programs/meat-and-poultry-processing-expansion-programhttps://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-programs/meat-and-poultry-processing-expansion-program https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-programs/meat-and-poultry-processing-expansion-program-phase-3 for the project narrative, to ensure all the following topics are addressed.

Sections in the template include:

(i) Applicant and Project information. Provide applicant, project, and Facility information as described in the Application Template. Please refer to Section 2.4 for a description of eligible applicants.

(ii) Project Information and Executive Summary. Provide a summary detailing project goals and objectives in 500 words or fewer.

(iii) Land Ownership and Access. Applicants must describe who owns and controls or has access to the land where the project is located.

(iv) Performance Metrics. Applicants must track progress towards goals to demonstrate success. Applicants must provide baseline data for the following metrics:

- Processing space added (square foot processing space added; amount of equipment added) at the Facility.
- Processing volume increased (number of pounds or tons at the Facility).
- New Value-Added products developed by the Facility.
- Increase in number of fishers and/or vessels served by the Facility.
- Number of new sales channels accessed by the Facility.
- Number of jobs created and retained at the Facility.

(4) *Merit Evaluation.*

(a) The application must be responsive to each evaluation criterion in Section 5.1. Your proposal should identify how your project will provide more Processing capacity, increase overall Processing volume in your market, and create more Processing opportunities for fishers. Your proposal should also describe the level of support by community stakeholders. Applicants must describe their proposed project and how the Processing Facility will achieve financial viability, technical merit and achievability and address sourcing strategy, labor standards, and marine and community impacts.

(b) Applicants must provide a Work Plan and budget that includes all key staff and activities performed within the proposed Period of Performance by task, associated costs, and proposed timeframe for completion. Please provide sufficient details to allow the Agency to determine project eligibility, including all other funding that is needed to complete the project. Refer to Section 1.3 for a list of project activities eligible for funding. Project activities not eligible for funding are listed in Section 1.4.

(c) Applicants should note that while a letter of support from a community leader is not required for a Complete Application, it is required for the application to receive points in the Community Impact & Support Section 5.1.6 below. Letters of support must be submitted with the application in Grants.gov to be considered.

(5) *Tribal Resolution of Consent*

For a project located on Tribal Lands where the applicant is not a member of the Tribe nor an entity owned or operated by that Tribe, a Tribe's Resolution of Consent must be provided. Other documentation such as a Letter of Support from the Tribal Council for the governing body of the Tribe with jurisdiction over the Tribal Lands where the project is located (if applicable) is also an acceptable acknowledgement of Tribal consent. Any applicant seeking funding for a project located on Tribal Lands that fails to provide a Tribal Resolution or Letter of Consent from the Tribe will not be considered for funding.

(6) *Other Supporting Information.*

Applicants are required to submit the following supporting information. Please refer to the Tips for Applicants section for a list of acceptable file types.

(a) *Environmental and National Historic Preservation Site Reviews*. Please review the environmental checklist available on grants.gov and on the program website (www.rd.usda.gov/mppep) to ensure you are providing all relevant documentation so that the Agency can complete all necessary reviews under the National Environmental Policy Acy (NEPA), the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), and applicable regulations. Please contact the Agency to assist in determining what documentation is required to be provided. Please refer to Section 8.2 and the MPPEP Phase 3 Round 2 website at https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-programs/meat-and-poultry-processing-expansion-program-phase-3 for additional information

(b) *Business Plan.* Provide a plan that includes the business goals and objectives, market analysis, and the rationale for the proposed project.

(c) *Financial Documents.* Provide the following to assist the Agency in determining financial viability of the project:

(i) Three years of historical balance sheet and income statements. Applicants with fewer than three years of data should submit what is available, which may include but is not limited to balance sheets, income statements, and other related documentation to demonstrate the financial viability of the venture.

(ii) Current balance sheet and income statements (within 90 days of application).

(iii) Two years of proforma and projected financial analysis including but not limited to (A) balance sheet, (B) income statement, and (C) cash flow analysis. Include financial projections with assumptions used in development of projections.

(d) *Resumes.* Provide resumes of key personnel at the Facility and on the management team (including construction management) for the proposed project.

(e) *Design and construction documents*. For projects involving construction, include any design and construction documents. If selected for funding, the Agency will follow the construction planning and performing development regulations at 7 CFR

4280.125.(excluding rescinded Executive Order 11246, rescinded Executive Order 11375, and rescinded Executive Order 13672 referenced in 7 CFR 4280.125(a)(2)).

