

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Commodity Credit Corporation and Foreign Agricultural Service

Regional Agricultural Promotion Program

Summary

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service, Global Programs, announces this funding opportunity to support the Regional Agricultural Promotion Program by issuing new awards. This opportunity is available to nonprofit U.S. agricultural trade organizations, nonprofit state regional trade groups (SRTGs), U.S. agricultural cooperatives, and state agencies and is intended to foster expanded exports and market diversification by encouraging the development, maintenance, and expansion of diverse commercial export markets for United States agricultural commodities and products.

A. Program Description

Issued By: Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) and Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS)

Assistance Listing Number: 10.618

Notice of Funding Opportunity Title: 2024 Regional Agricultural Promotion Program

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA–FAS–RAPP–2024

Authorizing Legislation: CCC Charter Act, 15 U.S.C. 714c(f).

Program Overview, Objectives, and Priorities: The RAPP is a cost share program that is designed to reimburse nonprofit U.S. agricultural trade organizations, SRTGs, U.S. agricultural cooperatives, and state agencies that conduct approved market development activities to foster expanded exports and market diversification by encouraging the development, maintenance, and expansion of diverse commercial export markets for United States agricultural commodities and products. For profit U.S. commercial entities that do not exceed 300 percent of the small

business size standards established for their particular industry at 13 CFR 121.201 may participate in a branded program through a RAPP Participant. Information, including a link to the program regulations, is available on the FAS website at: <http://www.fas.usda.gov/programs>.

Under RAPP, FAS enters into agreements with eligible Participants to share the cost of certain overseas activities. Financial assistance under RAPP is made available on a competitive basis, and applications are reviewed against the evaluation criteria contained in this notice. FAS endeavors to enter into agreements with eligible Participants to cover as broad an array of agricultural commodity sectors as possible and to maximize the likelihood that benefits generated will be available throughout the relevant agricultural sectors and that no single entity gains an undue advantage or sole benefit from program activities. All U.S. agricultural commodities, except tobacco, are eligible for consideration. FAS gives priority to organizations that have the broadest producer representation and affiliated industry participation of the commodity being promoted. Applicants should refer to and have a common understanding of the RAPP programmatic regulations, [7 CFR Part 1489](#), and the definitions contained within to fully understand this opportunity.

B. Federal Award Information

Available Funding for this Announcement: The RAPP will provide up to \$300 million in FY 2024 funding to support eligible projects. USDA makes no commitment to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards regardless of whether or at what level program funding for FY 2024 is provided. FAS anticipates making additional RAPP funding available through future Notice of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs).

Total Available Federal Funding: Anticipated to be no more than \$300 million, of which \$25 million will be dedicated for the special emphasis region of Africa.

Anticipated Number of Awards: 60–70 awards. Awards may be granted up to the maximum available program amount of \$300 million. Applicants should propose an appropriate number of activities and request a sufficient amount of resources to achieve their proposed program goals.

Projected Period of Performance: Awards will be generally granted for a period of performance of five years.

Projected Period of Performance Start Date(s): 06/01/2024

Projected Period of Performance End Date(s): 09/30/2029

Type of Assistance Instrument: USDA/FAS anticipates that grants will be funded pursuant to this funding opportunity. In this type of agreement, the recipient is expected to implement the project autonomously with little programmatic involvement from USDA/FAS. However, USDA/FAS maintains an oversight role, and the recipient must ensure that USDA/FAS is kept apprised of project activities and progress.

C. Eligibility Information

Eligible Applicants: Applicants must be a nonprofit U.S. agricultural trade organization, an SRTG, a U.S. agricultural cooperative, or a state government agency. For profit U.S. commercial entities that do not exceed 300 percent of the small business size standards established for their particular industry at 13 CFR 121.201 may participate in a branded program through a RAPP Participant, pursuant to the RAPP program regulations at [7 CFR 1489.15](#).

All applicants must have an active registration in the U.S. Government System for Award Management (www.sam.gov) before the application submission deadline of the announcement. Applicants with inactive, expired, pending, or excluded listings will be deemed ineligible. Exceptions, waivers, or extensions will not be considered. Please contact the program officer(s)

listed in Section G, Federal Awarding Agency Contact, if you have questions about this requirement. Applicants that do not meet the eligibility criteria will be considered ineligible.

