Fertilizer Investment & Expansion for Long-Term Domestic Supply Program (FIELDS)

Fiscal Year 2026
Notice of Funding Opportunity

Funding Opportunity Number: RD-RBS-26-01-FIELDS

Publication Date: July 1, 2026
Application Due Date: August 17, 2026

Victoria Collin Digitally signed by Victoria Collin Date: 2026.07.07 16:14:54 -04'00'

Victoria Collin

Acting Administrator

Rural Business-Cooperative Service

BASIC INFORMATION

Funding Opportunity Title: Fertilizer Investment & Expansion for Long-term Domestic Supply Program (FIELDS)

Funding Opportunity Number: RD-RBS-26-01-FIELDS

Announcement Type: Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

Assistance Listing Number: 10.383

Dates: Completed electronic applications must be submitted through www.grants.gov by August 17, 2026. Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted.

Executive Summary:

The Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) is utilizing the services of the Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBCS or Agency) of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), in the implementation of the Fertilizer Investment & Expansion for Long-term Domestic Supply Program (FIELDS). In response to well recognized challenges and concerns with fertilizer market volatility and the need to provide United States (U.S.) farmers more domestic access to fertilizer for producing agricultural commodities, CCC is providing $500 million in awards to expand or bring into operation new, independent domestic production capacity, pursuant to section 5(b) of the CCC Charter Act (15 U.S.C. 714c(b)), which provides that CCC may "make available materials and facilities required in connection with the production and marketing of agricultural commodities (other than tobacco)." Competitive, cost-share awards of up to $150 million are available to eligible entities to expand capacity, improve competition, and increase supply chain resilience within the agricultural fertilizer sector, in connection with the production of agricultural commodities.

Under FIELDS the process manufacturing of fertilizer must be: (1) independent and outside the dominant fertilizer suppliers; (2) made in America; (3) innovative; (4) energy dominant and secure; and (5) farmer focused. Moreover, CCC will prioritize projects that are in the later stages of development, technically feasible, financially viable, and have already identified other sources of funding.

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 an award through the program. Please review Section 4.2 for more information and details on the required documents and supporting information.

Document	Details
☐ SF424	Maximum period of performance is 60 months
☐ Project Narrative Application	Award Purpose and Project Details. Narrative is limited to 20 pages, not including application template and Supporting Documents.
☐ SF424A	Budget Document (Required for Non-Construction projects only)
☐ SF424C	Budget Information – Construction Programs
☐ SF424D	Assurances for Construction Projects
☐ SF-LLL	Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (if applicable)
☐ Environmental Information	Environmental checklist, or information covered in the checklist
☐ Supporting Documents	See section 4.2 for more information on required supporting documents.

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 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 during the active Federal award.
- 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 Notice to ensure the application is received and eligible for consideration, and to understand allowable and unallowable costs.
- Apply for the correct program
    - Assistance Listing number "**10.383**" and Funding Opportunity Number "**RD-RBS-26-01-FIELDS**"
- 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:
    - https://www.grants.gov/applicants/applicant-faqs
    - https://www.grants.gov/applicants/workspace-overview

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

1.1 Purpose of the Program

On January 20, 2025, the President issued Executive Order 14156, "Declaring a National Energy Emergency", which directed Federal agencies to take immediate action to expand domestic energy and critical mineral production in order to reduce costs, strengthen national security, and ensure reliable access to essential inputs for industries such as agriculture. In response, the Administration announced actions to accelerate energy development, improve supply chain resilience, and lower costs for farmers and ranchers who depend heavily on fuel, fertilizer, and other energy-intensive inputs.

On February 14, 2025, the President issued Executive Order 14213, establishing the National Energy Dominance Council to coordinate a whole-of-government strategy to increase domestic production of oil, gas, coal, uranium, biofuels, hydroelectric power, and critical minerals. The Administration also implemented targeted trade measures affecting fertilizer inputs, including tariff adjustments for non-United States, Mexico, Canada Agreement (USMCA) fertilizer products, to stabilize supply, reduce price pressures, and improve market access for American farmers. Collectively, these actions are intended to strengthen competition and availability within agricultural input markets, expand domestic production capacity, and ensure that American farmers have reliable, affordable access to the energy and materials needed to operate successfully.

USDA has identified several key areas of concern related to the fertilizer market and agricultural input supply chain, including: challenges in increasing domestic access to fertilizer for U.S. farmers producing agricultural commodities; short- and long-term trends in fertilizer prices; the competitive effects of bundling one product, such as fertilizer, with another product; transportation and delivery constraints; U.S. reliance on foreign sources of supply; and the global nature of fertilizer markets.

The Fertilizer Investment & Expansion for Long-term Domestic Supply (FIELDS) Program is intended to expand, or bring into operation new, independent domestic fertilizer production capacity in order to provide agricultural producers with additional domestic fertilizer options and strengthen the U.S. fertilizer supply chain. Program funding is intended to support projects that significantly increase domestic process manufacturing capacity and fertilizer availability, including expansions or upgrades of existing facilities, construction of new domestic production facilities, shovel-ready projects capable of rapidly increasing domestic supply, and on-site fertilizer terminals and transportation infrastructure that improve supply chain efficiency. It should be noted, while distribution is an eligible use of funds, it may not serve as the primary or standalone purpose.

Through these investments, CCC expects the FIELDS to expand domestic production capacity, promote competition, strengthen supply chain resilience, and increase fertilizer availability for U.S. farmers in support of agricultural productivity and the production of agricultural commodities.