(7) *Applicant certifications.* By signing and submitting the SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance, as a part of the grant application package, applicants are certifying that they agree to the following statements:

(a) The applicant does not have a known relationship or association with an Agency employee. If there is a known relationship, the applicant must identify each Agency employee with whom the applicant has a known relationship.

(b) The applicant is a legal entity in good standing and operating in accordance with the laws of the State(s) or Tribe(s) where the applicant has a place of business, including child labor laws.

(c) The applicant has not been found unfit to obtain a grant of Federal or State equivalent inspection because of convictions, in a Federal or State court, of (1) any felony, or (2) more than one violation of any law, other than a felony, based upon the acquiring, handling, or distributing of unwholesome, mislabeled, or deceptively packaged food or upon fraud in connection with transactions in food.

(d) The applicant who receives an award must comply with FSIS standards and must possess or plan to obtain a Federal Grant of Inspection during the period of performance for the MPPEP Phase 3 Round 2 grant. In addition, if inspection services have been suspended in the five years prior to the date of the application, the applicant must disclose the reasons for the suspension(s) and how the action was resolved.

(e) The applicant has disclosed all of its violations of Federal and state health, safety and labor laws, regulations and standards that occurred up to five years prior to the date of the application, including any remedial actions that have been taken by the applicant to rectify such violations, and whether the applicant is currently in compliance with such laws, regulations and standards.

(f) The applicant has developed a HACCP plan (or will revise a HACCP plan) to include Invasive, Wild-Caught Catfish.

(g) The applicant has the necessary certifications in place to ensure regulatory compliance with all food safety measures providing safe products to consumers.

(h) The State where the Processing Facility is located has a State Aquatic Nuisance Species or Invasive Species management plan that includes catfish.

(i) Any equipment required for the project is available, can be procured and delivered within the proposed project development schedule, barring any unforeseen supply chain disruptions to availability, and will be installed in conformance with manufacturer's specifications and design requirements.

(j) The project will be constructed in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, agreements, permits, codes, and standards.

(k) The applicant has identified the balance of funding necessary (i.e., a minimum of 20 percent of the total

(l) project costs) to complete the project in accordance with the timeline and budget proposed in its MPPEP Phase 3 Round 2 application. Evidence of the cost share will be verified at the time of the award.

(m) The applicant has an active entity registration in the System for Award Management, has not been debarred or suspended from participating in USDA covered transactions, is not listed on the Credit Alert Verification Reporting System, and is not listed as a delinquent debtor subject to offset on the Department of the Treasury's Treasury Offset Program;

(n) The applicant's principals have not been debarred or suspended from participating in USDA covered transactions under 2 CFR Parts 180 and 417; and

(o) Upon receipt of application, prior to award, and prior to disbursement of federal funds, the agency will screen the applicant and its principals through the Do Not Pay System, as required by 31 U.S.C. § 3354, to verify eligibility with respect to debarment, suspension, and any unresolved federal debts. Applicants are responsible for resolving any issues identified in the Do Not Pay System. If any such issues are not resolved by the deadlines specified in this notice, the agency may, in its discretion, proceed to award the grant funds to other eligible applicants. Applicants are responsible for compliance with all applicable regulations, including 2 CFR Parts 180 and 417.

4.4 Submission DATES AND TIMES

Applications must be submitted electronically through Grants.gov. Ensure that all components of the application 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. RBCS encourages you to submit your application at least two weeks prior to the application deadline to ensure all certifications are completed and registrations are met.

Only applications submitted and validated by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on December 7, 2026, on Grants.gov will be accepted.

4.5 Intergovernmental REVIEW

Intergovernmental Review under Executive Order 12372 is not required in this Program.

4.6 FUNDING Restrictions

Funding limitations are set forth in Section 3.4 Unallowable Uses of Funds of this Notice.

4.7 OTHER SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Your application will not be reviewed or be considered for funding if it is:

(1) Received after the application submission deadline.

(2) Submitted via any method other than through Grants.gov.

(3) Submitted to the wrong grant program.

(4) Not responsive to the requirements of this NOFO (eligibility, incomplete application, not providing all required documents, etc., as required in Section 4.2).