Eligibility Criteria

Eligible Commodities: Eligible commodity means any agricultural commodity or product thereof, excluding tobacco, that is comprised of at least 50 percent by weight, exclusive of added water, of agricultural commodities grown or raised in the United States.

Eligible Activities: RAPP Participants may receive assistance for generic or branded promotion activities. For generic activities, funding priority is given to organizations that have the broadest possible producer representation of the commodity being promoted and that are nationwide in membership and scope. For branded activities, only nonprofit U.S. agricultural trade organizations, SRTGs, U.S. agricultural cooperatives, and state government agencies can participate directly in the branded program. Eligible for-profit U.S. commercial entities may participate in the branded program through one of these entities.

Funding under the RAPP is intended to support activities that foster expanded exports and market diversification by encouraging the development, maintenance, and expansion of diverse commercial export markets for United States agricultural commodities and products. As such, activities in certain markets are ineligible for support, and proposed activities in those markets will not be approved under the program. The following countries/regions have been identified as ineligible for the FY 2024 RAPP: Canada, Mexico, the European Union, and China (including Hong Kong and Macau). With the exception of participation in USDA–endorsed trade shows in those markets, no other activities in those ineligible markets will be considered, and no activities in those markets are eligible. Because USDA–endorsed trade shows can target buyers from eligible markets, RAPP Participants may be reimbursed for eligible expenses related to

participation in USDA–endorsed trade shows in any country, even those identified as ineligible under the FY 2024 RAPP.

In addition, FAS has identified the following three regions for special emphasis through the FY 2024 RAPP: 1) Africa, 2) Latin American/Caribbean, and 3) South/Southeast Asia. For the purposes of the FY 2024 RAPP, those regions will be defined using the Partner Groups definitions found in the FAS Global Agricultural Trade System (GATS), which is available at <https://apps.fas.usda.gov/gats>. Any countries included in these special emphasis regions that have been identified as ineligible for the FY 2024 RAPP will remain ineligible for funding. Out of the total funding available for the FY 2024 RAPP, FAS will set aside \$25 million to fund activities in Africa. FAS will tally up the grand total of the funding for all activities approved in Africa and will compare that total to the \$25 million dedicated to Africa. If RAPP Participants are not successful in getting at least \$25 million in funding approved for activities in Africa, the unused funding will remain unallocated and will be removed from the FY 2024 RAPP for use in future announcements.

Cost Share/Match Requirement

To participate in RAPP, an applicant must contribute resources towards its proposed promotional activities. RAPP is intended to supplement, not supplant, the efforts of the U.S. private sector. In the case of generic promotion, the contribution must be at least 10 percent of the total amount reimbursed by CCC for all approved generic promotion activities. In the case of branded promotion, the contribution must be at least equivalent to the total amount reimbursed by CCC for all approved branded activities. The amount of cost share will be specified in an approved applicant’s allocation approval letter.

Promised contributions may be specified in dollars or as a percentage of the amount reimbursed by USDA. If the required promised contribution is not met, the applicant is required to either return to USDA the necessary amount of funds reimbursed by USDA to increase its actual cost share percentage to the required level or pay to USDA, in dollars, the difference between the amount actually contributed and the amount of funds necessary to increase its actual cost share percentage to the required level. Such payment must be made within six months after the agreement's period of performance end date.

The degree of commitment of an applicant to the promotional strategies contained in its application, as represented by the cost share contributions specified in its application, is one factor considered by FAS in the application review. Cost share may be actual cash invested or in-kind contributions, such as compensation paid to professional staff time spent on the design and implementation of generic or brand promotion activities. RAPP programmatic regulations provide a detailed list and discussion of eligible and ineligible cost share contributions at [7 CFR 1489.16](#).

Other Submission Requirements and Information

Applicants are limited to submitting one application per this announcement. In the event an applicant submits more than one application, FAS will contact the applicant to determine which application they want considered.

Organizations interested in applying to the RAPP must submit their RAPP application to FAS by the application submission deadline through the web-based Unified Export Strategy (UES) system. The UES system is accessible at <https://apps.fas.usda.gov/ues/webapp/>. The suggested UES format encourages applicants to examine the constraints or barriers to trade that they face, identify activities that would help overcome such impediments, consider the entire

pool of complementary marketing tools and program resources, and establish realistic export goals. Applications submitted outside of the UES will not be considered.