To meet this purpose, FIELDS will support the process manufacturing of fertilizer that is:

- Independent and outside the dominant fertilizer suppliers. The goal is to increase domestic competition. Accordingly, entities and affiliates that hold a market share, in production greater than or equal to the entity holding the fourth-largest share of the market for nitrogen, sulfur, phosphate, or potash, or any combination thereof, will not be considered for funding;

- Made in America. Produced within the United States and its territories or on Tribal Lands by entities operating within the United States and its territories or on Tribal Lands, thereby creating domestic jobs and reducing reliance on potentially unstable or inconsistent foreign supplies;

- Innovative. Designed to improve fertilizer production methods and enhanced-efficiency fertilizers in order to jump-start the next generation of fertilizer products;

- Energy Dominant & Secure. Supportive of domestic fertilizer production and critical agricultural input manufacturing and processing that strengthens U.S. supply chain resilience, advances energy dominance, reduces dependence on foreign adversaries, and protects the long-term security of American agriculture and food production; and

- Farmer-focused. Consistent with other CCC investments, designed to ensure that the additional domestic capacity supported by USDA is dedicated to U.S. agricultural commodity production and puts American farmers first.

Successfully addressing challenges related to expanding capacity, improving competition, and increasing supply chain resilience within the agricultural fertilizer and nutrient management sector will require coordination and partnership across the supply chain. The FIELDS Program represents one component of a broader, whole-of-government effort to invest in innovative, domestic fertilizer production.

1.2 Solicitation of Applications

CCC solicits applications from qualified entities, as described in Section 3.1, for projects that will contribute significantly to the purpose of the FIELDS Program. Accordingly, applicants must submit applications no later than August 17, 2026.

1.3 Statutory Authority

The FIELDS Program is authorized by section 5(b) the CCC Charter Act (15 U.S.C. § 714c(b)) which allows CCC funds to be used to make available materials and facilities required in the production and marketing of agricultural commodities.

1.4 Definitions

The definitions applicable to this Notice and the FIELDS program are as follows:

Agency. The Rural Business—Cooperative Service (RBCS).

Alaska Native Corporation. A corporate entity defined and established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, 43 U.S.C. Ch. 33 (ANC).

Business Plan. Formal statement describing the Applicant's business goals, the reasons why they are attainable, and the Applicant's plan for achieving 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 applicant and its officers and employees.

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

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.

Cost Sharing has the meaning located at 2 CFR 200.1.

Domestically Owned means an entity organized in the United States under the laws of a State or, in the case of a Tribal Entity, organized under Federal, State, or Tribal law and under the jurisdiction of a Tribe, including entities formed under Section 17 of the Indian Reorganization Act, and for which a majority of the ownership interest is held, directly or indirectly through one or more entities, by U.S. citizens.

Feasibility study. A comprehensive study, including an opinion or finding, prepared by qualified consultant(s), that evaluates the economic, market, technical, financial, and management feasibility of a proposed project or operation to determine whether it is practical and viable and to assess its likelihood of success.

Fertilizer. Fertilizer refers to any organic or inorganic material of natural or synthetic origin which is added to soil to provide the macronutrients necessary to sustain plant growth. For the purpose of this NOFO, such macronutrients are nitrogen, sulfur, phosphorus, and potash. Common examples of nitrogen fertilizer include but are not limited to: Nitrate (NO3), Ammonia (NH3) and Ammonium (NH4), Urea (COCNH). Ammonium Nitrate, Calcium Nitrate, Cal-Nitro,

Financial Assistance Agreement. Form RD 4280-2, Rural Business-Cooperative Service Financial Assistance Agreement, or successor form is an agreement between RBCS and the recipient setting forth the provisions under which the award will be administered.

Independently Owned and Operated. Independently Owned and Operated means not controlled, directly or indirectly, by any other entity, including a foreign state or controlled by others in matters of opinion or conduct; and not subject to another's authority or jurisdiction, except in the case of a Tribal entity.

Key personnel means the owners, employees, new hires, consultants, and/or contractors who will be overseeing and/or completing the tasks in the Work Plan.

Market Share. A company's, Tribal entity's, or ANC's market share is its production capacity measured as a percentage of an industry's total production or distribution capacity. Company Capacity / Market Capacity * 100 = Market Share. For purposes of the certification, both a global and domestic market share should be calculated and certified

National Appeals Division. A division of the United States Department of Agriculture as described in 7 CFR part 11.

Non-federal entity has the meaning located at 2 CFR 200.1.

Process Manufacturing. Process manufacturing means physical, mechanical, or chemical operations that alter a fertilizer's chemistry or physical characteristics, including, but not limited to, changes in particle size, moisture content, or release characteristics, as well as the conversion of raw materials into a fertilizer product. Examples include producing ammonia from natural gas; converting ammonia into urea; granulating fertilizer into uniform pellets; drying fertilizer granules for specific applications; and coating fertilizer with micronutrients. Process manufacturing does not include mixing, blending, or bagging alone.

Program. Program means the Fertilizer Investment & Expansion for Long-term Domestic Supply Program authorized by the CCC Charter Act and administered by RBCS.

Qualified Consultant. An independent third-party person possessing the knowledge, expertise, and experience to perform the specific task required.

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.

Tribal Entities. Tribal Entities includes any Indian Tribe, Tribal organization or consortia, Tribal corporation wholly owned and controlled by an Indian tribe, or Native Hawaiian organization.

Tribal Land. Tribal land means land owned by the United States and held in trust for the benefit of the Tribe or Tribal citizen; land held by the Tribe or Tribal citizen in restricted fee status; and land owned in fee by an ANC, Indian Tribe, or Tribal Entity.

Indian Tribe. means any entity included on the list published in the *Federal Register* by the Secretary of the Interior pursuant to the Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act of 1994 (Pub. L. 103-454; 108 Stat. 4791, 4792).

Workplan. A narrative provided by the applicant that demonstrates the feasibility of the proposed project and facility to meet the objectives of the FIELDS program, including a set of goals, strategies, anticipated outcomes, and well-developed targeting criteria for doing so.