5.0 APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

5.1 MERIT EVALUATION CRITERIA

Every complete and eligible application will be evaluated based on the scoring criteria below: Discretionary points may be added to the total score to generate the final score at the discretion of the Administrator. The most competitive applications will describe project objectives that align with the NOFO goals as described under Section 1.2 and that are specific to the applicant's project, market, and community. Failure to address all or part of a criterion, or to insufficiently communicate relevant project information, will result in a lower score.

Notwithstanding the high score of an application, the Agency reserves the right not to make an award to an applicant if the applicant's health, safety or labor law violations are deemed unsatisfactory, as determined by the Agency.

The maximum number of points for an application to score is 115 points.

(1) ***Alignment and Intent: Up to 20 points.***
  (a) The application identifies specific constraints or challenges in Processing Invasive, Wild-Caught Catfish, and describes the project's objectives, including how they will address those issues.
  (b) The application describes the steps the applicant will take at the Facility to increase Processing capacity and create more opportunities in the sector through higher volumes and other Value-Added activities (if applicable).
  (c) The application describes the project's proposed geographic focus area, and the regional market demand versus Processing constraints.
  (d) The application identifies the estimated numbers of fishers that will benefit from increased Processing capacity.
  (e) Marine Impact
    (i) Applicant describes how the project will result in fewer Invasive Wild-Caught Catfish species in the marine ecosystems in the area where the Facility is located.
    (ii) Applicant describes pollution control strategies for managing water quality and solid waste.

(2) ***Market Development and Industry Opportunities: Up to 20 points.***
  (a) *Fishing Industry Opportunities (Up to 10 of the 20 points awarded under this criteria).* Application describes a clear plan for procuring Invasive, Wild-Caught Catfish and providing more opportunities for fishers relative to the existing Processing opportunities in their geographic area, including but not limited to:
    (i) The increase in Processing volume results in procurement of more Invasive Wild-Caught Catfish from fishers.
    (ii) The increase in the number of fishers from which the Facility sources.
    (iii) The opportunity to diversify income among fishers.
  (b) *Market Development (Up to 10 of the 20 points awarded under this criteria).* Application describes the market opportunities that exist and the ability to provide sufficient supply, including:
    (i) The increase in the number and kind of markets or sales channels that the Facility provides and/or serves, including any new Value-Added products.
    (ii) Applications describe how the expanded Processing capacity will meet fisher, buyer, and consumer needs.

(3) ***Financial Viability: Up to 20 points.***

The project will contribute to the ongoing financial viability of the Facility, either through profitability or assurances of ongoing financial support, supported by income and expense projections for three years. ***Each of the four criteria listed below will be scored up to 5 points:***

    (i) Description of commitments from fishers to demonstrate reliability of supply;

(ii) Description of commitments from potential buyers to demonstrate product demand and robust sales;

(iii) Description of the plan and timeline of achieving optimal Processing capacity at the existing Facility; and

(iv) The project will contribute to the ongoing financial viability of the Facility, supported by historical financial documents and three years of income and expense projections.

(4) ***Technical Merit and Achievability: Up to 20 points.***

(a) Budget and Workplan (Up to 10 of the 20 points awarded under this criteria). The budget and workplan provide a clear description for each budget line item.

(i) The budget is consistent and proportional with the size and scope of the project activities.

(ii) All budget items are directly linked to project activities and key staff included in the application.

(iii) The application presents a clear, well-conceived, complete, and suitable overall Work Plan.

(b) Achievability (Up to 10 of the 20 points awarded under this criteria).

(i) The application presents a realistic schedule with project milestones and timelines for implementing the proposed project activities during the period of performance.

(ii) The project is comprised of key partnerships and collaborations with aligned local and regional entities that enhance and ensure project success.

(iii) The application identifies all reasonably foreseeable risks (e.g., product recall; current and past and current violations of Federal and state health and safety laws, regulations and standards; labor risks; access to operating capital risk; and other legal risks) and describes the implementation of appropriate risk mitigation strategies.

(iv) Key staff have the experience and capacity to implement the project and maintain expanded operations after the period of performance ends (including construction management where applicable).

(v) The applicant has identified all necessary permits and inspections aligned with the stage of the project, including construction permits, where applicable.

(5) ***Labor and Personnel: Up to 10 points.***

The application describes how the project enhances worker conditions and safety through payment of living wages, essential benefits, worker training, and/or promotion of safe working conditions. The application should disclose the Facility's current or past violations of Federal and state safety and labor laws, regulations and standards, and how and when any such violations were resolved.