Organizations that do not have UES access may request access from FAS by following this 2–step process:

- 1) Users must first create an eAuthentication account and user ID at <https://www.eauth.usda.gov/eauth/b/usda/home>. FAS recommends creating a Level 2 eAuthentication account.
- 2) Users then must submit to FAS a completed UES Access Request form, which may be obtained by contacting the Program Operations Division, Global Programs, Foreign Agricultural Service *by e-mail*: uesadmin@usda.gov. Once the request is approved, FAS will create a UES account for the user. Applicants experiencing difficulty or otherwise needing further assistance in applying to RAPP should use this same contact information for assistance.

Substantial Compliance

All applications will be reviewed for eligibility and must meet the eligibility requirements described in Section C to be considered eligible. Applicants deemed ineligible for funding consideration as a result of the threshold eligibility review will be notified within 30 calendar days of the application deadline of the ineligibility determination.

Applications must substantially comply with the application submission instructions and requirements set forth in Section D of this solicitation or else they will be rejected. However, where a page limit is expressed in Section D with respect to the application, or parts thereof, pages in excess of the page limitation will not be reviewed.

D. Application and Submission Information

This announcement contains all information necessary to apply to this funding opportunity.

Application Submission Deadline: All applications must be received by 5 p.m. Eastern Time, Friday, February 2, 2024. Applications submitted after this date or applications that do not otherwise conform to this announcement and the RAPP regulations will not be considered for funding.

Content and Form of Application Submission

An applicant must submit to FAS a complete application package consisting of:

- (1) A marketing plan that outlines an applicant's proposed foreign market promotion and development activities and requested funding;
- (2) Standard Form 424, "Application for Federal Assistance" (SF-424), showing the Unique Entity Identifier and signed by the applicant. Please email the completed SF-424 to uesadmin@usda.gov with the subject: "2024 RAPP SF-424."
- (3) If required, the SF-LLL form, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," must also be submitted.

If FAS determines that an applicant made a good faith effort to submit a marketing plan and 424 by the application deadline but identifies that a clarification on the submission is needed, FAS will notify the applicant and request that the applicant provide the clarification within 15 business days. FAS will not review applications until they are complete, which could delay application processing. FAS will not consider any applications that remain incomplete after the 15 business days.

The marketing plan required by this announcement must include the following elements:

- (1) *Applicant and program information:*
 - (i) The name, address, and website of the applicant organization;

- (ii) The name of the applicant's Chief Executive Officer;
- (iii) The name, telephone number, and email address of the applicant's primary contact person;
- (iv) The name(s) of the person(s) responsible for managing the proposed program;
- (v) A description of the applicant organization, including the type of organization (*e.g.*, nonprofit SRTG), its mission, and the statutory authorities by which it is constituted and under which it operates, if applicable;
- (vi) Tax exempt identification number of the applicant, if applicable;
- (vii) Dollar amount of CCC resources requested for generic activities;
- (viii) Dollar amount of CCC resources requested for brand activities;
- (ix) Total dollar amount of CCC resources requested;
- (x) Percentage of CCC resources requested for general administrative expenses;
- (xi) The applicant's UEI from SAM.gov;
- (xii) A description of the applicant organization's membership and membership criteria;
- (xiii) A list of organizations affiliated with the applicant, including parent organizations, subsidiaries, and partnerships;
- (xiv) A description of the applicant's management and administrative capabilities and experience;
- (xv) A description of the applicant's consideration of diversity, equity, and inclusion in program design and implementation. The applicant's efforts should reflect a broad effort to grow export opportunities for diverse (including gender, ethnicity, and geographic diversity) stakeholders and a demonstrated commitment to equity and accessibility of program;

- (xvi) A description of the applicant's prior export promotion experience;
- (xvii) Value, in U.S. dollars, of proposed contributions from the applicant or the applicant's proposed contribution stated as a percentage of the total dollar amount of CCC resources requested; and
- (xviii) Value, in U.S. dollars, of proposed contributions from other sources.