1.5 Application of Awards

The Agency will review, evaluate and score applications received in response to the provisions found in section 5.1 of this Notice. Awards under the FIELDS program will be made on a competitive basis using specific selection criteria contained in section 5.2 of this Notice. The Agency advises all interested parties that the applicant bears the full burden in preparing and submitting an application in response to this Notice regardless of whether or not funding is appropriated for the FIELDS program in FY 2026.

2.0 FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Type of Awards: Grant

Fiscal Year Funds: FY 2026

Available Funds: $500 million. RBCS may at its discretion, increase the total level of funding available under this Notice from any available source provided the awards meet the requirements of the statute which made the funding available to the Agency.

Minimum Award Amount: $15 Million

Maximum Award Amount: $150 Million

Anticipated Award Date: December 2026 - January 2027

Performance Period: Projects may be between one and five years in duration. The maximum period of performance for this award is 60 months with up to 24 months of no-cost extensions considered on a case-by-case basis.

Renewal or Supplemental Awards: None

Type of Assistance Instrument: Financial Assistance Agreement

Approximate Number of Awards: 10 Awards

3.0 ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

3.1 Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants must meet the eligibility requirements of this Notice.

Entities are eligible regardless of legal structure and may include Tribes, Tribal Entities, Alaska Native Corporations, for-profit entities, corporations, non-profit entities, producer-owned cooperatives and corporations, certified benefit corporations, and state or local government entities. Private entities must be independently owned and operated.

Eligible applicants must:

- Operate within the U.S. and its territories and propose projects that are physically located within the U.S. and its territories ; and
- Be Domestically Owned; and
- Process manufacture or plan to process manufacture in accordance with all federal, state, Tribal and local regulations governing fertilizer process manufacturing; and
- Be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) and must maintain annual SAM registration while an application is active and through the term of an award. Refer to Section 4.3 for instructions on how to register your entity in the SAM.

Additionally, eligible applicants, including affiliates of the eligible applicant, must not hold a market share in production greater than or equal to the entity that holds the fourth largest share of that market for any of the following nutrients or components: nitrogen, sulfur, phosphate, potash, or any combination thereof. All applicants must certify whether they hold a market share greater than or equal to the top four process manufacturers as applicable in nitrogen, sulfur, phosphate, potash, or any combination thereof, as applicable. If process manufacturing or planning to process manufacture other eligible nutrients which are not listed above, no certification is required.

If an applicant believes market share of the top four entities or their affiliates is not an accurate measure of the competitive environment for the particular segment which they are proposing to add fertilizer production capacity, they may submit a justification with the application which is subject to review and approval. For example, there may be a situation where two dominant firms control the vast majority of the market and the other smaller firms have very small fractions such that it is difficult to know what the third and fourth largest entities or their affiliates are and do not have the same market power as the two dominant firms. Farmer association applicants, as defined by the Capper Volstead Act, have a limited antitrust exemption and may also submit a justification that will be subject to review and approval.

Multiple applications from affiliated applicant entities (with ''affiliation'' defined by the Small Business Administration regulation 13 CFR 121.103, or successor regulation) are not permitted. Multiple projects owned by the same applicant entity should be combined into one application before submission.

The applicant and its principals must not be debarred, suspended, or otherwise excluded from participation in USDA programs, in accordance with 2 CFR parts 180 and 417. The applicant also must not be delinquent on any Federal debt or subject to an outstanding judgment obtained by the United States in a Federal court. Upon receipt of an application, 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 unresolved Federal debts. If the Do Not Pay system returns a finding, the Agency may determine if the applicant is ineligible or may proceed to award funds to other eligible applicants as appropriate. Applicants are responsible for complying with all applicable regulations, including 2 CFR parts 180 and 417.

3.2 Cost Sharing or Matching

Matching funds are required under this funding opportunity. Before execution of the Financial Award Agreement, applicants must demonstrate that they have secured commitments to sufficient non-Federal matching funding in the amount needed to complete the project as described in the application. All award requests are subject to a matching requirement equal to 50 percent of total eligible project costs. For example, for a project with $50 million in total eligible costs, an applicant may request up to $25 million and must provide at least $25 million in matching funds.

3.3 Other Eligibility Requirements

A Tribal Government Resolution of Consent, is required if a project is being proposed on Tribal lands and the applicant is not the Tribe nor a Tribal entity owned by the Tribe.

Within such a project, eligible uses of funds include, but are not limited to:

- Construction of a new facility or purchase of an existing facility for purposes of expanding capacity or increasing output, including the purchase of land;
- Pre-development costs including, but not limited to, engineering and other professional fees. While pre-development costs is an eligible use of funds, it cannot be the primary use of funds;
- Working capital to support expanded capacity or increased outputs. While working capital is an eligible use of funds, it cannot be the primary use of funds;
- Modernizing or expanding an existing facility, including expansion and modifications to existing buildings and construction of new buildings at existing facilities;
- Purchasing new, or modernizing existing process manufacturing equipment;
- Customizing and installing equipment, devices, and technology that improves processing functions, worker conditions, or safety;
- Ensuring compliance with occupational and other safety requirements under applicable law; and
- Improving fertilizer logistics (e.g., distribution, transportation, and storage) to benefit producers in a cost-efficient manner. While an expenditure for logistics is an eligible use of funds, it cannot be the primary use of funds.

Applicants with an existing or prior FPEP award may apply only for a project or project phase that is demonstrably separate from, and additive to, the scope of work funded under the FPEP award. FIELDS funds may not be used to duplicate or replace previously awarded federal funding.

Applicants and Activities Not Eligible for Funding:

For the purpose of this Notice, examples of fertilizer not eligible for funding include but are not limited to precision agriculture technologies, such as drones. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has a variety of programs outside the FIELDS program to assist producers with the adoption and development of nutrient management plans and precision delivery of fertilizer.