(6) ***Community Impact & Support: Up to 10 points.***

To receive points for this section, applicants must provide letters of support from qualifying leaders (defined below) where the proposed project will take place. For a project located on Tribal Lands where the applicant is not a member of the Tribe nor an entity owned or operated by that Tribe, a Tribal Resolution of Consent must be provided. Other documentation such as a Letter of Support from the Tribal Council for the governing body of the Tribe with jurisdiction over the Tribal Lands where the project is located (if applicable) is also an acceptable acknowledgement of Tribal consent. Any applicant with a proposed project on Tribal lands that fails to provide a

Tribal Resolution or Letter of Consent from the Tribe will not be considered for funding.

Qualifying leaders may include but are not limited to State and local government officials, associations of agricultural producers, and labor unions. All letters from qualifying leaders should include the following:

(a) Identification of the stakeholder producing the letter and their connection to the project activities;

(b) A description of the sustained community impact that will be supported by expansion activities to be carried out under the project; and

(c) Additional information relative to the project's impact on the long-term needs and goals of the community.

(7) ***Discretionary Points: Up to 15 points.***

During Administrative Agency Review, up to 15 discretionary points may be assigned by the RBCS Administrator for projects to maximize diversity among awards on the basis of geography and species, including the prioritization of projects involving the Processing of Apex Predators.

5.2 REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

(1) *Step 1: Initial Application Qualification Screening.*

Each application is initially reviewed for overall completeness, as well as compliance with eligibility and Program requirements as set forth in this NOFO. If an application does not meet these requirements, it will be removed from consideration and will not be scored.

(2) *Step 2: Panel Review.*

Each application that passes initial application qualification screening (Step 1) is evaluated by a panel of reviewers. The review panel evaluates their assigned applications using instructions prepared by RBCS officials. Individual reviewers confer with other panel members to derive a consensus score based on the strengths and weaknesses identified for each proposal. The consensus score serves as the basis for awarding grant funds.

(3) *Step 3: Agency Review.*

RBCS will conduct a final administrative evaluation of the panel's top rankings and recommendations. In addition to the rank and scores, RBCS reviews each application to ensure that potential recommended projects align with the scope, allowability of budget items, available funding, and USDA priorities as outlined in the NOFO. RBCS staff will work with top-ranked applicants to negotiate any revisions to projects as necessary. RBCS will also assess an organization's ability to account for the use of Federal funds and monitor the performance associated with these funds using the guidance provided by 2 CFR 200.302.

(4) *Step 4: Ranking of Applications.*

RBCS will rank eligible applications based on the sum of the merit evaluation criteria plus any discretionary points, for a maximum of 115 points.

(5) *Step 5: Funding selected applications.*

The Administrator of RBCS will make the final award decisions based on all of the foregoing scores, reviewed information, and discretionary points. The Agency will select applications for funding in rank order until available funds are expended or a minimum score of 50 points is reached. If an application cannot be fully funded, the Agency may, in its discretion, offer partial funding to the extent funds are available.

(6) *Step 6: Environmental and National Historic Preservation Reviews.*

RBCS will review projects that are selected for funding for environmental impacts to determine next steps for the project to achieve compliance under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and applicable regulations as outlined in Section 8.2.

5.3 ANTICIPATED ANNOUNCEMENT AND AWARD DATES

The anticipated announcement and award date is February 8, 2027.

6.0 FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

6.1 FEDERAL AWARD NOTICES

Successful applicants will receive a signed notice of Federal award, containing instructions on requirements necessary to proceed with execution and performance of the award.

6.2 UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS

If an application is not selected for funding, the applicant will be notified in writing via postal or electronic mail and informed of any review and appeal rights (see 7 CFR part 11 for USDA National Appeals Division procedures). Funding of successfully appealed applications will be limited to and conditioned upon available funding. Due to the number of applications that the agency expects to receive, USDA anticipates that there will be no available funds for successful appellants once all MPPEP Phase 3 Round 2 funds are awarded and obligated.