(2) *Program justification:*

- (i) An executive summary, not exceeding two pages in length, of the applicant's overall RAPP strategy. Any pages in excess of the two page limit will not be considered;
- (ii) A description of the U.S. agricultural commodity(s) promoted by the applicant, its harmonized tariff classification, the applicable commodity aggregate code (available from the UES website), and the percentage of U.S. origin content by weight, exclusive of added water;
- (iii) A description of the anticipated supply and demand situation for the promoted U.S. agricultural commodity(s) in the targeted markets;
- (iv) A description of how the funding requested through RAPP will contribute to the enhancement and diversification of the targeted export markets for the promoted commodity; and
- (v) An explanation for why Federal funding assistance is needed and why the applicant is unlikely to carry out the proposed projects without assistance.

(3) *Proposed program's strategic plan:*

- (i) All applications shall include a strategic plan that contains:
 - (A) A description of overall long term strategic goals to be advanced by the proposed activities for the ensuing 5–10 years;

- (B) An explanation of the organization's strategic planning process and the resulting identification of priority target markets, including a summary of proposed budgets by country and commodity aggregate code;
- (C) A description of the world market situation for the exported U.S. agricultural commodity(s);
- (D) A description of competition from other exporters;
- (E) An evaluation plan describing the applicant's goals and the applicant's plans for monitoring and evaluating performance towards achieving these goals. This evaluation plan should set forth specific goals and benchmarks set at regular intervals to be used to identify results against identified constraints and opportunities and to measure progress made in the target market. Evaluation of a proposed RAPP program's effectiveness will depend on a clear statement by the applicant of goals, method of achievement, and expected results of programming at regular intervals. The overall goal of RAPP and of individual Participants' programming is to restore or increase sales that would not have occurred in the absence of RAPP funding. A RAPP Participant may modify and resubmit this plan for re-approval at any time during the budget period.
- (F) For each eligible targeted market, five years or as many years as are available of:
 - (1) Historical U.S. export data (volume and value) for the promoted commodity;
 - (2) Historical U.S. market share for the promoted commodity; and
 - (3) CCC market development program funds received by the applicant.
- (G) For each eligible targeted market, three years of projected U.S. export data and U.S. market share for the promoted commodity;

(H) A country strategy for each eligible target country, including market constraint(s) impeding U.S. exports (*e.g.*, trade barriers) or opportunities present and the strategy proposed to overcome the constraints or take advantage of the opportunities, previous activities in the country, and the projected impact of the proposed program on U.S. exports;

(I) A written presentation of all proposed activities including:

(1) A description of the relevant market constraint or opportunity;

(2) A description of the proposed activity and its expected impact; and

(3) A budget for each proposed activity, identifying the source of funds; and

(J) A description of any demonstration projects, if applicable.

(ii) Applications for brand promotion assistance shall also include in their strategic plans:

(A) A description of how the brand promotion program will be publicized to the relevant U.S. industry; and

(B) The criteria that will be used to allocate funds to U.S. for-profit entities and U.S. agricultural cooperatives.

Programmatic Capability and Past Performance

As part of the application evaluation process, FAS will consider an applicant's past performance under the FAS market development programs. If an applicant has not previously participated in an FAS market development program, they may submit a list of no more than five federally-funded (preferably USDA or USDA/FAS) assistance agreements (assistance agreements include Federal grants and cooperative agreements but not Federal contracts) that your organization performed within the last three years and describe:

- i) whether, and how, you were able to successfully complete and manage those agreements;
- ii) your history of meeting the reporting requirements under those agreements, including whether you adequately and timely reported on your progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes of those agreements (and if not, explain why not) and whether you submitted acceptable final technical reports under the agreements; and
- iii) your organizational experience and plan for timely and successfully achieving the objectives of your proposed RAPP marketing plan, and your staff expertise/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed project.

In evaluating applicants under the factors in Section E, USDA/FAS will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources, including information from USDA/FAS files and from current/prior grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information provided by the applicant). If you do not have any relevant or available past performance or past reporting information, please indicate this in the application and you will receive a neutral score for these factors (a neutral score is half of the total points available in a subset of possible points). If you do not provide any response for these items, you may receive a score of 0 for these factors.

Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM)

Each applicant is required to:

- i) Have an active registration in SAM before submitting its application;
- ii) Have assented to the federal assistance certifications in the SAM platform;

- iii) Provide a valid Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) in its application; and
- iv) Continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency.

SAM.gov Registration Instructions

Organizations applying to this funding opportunity must have an active SAM.gov registration. If you have never done business with the Federal Government, you will need to register your organization in SAM.gov. If you do not have a SAM.gov account, then you will create an account using login.gov¹ to complete your SAM.gov registration. SAM.gov registration is FREE. The process for entity registrations includes obtaining a UEI and requires assertions, representations, certifications, and other information about your organization. Please review the [Entity Registration Checklist](#) on SAM.gov for details on this process.

If you have done business with the Federal Government previously, you can check your entity status using your government issued UEI to determine if your registration is active. SAM.gov requires you renew your registration every 365 days to keep it active.

Please note that SAM.gov registration is different than obtaining a UEI only. Obtaining an UEI only validates your organization's legal business name and address. Please review the [Frequently Asked Question](#) on the difference for additional details.

Contact the [Federal Service Desk](#) for help with your SAM.gov account, to resolve technical issues, or to chat with a help desk agent: (866) 606-8220. The Federal Service desk hours of operation are Monday – Friday 8am – 8pm ET.

¹ Login.gov is a secure sign in service used by the public to sign into Federal Agency systems including SAM.gov and Grants.gov. For help with login.gov accounts you should visit [http://login.gov/help](https://login.gov/help).

Applicants must maintain an active SAM.gov registration at all times during which they have active Federal awards or an application under consideration by FAS. FAS will not make an award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM.gov requirements, and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time FAS is ready to make the award, FAS may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive an award and use that determination as a basis for making an award to another applicant.

Intergovernmental Review

Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs, may be applicable to awards resulting from this announcement. USDA implemented the Executive Order in 2 CFR 415.5. USDA/FAS may require applicants selected for funding to provide a copy of their application to their State Point of Contact (SPOC) for review. These reviews are not required before submitting an application. Only applicants that USDA/FAS selects for funding under this announcement are subject to the Intergovernmental Review requirement. For more information about USDA's implementation for Intergovernmental Review, please visit [https://www.usda.gov/ocfo/federal-financial-assistance-policy/intergovernmental-review#:~:text=Executive%20Order%20\(EO\)%2012372%2C,of%20proposed%20Federal%20financial%20assistance.](https://www.usda.gov/ocfo/federal-financial-assistance-policy/intergovernmental-review#:~:text=Executive%20Order%20(EO)%2012372%2C,of%20proposed%20Federal%20financial%20assistance.)

Funding Restrictions

Only those RAPP activities that are approved in each approved applicant's allocation approval letter or are subsequently approved by FAS may be implemented, and those activities must be implemented during the budget period specified in the allocation approval letter.

Requests for activity changes during the budget period must be approved in advance by FAS. RAPP generally operates on a reimbursement basis.

Certain types of expenses are not eligible for reimbursement by the program, and there are limits on other categories of expenses. FAS also will not reimburse unreasonable expenditures or expenditures made prior to approval. For more information and a list of eligible and ineligible expenses, applicants are encouraged to review the RAPP regulations at [7 CFR 1489.17](#) prior to preparing their requested budgets in their applications.

RAPP Participants must use their own funds and may not use RAPP funds to pay any administrative costs of the RAPP Participant's U.S. office(s), including legal fees, except as set forth in the RAPP program regulations. Where the RAPP Participant uses its own funds to pay for administrative costs, such costs may be counted in calculating the amount of contributions the RAPP Participant contributes to RAPP generic or brand promotion programs, subject to certain limitations. Additional types of expenses are not eligible for reimbursement by RAPP, and there are limits on other categories of expenses. Full details and a complete list of eligible and ineligible expenses may be found in the RAPP regulations in [7 CFR 1489.17](#).

Generally, RAPP funding may not be used for any activities prohibited by 2 CFR Part 200, 2 CFR Part 400, RAPP programmatic regulations, and the provisions set forth in this announcement. Awards issued pursuant to this NOFO may only be used for the purpose set forth in the award, consistent with the statutory authority for the award. Grant agreement funds and non-monetary support may not be used for matching contributions for other federal grants or cooperative agreements, lobbying, or intervention in federal regulatory or adjudicatory proceedings. Federal employees are prohibited from serving in any capacity (paid or unpaid) in the development or submission of any application submitted under this program. Federal

employees may not receive funds under this award. Also, federal funds may not be used to sue the Federal Government or any other U.S. government entity.