Entities or their affiliates that hold a market share in process manufacturing greater than or equal to the entity that holds the fourth largest share of that market for any of the following nutrients or components: nitrogen, sulfur, phosphate, potash, or any combination thereof, are ineligible under FIELDS.

Ineligible activities (existing or planned) and costs include but are not limited to those associated with elements a) through h) below:

a) Research and development; or

b) Process manufacturing of fertilizer that is not commercially available and in use; or

c) Projects focused primarily on nutrient substitutes or alternatives to commercial fertilizer; or

d) Projects that do not materially increase domestic commercial fertilizer process manufacturing capacity; or

e) Standalone projects that consist primarily of mixing, blending, repackaging, bagging, storage, warehousing, distribution, or resale are not eligible unless these activities are integral to and directly support an otherwise eligible project that materially increases domestic commercial fertilizer process manufacturing capacity.; or

f) Projects that have not secured the required matching funds; or

g) Fertilizer and nutrient alternative logistics activities, such as distribution, or transportation, or storage for which funding is made available under other authorities; or

h) Site-specific applications of fertilizers, pesticides, irrigation, and herbicides, remote sensing, geographic information systems (GISs), and the Global Positioning System (GPS), as funding is also made available for these activities under other authorities, https://www.nifa.usda.gov/grants/programs/precision-geospatial-sensor-technologies-programs; https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/eqip/; and https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/csp/.

4.0 APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

4.1 Application Package

Applications submitted in response to this Notice must be filed electronically through Grants.gov unless the applicant has received a prior waiver from the Agency. In limited circumstances, including when an applicant is unable to submit electronically due to circumstances beyond the applicant's control, the Agency may approve a waiver of the electronic submission requirement. Applicants requesting a waiver must submit that request by email to **FIELDS@usda.gov** no later than 48 hours before the application window closes. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit applications well in advance of the deadline through grants.gov/. For an overview of the application process, applicants should refer to the Grants.gov "Apply for Grants" webpage. This Notice provides the information necessary to obtain and complete the required application forms and Rural Development-specific attachments. Additional information about submitting an application through Grants.gov is available in this document.

Applicants can find the opportunity under either the Assistance Listing Number 10.383, or the Funding Opportunity Number "RD-RBS-26-01-FIELDS."

4.2 Content and Form of Application Submission

Applicants must include all requirements as described in this Notice.

Application and Submission Information:

Project Narrative. The project narrative must address all elements a) through f), be typed single spaced in a standard typeface (e.g., Times New Roman, Arial, Calibri, Courier), with no smaller than 12-point font, one-inch margins, and each page numbered.

a) Executive summary. Provide a summary detailing project goals and objectives in 500 words or less.

b) Applicant information. Refer to Section 3.1 and address all information specified in the section to allow RBCS to determine the eligibility of the applicant.

c) Project information. Provide a workplan and budget to include all activities by task, associated dollar amounts, and proposed timeframe for completion. Ensure sufficient detail is provided to allow RBCS to determine project eligibility including all other funding that is needed to complete the project. Refer to Section 3.3 for a list of activities eligible for funding. Funding Restrictions are listed in Section 4.6.

d) Land ownership and access. Describe how applicant owns and controls or has access to the land where the project is located or is to be located, as applicable, or in the case of Tribal Entities, the beneficial interest in the trust lands.

e) Applicants must estimate the increase in volume associated with the project and the corresponding unit of measure. Estimates must also include the acreage covered and the number of farmers served.

f) Evaluation criteria. Refer to Section 5.1 and address all evaluation criteria. Discussion is required for each criterion to show how the project has merit and why it is likely to be successful. Include summaries of any feasibility studies, business, and marketing plans.

Environmental review. Review the environmental checklist available on Grants.gov to ensure that you provide the environmental documentation necessary to complete a NEPA environmental review. Contact RBCS to assist in determining what documentation is required to be provided. Refer to Section 8.2 and the FIELDS website at rd.usda.gov for additional information.

Financial viability. Provide the following to assist RBCS in determining financial viability of the project.

a) Business plan;

b) 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;

c) Current balance sheet and income statements (within 90 days);

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

e) Feasibility study. Applicants must provide a recently completed feasibility study, prepared for the project and dated no more than 3 years before submission, signed by a qualified consultant. The feasibility study must demonstrate that the proposed project or operation is practical and viable and assess its likelihood of success. The Agency must concur that the feasibility study is acceptable and adequate.

f) Source documentation (including resumes for key personnel) to support key personnel, construction labor, and operational workforce under scoring criterion 3 in Section 5.1.

Applicant certifications. Applicants must provide the following as part of a complete application:

a) The applicant must identify whether or not the applicant has 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) Certification that the applicant is a legal entity in good standing and operating in accordance with the laws of the U.S., state(s) or Tribe(s) where the applicant has a place of business.

c) Certification by the applicant that any equipment required for the project is available, can be procured and delivered within the proposed project development schedule, and will be installed in conformance with manufacturer's specifications and design requirements. This would not be applicable when equipment is not part of the project.

d) Certification by the applicant that the project will be constructed in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, agreements, permits, codes, and standards.

e) Certification by the applicant that the applicant is not one of the top four process manufacturers of nitrogen, sulfur, phosphate, or potash, as applicable.

f) Certification by applicant of matching funds and other funding needed to complete the project as proposed in the application has been secured.

By certifying, the applicant acknowledges that providing false or misleading information may result in denial of the application, termination of an award, or other remedies available to the Federal Government.

Design and construction documents. For projects involving construction, include any design and construction documents. If selected for funding, RBCS will follow the construction planning and performing development regulation at 7 CFR 4280.125.