6.3 ADMINISTRATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY STATEMENTS

(1) As part of the Notice of Award all grant recipients must abide by the Federal Assistance Agreement (Form RD 4280-2).
(2) Additional requirements that apply to recipients selected for this Program can be found in the governmentwide Grants and Agreements regulations codified in 2 CFR parts 25, 170, 175, 180, 182,183, 184, 200, 400, 415, 417, 418, 421; and 48 CFR part 31, and successor regulations to these parts.
(3) All recipients of Federal financial assistance are required to report information about first-tier sub-awards and executive total compensation in accordance with 2 CFR part 170. The recipient must have the necessary processes and systems in place to comply with the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 (Pub. L. 109-282) reporting requirements (see 2 CFR 170.210(b), unless exempt under 2 CFR 170.105(b)).
(4) *Civil Rights.* All awards of Federal financial assistance made under this NOFO are subject to applicable civil rights laws, which may include Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1973, and the Equal Credit Opportunity Act of 1974.
(5) Build America, Buy America (BABAA). Awardees that are Non-Federal Entities, defined pursuant to 2 CFR 200.1 as any State, local government, Indian Tribe, Institution of Higher Education, or nonprofit organization, shall be governed by the requirements of Section 70914 of the Build America, Buy America Act (BABAA) within the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Public Law 117-58), and its implementing regulations at 2 CFR part 184. Any requests for waiver of these requirements must be submitted pursuant to USDA's guidance available online at https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/general-information/staff-

offices/office-chief-financial-officer/federal-financial-assistance-policy/build-america-buy-america-baba-act

(6) *Geospatial Data*. Awardee, and any and all contracts entered into by the Awardee with respect to the Award, shall ensure that geospatial data required to be collected and provided to the agency conforms with the requirements of USDA Department Regulation DR-3465-001 and the Geospatial Metadata Standards set forth in DM 3465-001, which can be obtained online at usda.gov/directives/dr-3465-001.

(7) USDA General Terms & Conditions. Recipients and cooperators who receive USDA grants, cooperative agreements, and similar arrangements (including mutual interest agreements), must comply with the applicable USDA General Terms and Conditions (GT&Cs) below. These terms and conditions are in addition to the assurance and certifications made as part of the award or agreement, and any terms, conditions, and restrictions reflected on or in the official award or agreement document. The terms and conditions are available at the following website: https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/general-information/staff-offices/office-chief-financial-officer/federal-financial-assistance-policy/usda-general-terms-and-conditions.

6.4 REPORTING REQUIREMENTS, ACCOUNTABILITY AND GRANT DISBURSEMENT

Reporting Requirements and Accountability. The maximum Period of Performance is 48 months. The recipient is responsible for the oversight of the Federal award. The recipient must monitor its activities under its Federal award to ensure that it is compliant with all requirements and meets performance expectations. Monitoring by the recipient must cover each program function or activity and is subject to the requirements of 2 CFR 200.328, 2 CFR 200.329 , and 2 CFR 200.330.

(1) A SF-425, Federal Financial Report, and a project performance report will be required on a semi-annual basis (i.e., such reports are due 30 working days after the end of the semi-annual period). For the purposes of this program, semi-annual periods end on June 30th and December 31st. The project performance reports will include the elements prescribed in the Financial Assistance Agreement, Form RD 4280-2, including but not limited to:
    - (a) Processing volume increased (number of pounds or tons) at the Facility;
    - (b) New Value-Added products developed at the Facility;
    - (c) Increase in number of fishers and/or vessels served by the Facility;
    - (d) Number of new sales channels accessed by the Facility; and
    - (e) Number of jobs created and retained at the Facility.

(2) Construction performance report. Federal agencies rely on on-site technical inspections and certified percentage of completion data to monitor progress under Federal awards for construction. Therefore, the Federal agency may require additional performance reports when necessary to ensure the goals and objectives of the Federal awards are met.

(3) A final project and financial status report within 120 days after the expiration or termination of the grant.

(4) Awardees must comply with FSIS regulations as required to attain and maintain inspection status. Inspection violations must be reported to the USDA RBCS State Office administering the grant. Federal action may include termination of the grant award or other appropriate administrative measures, such as requiring corrective actions within a specified timeframe.

(5) One year after project completion the applicant must provide a project performance report describing the outcomes in expanding Processing capacity as identified in the MPPEP Phase 3 Round 2 application and Financial Assistance Agreement, Form RD 4280-2. The report is due 60 days after the first full year following the year in which the expansion project was

completed.

(6) The Agency will conduct onsite reviews more frequently during construction and at least annually for all projects during the period of performance.