E. Application Review Information

FAS will review all applications for eligibility and completeness. FAS will, subject to the availability of funds, approve those applications that it considers to best meet the objectives outlined in this announcement. When determining funding recommendations, FAS will give priority to organizations that have the broadest producer representation and affiliated industry participation of the commodity being promoted. FAS may require that applicants participate in RAPP through another RAPP Participant. When appropriate to the subject matter of the application, FAS may also request the assistance of other U.S. Government experts in evaluating applications.

Conflict of Interest

The applicant's Conflict of Interest (COI) Point of Contact as defined in the USDA/FAS Conflict of Interest Policy must notify the USDA/FAS contact identified in Section G of this solicitation of any actual or potential conflict of interest that they are aware of that may provide the applicant with an unfair competitive advantage in competing for USDA/FAS financial assistance awards within 10 calendar days of becoming aware of the conflict of interest.

Examples of an unfair competitive advantage include, but are not limited to, situations in which an USDA/FAS employee reviewed and commented on or drafted all or part of an applicant's application prior to submission. Note that USDA/FAS does not generally consider receiving information from an USDA/FAS employee limited to whether the applicant or the applicant's proposed project is eligible to compete for funding to confer an unfair competitive advantage. In addition, assistance agreements made under this solicitation will include a term and condition

notifying recipients of their COI disclosure obligations and responsibilities under the award, including the need to have systems in place to address, resolve, and disclose COIs to USDA/FAS.

Integrity in Performance

Prior to making a Federal award, the Federal awarding agency is required by [31 USC 3321](#) and [41 USC 2313](#) to review information available through any OMB–designated repositories of government–wide eligibility qualification or financial integrity information. Therefore, application evaluation criteria may include the following risk–based considerations of the applicant: (1) financial stability; (2) quality of management systems and ability to meet management standards; (3) history of performance in managing federal awards; (4) reports and findings from audits; and (5) ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements.

Prior to making a Federal award with a total amount of Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold, currently \$250,000, the federal agency is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM.gov (currently FAPIIS).

- An applicant, at its option, may review information in the designated integrity and performance systems accessible through SAM.gov and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered and is currently in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM.gov.
- The Federal awarding agency will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant’s integrity, business ethics, and record of performance

under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in [2 CFR 200.206](#).

Review and Selection Process

The purpose of the application evaluation is to recommend an appropriate funding level for each application and submit the funding recommendations to the appropriate officials for decision making. The agency will convene a review panel, which may include both federal and non-federal reviewers, to review the eligible applications against the evaluation criteria described below. The reviewers will ensure that the applicant is capable of delivering the programs/activities as described in the announcement based on the applicant's marketing plan and assign a score and provide summary comments based on the evaluation criteria identified below. The review panel will prepare a recommendation list and present it to the selecting official, who is not a member of the panel.

The selecting official may select applications out of rank order in consideration of strategic program priorities, such as geographical distribution, incorporation of minority-serving institutions, or congressional directive. Selection determinations are final and cannot be appealed.

Throughout the evaluation process, applicants will be evaluated based on their ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project considering their:

- i) past performance in successfully completing and managing the assistance agreements identified in response to Section D of the solicitation,
- ii) history of meeting the reporting requirements under the assistance agreements identified in response to Section D of the solicitation including whether the applicant submitted acceptable final technical reports under those agreements and the extent to which the applicant

adequately and timely reported on their progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes under those agreements and if such progress was not being made whether the applicant adequately reported why not,

iii) organizational experience and plan for timely and successfully achieving the objectives of the proposed project, and

iv) staff expertise/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed project.

Note: In evaluating applicants under items i and ii of this criterion, USDA/FAS will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources including agency files and prior/current grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information supplied by the applicant). If you do not have any relevant or available past performance or past reporting information, please indicate this in the application and you will receive a neutral score for these subfactors (items i and ii above-a neutral score is half of the total points available in a subset of possible points). If you do not provide any response for these items, you may receive a score of 0 for these factors.