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

- Received by Grants.gov after the submission deadline.
- Submitted via any method other than through Grants.gov, unless specifically waived by the Agency.
- Submitted to the wrong Funding Opportunity Announcement.
- Not responsive to the requirements of this NOFO (e.g., project or applicant eligibility requirements, incomplete application, not providing all documents as required in Section 4.0).

4.3 Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management

a) At the time of application, each applicant must have an active registration in 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 they complete 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.

4.4 Submission Dates and Times

The Agency will not solicit or consider new scoring or eligibility information that is submitted after the application deadline. The Agency does reserve the right to ask applicants for clarifying information and additional verification of assertions in the application.

4.5 Intergovernmental Review

Executive Order (EO) 12372, “Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs,” does not apply to this program.

4.6 Funding Restrictions

Funding limitations are set forth in this Notice and include the following:

a) Use of Funds. Award funds and matching funds may be used only for eligible purposes described in this Notice. In general, FIELDS funds cannot be used to pay for project costs incurred before the award is approved. However, certain pre-award costs may be allowable pursuant to 2 CFR 200. Funds may not be used to pay the salaries or administrative costs of any State or local government.

b) Period of Performance. The Period of Performance for this award is 60 months from the date of award. A no-cost extension of up to 24 months may be approved on a case-by-case basis. However, the Project timeframe may not exceed five (5) years from the date of award unless an extension is approved. The project must be implementation-ready upon award, pending completion of environmental reviews or similar requirements. The proposed length of the award period should reflect the complexity of the project, as described in the application work plan

c) Any Program Income earned during the award period as a result of Project activities is subject to the requirements of [2 CFR 200.307] and must be managed and reported accordingly.

d) Indirect project costs. Indirect project costs are not eligible project costs.

5.0 APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

5.1 Criteria

All eligible and complete applications will be evaluated and competitively scored based on the scoring criteria and weights contained in this Notice. Failure to address any of the application criteria by the application deadline will result in the application being determined ineligible, and the application will not be considered for funding.

As part of a complete application, applicants are required to provide a narrative describing their project. In general, all proposals will be evaluated at minimum on the following primary evaluation criteria and sub-criteria as drafted below.

The most competitive applications will describe project objectives that align with FIELDS goals (as described in [Section 1.2]), expected outcomes and measures of success for the project. Failure to address all or part of a criterion, or to insufficiently communicate relevant project information, will result in a lower score.

Merit Evaluation Criteria

Eligible applications will be evaluated using the scoring criteria below. Applications may undergo a multi-stage evaluation process, which may include automated and reviewer-based scoring. The most competitive applications will clearly describe project objectives that align with the purpose of the FIELDS program, as described in Section 1.2, and that are tailored to the applicant's specific project, market, business operations, and community.

Priority will be given to applications for projects that are implementation ready. Applicants that demonstrate a higher degree of implementation readiness may receive higher scores under the evaluation criteria. For purposes of this competition, implementation ready means the applicant demonstrates that the project is sufficiently advanced in planning, financing commitments, technical development, and execution to begin and proceed within the period of performance with a strong likelihood of success. Relevant indicators may include, as applicable, the status of financing; engineering and design; technical validation; site control; permitting and environmental review; equipment procurement; supplier or contractor arrangements; and customer, sales, or offtake commitments.

Applications that provide strong, well-documented evidence that these project elements are in place or substantially advanced will receive higher scores than applications that rely on preliminary assumptions, contingent commitments, or less developed project plans.

1. Financial Viability and Technical Merit (0–25 points)
   Applicants must describe in the project narrative, Section 4.2, the strength of the proposed project and how the project will achieve financial viability and technical feasibility. Responses must address:

   a. Financial projections - The strength of the applicant's financial projections, including assumptions and supporting documentation; and
   b. Technical merit and performance - The demonstrated track record of the proposed technologies or systems, expected project performance, and supporting documentation; and
   c. Financing and capital - The extent to which financing and capital necessary to carry out the project have been secured or identified, including confirmed and preliminary commitments. Applicants with confirmed commitments for matching funds will receive more points.

Merely addressing the elements of this criterion is not sufficient. Scores will reflect the quality of the response, the strength of the supporting evidence, and the extent to which the application demonstrates a likelihood of success.

Scoring:
0 points - The application does not address this criterion.
1–8 points - The application addresses the criterion but does not adequately address all required elements, provides limited supporting detail, or does not clearly demonstrate a likelihood of success.
9–17 points - The application adequately addresses all required elements, provides sufficient supporting detail, and demonstrates a reasonable likelihood of success.
18–25 points - The application thoroughly addresses all required elements, provides strong supporting detail and evidence, and demonstrates a high likelihood of success.

2. Market Impact and Market Demand & Opportunities (0–30 points)
The Agency will award points for this criterion as follows:

(i) Market Impact (0–12 points)
Applicants must demonstrate that the project will have a meaningful impact on the domestic fertilizer market by expanding the process manufacturing of fertilizer for use in the production of agricultural commodities in the United States. Applications should show how the project will increase product availability, improve market access for agricultural producers, and expand market choice and competition within the sector.

Applicants should describe plans for procuring inputs, including any arrangements that create additional market opportunities for agricultural producers as suppliers. Applicants may also describe commitments or expressions of interest from agricultural producers, producer-owned entities, end users, or other buyers.

Applications must address:

a. The adequacy of the input supply and procurement plan, including the type, quantity, quality, frequency, and duration of procurement arrangements, and how those arrangements align with current, initial, and maximum anticipated operating capacity; and
b. How the project will expand domestic fertilizer process manufacturing, and improve product availability and market access; and
c. The extent to which the project will increase competition, diversify available fertilizer products, or reduce supply constraints in the service area or broader U.S. market; and
d. The anticipated number of agricultural producers or producer-owned entities and the associated acres involved in or benefiting from the project; and
e. Any additional market barriers the project will address or market opportunities it will create if funded; and
f. Applicants must describe any local support for their proposed project and outline strategies to build regional support. They should also summarize the scale and scope of commitments - financial, infrastructure, workforce or otherwise - from federal, Tribal, state, local, or third-party contributors.