(7) Please note that if MPPEP Phase 3 Round 2 grant funds will be utilized for the purchase of or improvements and fixtures to real property, the Agency will file a Notice of Federal Financial Interest on the subject real property. Improvements and fixtures must be used for the original authorized purpose of the grant award. If a situation arises where the original authorized purpose of the grant is no longer feasible, RBCS will work with the entity that owns and operates the Facility to ensure the improvements and fixtures are used for a comparable purpose. Recipients must not dispose of or encumber their title or other interests in any grant-financed real property or equipment, unless prior written approval is given by the agency pursuant to 2 CFR 200.312 and 2 CFR 200.313, as applicable.

(8) Awardees subject to the audit requirements of 2 CFR 200.501, shall provide a full and complete reporting package in accordance with 2 CFR 200.512(c), submitted to the Federal Audit Clearinghouse *the earlier of* 30 calendar days after the auditee receives the auditor's report(s) or nine months after the end of the audit period.

(9) Awardees must request disposition instruction from the Agency if equipment purchased with grant funds is no longer needed for its original purpose. The Agency will follow 2 CFR 200.313 when issuing disposition instructions.

Grant Reimbursement. There are three options for obtaining grant disbursement under MPPEP Phase 3 Round 2. Payments are subject to the requirements in 2 CFR 200.305.

(1) Single Disbursement -Grant funds will be disbursed in full after the project is 100 percent completed and a valid grant of inspection (Federal or equivalent) is provided to the Agency. If this option is utilized the Agency will modify and make applicable the construction planning and performing development requirements at 7 CFR 4280.125(excluding rescinded Executive Order 11246, rescinded Executive Order 11375, and rescinded Executive Order 13672 referenced in 7 CFR 4280.125(a)(2)) or,

(2) Reimbursement -Grant funds will be disbursed on a reimbursement basis through 90 percent of the grant disbursement. The final 10 percent of the grant funds will be held until construction or installation of the project is completed and a valid grant of inspection (Federal or equivalent) is provided to the Agency. If this option is utilized, the Agency will follow the construction planning and performing development requirements in 7 CFR 4280.125 (excluding rescinded Executive Order 11246, rescinded Executive Order 11375, and rescinded Executive Order 13672 referenced in 7 CFR 4280.125(a)(2)).
    (a) Recipients may submit requests for reimbursement no more frequently than monthly. Ordinarily, payment will be made within 30 days after receipt of proper request for reimbursement.
    (b) Recipients must not request reimbursement for the Federal share of amounts withheld from contractors to ensure satisfactory completion of work until after such payments have been made to contractors.
    (c) Recipients must use SF 271, “Outlay Report and Request for Reimbursement for Construction Programs,” to request grant reimbursements. Fund requests must at minimum include documentation of costs and evidence of payment(s), including payment date(s). Failure to provide sufficient documentation of costs and evidence of payment may result in a denial of reimbursement. Or-

(3) The recipient may request advance payments provided it maintains or demonstrates the willingness to maintain both written procedures that minimize the time elapsing between

the transfer of funds and disbursement by the recipient or subrecipient, and financial management systems that meet the standards for fund control and accountability as established in this part. Advance payments to a recipient or subrecipient must be limited to the minimum amounts needed and be timed with actual, immediate cash requirements of the recipient or subrecipient in carrying out the purpose of the approved program or project. The timing and amount of advance payments must be as close as is administratively feasible to the actual disbursements by the recipient or subrecipient for direct program or project costs and the proportionate share of any allowable indirect costs (see 2 CFR 200.305 for additional requirements relating to payment requests and advances of grant funds).

(a) Any advanced funds that are not utilized for allowable costs by the end of the Period of Performance must be returned to the Federal government.
(b) Advance payments of Federal funds must be deposited and maintained in insured accounts whenever possible.
(c) The recipient may retain up to $500 per year of interest earned on Federal funds to use for administrative expenses of the recipient or subrecipient. Any additional interest earned on Federal funds must be returned annually to the Department of Health and Human Services Payment Management System (PMS) through either the Automated Clearing House (ACH) network or a Fedwire Funds Service payment. All interest in excess of $500 per year must be returned to PMS regardless of whether the recipient or subrecipient was paid through PMS. Instructions for returning interest can be found at *https://pms.psc.gov/grant-recipients/returning-funds-interest.html*.
(d) The remaining 50 percent of project costs will be disbursed based on the requirements identified in option 1 or 2 of this section.

6.5 ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF USDA SUPPORT

Proper acknowledgement of a Recipient's USDA funding in published solicitations (e.g., for State competitions), presentations, press releases, and other communications is critical for the success of Agency's programs. As required in 2 CFR 415.2, grant recipients must acknowledge USDA support in all publications written or published with USDA grant or cooperative agreement support.