Merely addressing the elements of this criterion is not sufficient; scores will reflect both the quality of the response and the extent to which it demonstrates a likelihood of success.

Scoring:
0 points - The application does not address this criterion.
1–4 points - The application discusses the criterion but does not adequately address all required aspects, provides limited supporting detail, or does not clearly demonstrate a likelihood of success.
5–8 points - The application adequately addresses all required aspects of the criterion, provides sufficient supporting detail, and demonstrates a reasonable likelihood of success.
9–12 points - The application thoroughly addresses all required aspects of the criterion, provides strong supporting detail and evidence, and demonstrates a high likelihood of success.

(ii) Market Demand & Opportunities (0–18 points)
Applicants must provide detailed information demonstrating market demand for the proposed fertilizer product(s) and the project's ability to capture that demand successfully. The response should explain the market need for additional fertilizer offerings, anticipated sales opportunities, relevant competition, and the applicant's ability to bring product to market.

Applications should address the following, as applicable to the proposed project, and explain any item that is not applicable:

a. Validated demand - Evidence of expected increases in production, throughput, or sales volume, including current or prospective customer demand; and
b. Production availability - Projected production capacity for fertilizer to be made available for use in agricultural commodity production when the project is at operational capacity; and
c. Market drivers - The economic, agronomic, technological, or supply chain factors driving customer demand, as well as current constraints affecting U.S.-produced fertilizer products; and
d. Partnerships and commercial linkages - Existing or prospective supplier, distributor, retailer, producer, or end-user arrangements that support market entry, product movement, and sales growth; and
e. End-user commitments and identified markets - Current or prospective commitments from end users or buyers, including identified regional or national markets and anticipated sales volumes; and
f. Applicant capability and market position - The applicant's experience producing, handling, marketing, or selling fertilizer products, and the competitive conditions in the service area; and
g. Project sustainability - The operational and economic factors supporting the long-term viability of the business beyond the FIELDS project period.

Merely addressing the elements of this criterion is not sufficient. Scores will reflect both the quality of the response and the extent to which the application demonstrates market potential and a likelihood of success.

Scoring:
0 points - The application does not address this criterion.
1–6 points - The application addresses the criterion but does not adequately address all applicable elements, provides limited supporting detail, or does not clearly demonstrate market potential or a likelihood of success.
7–12 points - The application adequately addresses all applicable elements, provides sufficient supporting detail, and demonstrates a reasonable likelihood of success.
13–18 points - The application thoroughly addresses all applicable elements, provides strong supporting detail and evidence, and demonstrates a high likelihood of success.

3. Work Plan and Budget (0–25 points)
Applicants must provide a clear, detailed, and achievable plan for implementing the proposed project during the Period of Performance. The application must demonstrate that the project is well organized, supported by an appropriate budget, and capable of being carried out by qualified personnel with effective risk management measures in place.

Applications should address the following:

(i) Work Plan (0–7 points)
The application must present a clear, detailed, and complete work plan for implementing the proposed project. The work plan should identify major project activities, sequencing, milestones, and expected timelines for completion during the Period of Performance. The work plan should demonstrate that the proposed schedule is realistic and aligned with the project’s objectives and anticipated outcomes.

Scoring:
0 points - The application does not address this criterion.
1–3 points - The application provides a limited or incomplete work plan, lacks sufficient detail on activities or timelines, or does not clearly demonstrate feasibility.
4–5 points - The application provides an adequate work plan with reasonable detail on activities, milestones, and timelines and demonstrates a reasonable likelihood of successful implementation.
6–7 points - The application provides a thorough, clear, and well-supported work plan with realistic timelines, logical sequencing, and strong evidence of achievability.

(ii) Budget (0–6 points)
The application must include a detailed project budget that clearly describes each budget line item and shows how each cost is directly tied to project activities, key personnel, or service providers. The budget should demonstrate that proposed costs are reasonable, allocable, allowable, and necessary to achieve the project’s objectives. Applicants should provide enough detail to support review of major cost categories and explain how the proposed expenditures contribute to project outcomes.

Scoring:
0 points - The application does not address this criterion.
1–2 points - The application includes a budget, but it lacks sufficient detail, does not clearly connect costs to project activities, or raises concerns about reasonableness or allocability.
3–4 points - The application includes an adequate budget with sufficient detail, reasonable costs, and a clear connection between expenditures and project activities.
5–6 points - The application includes a thorough and well-justified budget with clear, detailed line items, strong alignment to project activities, and convincing evidence that costs are reasonable, allocable, and necessary.

(iii) Key Personnel and Service Providers (0–6 points)
The application must describe the key personnel and service providers who will implement the project and support expanded operations after the Period of Performance. Applicants should demonstrate that

these individuals or entities have the experience, qualifications, and organizational capacity needed to carry out the project successfully.

Scoring:
0 points - The application does not address this criterion.
1–2 points - The application identifies personnel or service providers but provides limited information about their qualifications, roles, or capacity to implement the project.
3–4 points - The application adequately describes key personnel and service providers, including their roles and relevant experience, and demonstrates a reasonable likelihood of successful implementation.
5–6 points - The application thoroughly describes key personnel and service providers, clearly defines their responsibilities, and provides strong evidence of the experience and capacity needed to implement the project and sustain expanded operations.

4. Major Risks and Mitigation (0–6 points)
The application must identify major risks that could affect project implementation or long-term operations and describe strategies to manage or mitigate those risks. Risks may include, as applicable, construction delays, equipment or materials availability, labor shortages, service provider performance, access to operating capital, market loss, legal or regulatory compliance issues, or zoning, environmental, waste, and utility-related issues. Applicants should focus on the most significant risks relevant to the proposed project and explain how they will be monitored and addressed.

Scoring:
0 points - The application does not address this criterion.
1–2 points - The application identifies some risks but provides limited detail, does not address the most significant risks, or does not present credible mitigation strategies.
3–4 points - The application adequately identifies major risks and provides reasonable mitigation strategies demonstrating a reasonable likelihood of successful implementation.
5–6 points - The application thoroughly identifies the most significant project risks and provides clear, credible, and well-developed mitigation strategies demonstrating a high likelihood of successful implementation.

5. Nitrogen or Sulfur-Related Products or Projects (Up to 5 points)

As domestic shortages and supply constraints have affected in particular the availability of nitrogen- and sulfur-related fertilizers, the Agency will award up to 5 points to projects involving the process manufacturing of nitrogen- or sulfur-related fertilizer products intended for use in agricultural commodity production in the United States. Applications should clearly describe the nitrogen- or sulfur-related product or project component and its expected contribution to improving domestic fertilizer availability.

6. Executed Off-Take Agreements (Up to 5 points)

The Agency will award up to 5 points to projects that demonstrate market readiness through executed off-take agreements for the proposed fertilizer product(s). Applications should describe any relevant agreements, including the terms of the agreement, and indicate whether they are executed or under negotiation, and explain how those agreements support project viability, market access, and expected sales.

7. Administrator Points (0–10 points)

On a discretionary basis, up to an additional 10 points may be given to applications that assist rural communities in economic recovery through enhanced market opportunities and improved access to domestically produced fertilizer, as well as to applicants that have not previously received an award through the Fertilizer Product Expansion Program.

The Agency may also award up to 10 points to promote geographic diversity, reflecting regional needs for fertilizer application, storage, and transportation.

Administrative and Risk Review

Additional information may be requested from the applicant as part of the application evaluation process or after notification of selection. During this process, the Agency may request further documentation from the applicant, such as organizational information for risk assessment purposes or additional detail regarding proposed costs, to ensure that program requirements have been met and that proposed costs are allowable, allocable, and necessary. Notification of selection does not guarantee an award.

5.2 Review and Selection Process

Within 30 days of receiving an application, RBCS will provide the applicant written acknowledgement of receipt. The following actions will be taken:

(a) RBCS will review applications for completeness and eligibility in accordance with this Notice and applicable federal regulations.

(b) Complete applications and applications determined eligible by the Agency will be evaluated competitively by a review team and ranked by score. Funding will be awarded in rank order, starting with the highest-scoring applications and continuing until available funds are exhausted. Funding may not be sufficient for all eligible applications. At its discretion, the Agency may offer partial funding to applicants. RBCS may also choose not to fund lower-scoring applications, even if funds remain available. Successful applicants must comply with Section 6, Award Administration Information.

5.3 Anticipated Announcement and Federal Award Dates

December 2026 – January 2027

6.0 FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

6.1 Federal Award Notices

(a) Award Outcomes. There are four possible outcomes following the submission of an application under the FIELDS program. RBCS may determine that the application is:

i. Eligible and selected for funding,

ii. Eligible but offered less funds than requested,

iii. Eligible but not selected for funding due to ranking of all applications, or

iv. Ineligible for the program.

RBCS reserves the right to make no award if all applications are ineligible, incomplete, and/or do not meet the established program objectives and priorities.

(b) 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.

(c) Unsuccessful Applicants. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified in writing and informed of any review and appeal rights in accordance with the National Appeals Division regulation at 7 CFR part 11. Funding of successfully appealed applications will be limited to available funding.

6.2 Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Additional requirements that apply to recipients selected for FIELDS can be found in 2 CFR parts 180, 200, 400, 415, 417, 418, 421 and USDA General Terms and Conditions; 2 CFR parts 25 and 170; and 48 CFR 31.2, and successor regulations to these parts.

All recipients of federal financial assistance are required to report information about first-tier sub-awards and executive compensation (see 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. 109-2115182) reporting requirements (see 2 CFR 170.105(c) unless excepted under 2 CFR 170.105(d)).

a. *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.

b. *Build America, Buy America (BABAA*). Awards under this announcement for Infrastructure projects to 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 BABAA within the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act unless subject to a valid public interest waiver under section 70914 of BABAA . Recipients of an award of federal financial assistance from a program for infrastructure are hereby notified that none of the funds provided under this award may be used for a project for infrastructure unless:

1) All iron and steel used in the project are produced in the U.S. This means all manufacturing processes, from the initial melting stage through the application of coatings, occurred in the U.S.

2) All manufactured products used in the project are produced in the U.S. This means the manufactured product was manufactured in the U.S., and the cost of the components of the manufactured product that are mined, produced, or manufactured in the U.S. is greater than 55 percent of the total cost of all components of the manufactured product, unless another standard for determining the minimum amount of domestic content of the manufactured product has been established under applicable law or regulation.

3) All construction materials (excludes cement and cementitious materials, aggregates such as stone, sand, or gravel, or aggregate binding agents or additives) are manufactured in the U.S. This means that all manufacturing processes for the construction material occurred in the U.S.

The BABAA preference only applies to articles, materials, and supplies that are consumed in, incorporated into, or affixed to an infrastructure project. As such, it does not apply to tools, equipment, and supplies, such as temporary scaffolding, brought to the construction site and removed at or before the completion of the infrastructure project. Nor does a BABAA preference apply to equipment and furnishings, such as movable chairs, desks, and portable computer equipment, that are used at or within the finished infrastructure project but are not an integral part of the structure or permanently affixed to the infrastructure project.

Recipients are expected to use BABAA compliant materials; however, waivers will be available, if necessary, to allow the use of the non-qualifying materials. Recipients with questions about BABAA compliance should contact the agency.

c. *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.