The following acknowledgment of USDA funding must appear in all published materials or products, in any format (web sites, audiovisuals, etc.), that are substantially based upon or developed under a USDA award:

"Funding for [Project or Publication] was made possible by a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The contents of the [Publication] are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the USDA."

Recipients are strongly encouraged to acknowledge Federal funding in public statements, such as press releases regarding projects and activities. The Recipient is encouraged to display USDA's standard infrastructure investment signage, available for download from the Agency, during construction of the Project. Expenditures for such signage shall be a permitted eligible cost of the Project.

7.0 FEDERAL AWARD AGENCY CONTACTS

After closely reviewing this NOFO in its entirety, applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to utilize the following MPPEP Phase 3 Round 2 tools for program guidance and application support:

(1) *The MPPEP Phase 3 Round 2 Webpage* – site provides an overview, information on submitting

an application, provides contact information and addresses upcoming events https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-programs/meat-and-poultry-processing-expansion-program-phase-3

(2) *USDA AMS* - offers no-cost technical assistance to applicants to help prepare grant applications through its Meat and Poultry Processing Capacity -Technical Assistance Program (MPPTA). Applicants are encouraged to contact the MPPTA network of providers for broad-scope technical support from preapplication to post-award grant management, business planning and processing, operational resources and supply chain development expertise. Complete the USDA MPPTA Technical Assistance Request form to connect with these services.

(3) *Grants.gov* - All questions regarding Grants.gov technical assistance must be directed to the Grants.gov Applicant Support Portal.

(4) MPPEP Phase 3 Round 2 Staff – MPPEP Phase 3 Round 2 staff can be contacted for general assistance via e-mail at mppep@usda.gov.

8.0 OTHER INFORMATION

8.1 PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT

In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. §§ 3501 et seq.), 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 0570-0079.

8.2 NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT

All activities funded under this NOFO must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act and related applicable Agency regulations at 7 CFR Part 1b and related instructions, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, other applicable Federal laws and regulations, and any applicable State, local, or Tribal laws or regulations.

The Agency will review each grant application to determine its compliance with 7 CFR Part 1b. Activities such as purchase of equipment, including improvements, upgrades, renovations or retrofits to install equipment in an existing Facility are generally classified as a Categorical Exclusion pursuant to 7 CFR 1b.4, and usually do not require any additional documentation. However, the Agency may request additional information from the applicant for the purpose of completing the environmental review.

8.3 FEDERAL FUNDING ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY ACT

All applicants, in accordance with 2 CFR part 25, must be registered in SAM and have a UEI number as stated in Section 4.3 of this notice. All recipients of Federal financial assistance are required to report information about first-tier sub-awards and executive total compensation in accordance with 2 CFR part 170.

8.4 EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

(1) Faith-based organizations may apply for this award on the same basis as any other organization, as set forth at, and subject to the protections and requirements of, this part and any applicable constitutional and statutory requirements, including 42 U.S.C. 2000bb *et seq.* USDA will not, in the selection of recipients, discriminate for or against an organization on the basis of the organization's religious character, motives, or affiliation, or lack thereof, or on the basis of

conduct that would not be considered grounds to favor or disfavor a similarly situated secular organization.

(2) A faith-based organization that participates in this program will retain its independence from the Government and may continue to carry out its mission consistent with religious freedom and conscience protections in Federal law. Religious accommodation may also be sought under many of these religious freedom and conscience protection laws.

(3) A faith-based organization may not use direct Federal financial assistance from USDA to support or engage in any explicitly religious activities except when consistent with the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment and any other applicable requirements. An organization receiving Federal financial assistance also may not, in providing services funded by USDA, or in their outreach activities related to such services, discriminate against a program beneficiary or prospective program beneficiary on the basis of religion, a religious belief, a refusal to hold a religious belief, or a refusal to attend or participate in a religious practice.

8.5 NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

In accordance with Federal civil rights laws and 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, 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, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the State or local Agency that administers the program or contact USDA through the Telecommunications Relay Service at 711 (voice and TTY). 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 usda.gov/about-usda/general-information/staff-offices/office-assistant-secretary-civil-rights/how-file-program-discrimination-complaint and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all 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, Mail Stop 9410 Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or

(2) Fax: (202) 690-7442; or

(3) E-Mail: program.intake@usda.gov