6.3 Reporting

Project Performance and Reporting

After award approval and through completion, you will be required to provide the following, as indicated in the Financial Assistance Agreement:

a. A SF-425, “Federal Financial Report,” and a project performance report will be required on a semiannual basis (due 30 working days after the end of the semiannual period). For the purposes of this award, semiannual periods end on March 31st and September 30th. The project performance reports shall include the elements prescribed in the Financial Assistance

Agreement; including, as appropriate, but not limited to, processing capacity added, number of agricultural producers served, number of acreages covered and jobs created.

b. A final project and financial status report within 120 days after the expiration or termination of the award.

c. Outcome project performance report. One year after project completion, recipients must submit a project performance report covering the first full calendar year after completion. The report must clearly document measurable outcomes directly attributable to the project's expanded processing capacity. At a minimum, it must quantify the increase in processing volume, specify the unit of measure used and compare this increase against the baseline capacity established at the time of award. The report must also include the total number of agricultural producers served as a result of the project, the number of new producers added, and the number of acres supported or impacted, expressed in precise acreage totals. Where applicable, the report should identify percentage increases, throughput improvements, or other quantifiable performance indicators demonstrating the project's operational impact. This report is due no later than 60 days after the end of the first full calendar year of performance.

RBCS may conduct onsite reviews frequently during construction and at least annually for all projects during the period of performance.

Note that if FIELDS funds will be utilized for the purchase of or improvements and fixtures to real estate, RBCS will file a Notice of Federal Financial Interest on the subject real estate. Real property must be used for the originally authorized purpose of the award. Recipients must not dispose of or encumber its title or other interests if it is being used for the originally authorized purpose.

RBCS must be notified if a sale or change of total or partial ownership of the facility is under consideration. RBCS will issue disposition instructions in accordance with 2 CFR 200.311 and the recipient may be required to return a proportional amount of funds received from the sale or change of total or partial ownership.

If the facility is going to be sold or undergo a change of total or partial ownership within ten years after receiving the award, the awardee will notify RBCS and the sale will be subject to USDA review to determine if the sale or change of total or partial ownership is consistent with the purposes of the program. The review could require partial return funds or other actions.

Funding through FIELDS is subject to 2 CFR Part 200, including the specific provisions relating to disposition of real property (2 CFR 200.311), equipment (2 CFR 200.313), supplies (2 CFR 200.314), intangible property (2 CFR 200.315), and the prohibition of the encumbrance of property without agency approval (2 CFR 200.316).

Fund Disbursement

There are two options for obtaining disbursements under FIELDS.

a. Funds will be disbursed in full after the project is completed and a valid inspection (federal or equivalent) is provided to RBCS. If this option is utilized, RBCS will modify and make applicable the construction planning and performing development requirements at 7 CFR 4280.125.

b. Funds will be disbursed on a reimbursement basis through 90 percent of award amount. The final 10 percent of the funds will be held until construction or installation of the project is completed and a valid inspection (federal or equivalent) is provided to RBCS. If this option is utilized, RBCS will follow the construction planning and performing development requirements at 7 CFR 4280.125.

    i. Recipients may submit requests for reimbursement no more frequently than bi-monthly. Ordinarily, payment will be made within 30 days after receipt of a proper request for reimbursement.

    ii. Recipients must not request reimbursement for the federal share of amounts withheld from contractors to ensure satisfactory completion of work until after any such payments have been made to the contractors.

    iii. Recipients must use SF-271, "Outlay Report and Request for Reimbursement for Construction Programs," to request reimbursements. Fund requests must at a 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, including payment date, may result in a denial of reimbursement.

7.0 FEDERAL AWARD AGENCY CONTACTS

After closely reviewing this NOFO in its entirety, applicants and other interested parties with questions are encouraged to contact the FIELDS staff listed below or at FIELDS@usda.gov. For additional information, visit the FIELDS Website: https://www.rd.usda.gov.

Team Lead: Lisa Noty E-Mail: FIELDS@usda.gov

8.0 OTHER INFORMATION

8.1 Paperwork Reduction Act

In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. chapter 35), the information collection requirements associated with the programs, as covered in this Notice, have been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under OMB Control Number 0570-0081.

8.2 National Environmental Policy Act

All activities funded under this NOFO must comply with NEPA and related applicable Agency regulations at (7 CFR Part 1b) and related instructions, Section 106 of the NHPA, Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, other applicable Federal laws and regulations, and any applicable State, local, or Tribal laws or regulations. https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-A/part-1b The Agency will review each application to determine its compliance with 7 CFR part 1b. The applicant may be asked to provide additional information or documentation to assist RBCS with this determination.

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

(a) 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.

(b) 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 accommodations may also be sought under many of these religious freedom and conscience protection laws.

(c) 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 Nondiscrimination Statement

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, 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 https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/general-information/staff-offices/office-assistant-secretary-civil-rights/how-file-usda-discrimination-complaint/how-file-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:

(a) 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;

(b) fax: (844) 496-7442; or

(c) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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

8.6 E.O. 13175 Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments

This E.O. imposes requirements on the Agency in the development of regulatory policies that have Tribal implications or preempt Tribal laws. USDA conducted consultation with Tribes on access to USDA's Economic Development programs and ongoing barriers on April 11, 2022. In response to feedback from this session, the Agency has included a very broad definition of Tribal Entities to maximize the range of applicants that can apply under this NOFO.

Additionally, the Agency has incorporated flexibility to reduce the matching funds requirements for applications from Tribes, Tribal entities owned by Tribes, and Alaska Native Corporations. If Tribal leaders are interested in additional consultation with the Agency, they are encouraged to contact USDA's Office of Tribal Relations or The Innovation Center's Tribal Relations Specialist at: *AIAN@usda.gov* to request such a consultation.