FAS conducts the following process in reviewing applications and allocating available RAPP funds:

Sufficiency Review (Phase 1): In Phase 1, FAS conducts an initial sufficiency review of all applications received to determine the completeness of the application and responsiveness to this announcement. If an applicant is determined to be ineligible per Section C, “Eligibility Information,” of this announcement, FAS will not consider the application and will take no further action on it. The agency will notify applicants determined to be ineligible, usually within 5 business days of the Application Submission Deadline. An applicant that feels such a

determination is made in error may request reconsideration, highlighting evidence supporting their claim, by email to the program officer(s) listed in Section G, Federal Awarding Agency Contact, within 3 business days of notification. If an application is determined to be incomplete, FAS will notify the applicant and request that the applicant send in the missing information within 15 business days to the address provided by FAS to complete its application. Applications that are deemed eligible and complete will be passed to FAS' Cooperator Programs Division (CoPD) for the Phase 2 review.

Review of Proposed Activities and Requested Budgets (Phase 2): In this phase, a CoPD reviewer will be assigned to each application to review the proposed activities. This reviewer will first assign the proposed activities to market categories: emphasized regions, ineligible markets, and all other regions/markets. Any activities proposed in the ineligible markets defined in Section C of this announcement will receive no further consideration and will not be funded.

Second, the reviewer will review each proposed activity and rate them on a scale of 1 to 3, with 1 being the highest, using the following criteria: anticipated return on investment, level of diversification of markets and customers, growth potential of target market, reasonable implementation plan, well-developed plans to measure impact, expected trade impact of activity, whether or not the activity includes quantifiable measures, level of FAS post and program area support, whether or not the applicant has sufficient administrative capacity to carry out the proposed activity, whether the activity is allowable within the guidelines of this NOFO announcement and the RAPP regulations, and whether the activity is contrary to the obligations of the United States by treaty or international obligation.

Finally, the reviewer will review each proposed activity's corresponding requested budget and determine whether or not the amount is reasonable, based upon the following

considerations: the reviewer's professional expertise, past examples of similar market development activities, whether the proposed activity is practical and appropriate to undertake in the identified market(s) in the identified period of performance, the applicant's administrative capabilities and, if applicable, market development program history, the level of market diversification and innovation the activity demonstrates, and any known costs of the proposed activity. If the amount requested is determined to be unreasonable, the reviewer will propose a reasonable revised budget for the activity, based on the same considerations as above.

Application Review and Scoring (Phase 3): In this phase, a different reviewer from the one assigned in Phase 2 will be assigned to each application to perform the application review and score the application. The Phase 3 reviewer will first review the application and determine the application's review score by using the following criteria:

Program Strategic Planning (total of 40 possible points)

- Overall Quality and Clarity (10 points): Applicants will be evaluated based on the overall quality and clarity of their marketing plan and the extent to which they present a clear and convincing vision of the project reflective of the identified needs and targeted geographic area.
- Program Description and Objectives (10 points): Applicants will be evaluated based on the extent to which the proposed program identifies specific target markets, target audiences, and market share goals, and whether the program prioritizes markets with clear, differentiated, and appropriate marketing strategies.
- Collaborations and Partnerships (5 points): Applicants will be evaluated based on the extent to which the long-term strategy includes input from a broad representation of industry and affiliated industries that meet regularly to update the strategic priorities, and

any demonstrated partnerships or collaborations that enhance the program's potential success.

- Innovation and Originality (5 points): Applicants will be evaluated based on the extent to which they showcase uniqueness or innovation of the proposed approach.
- Significance and Impact (5 points): Applicants will be evaluated based on the extent to which they demonstrate the importance of the program within the relevant market(s) or region(s), and the potential positive impact of the program on the target market(s) or region(s).
- Alignment with Program Goals (5 points): Applicants will be evaluated based on the extent to which the proposed activities align with the RAPP goals stated in this NOFO.

Program Management and Implementation (total of 60 possible points)

- Qualifications and Expertise (10 points): Applicants will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which they demonstrate that they possess: the qualifications, experience, and expertise relevant to the program, adequate resources, and capabilities to carry out the program, adequate and appropriate staffing/organizational capacity to implement the program, and collaboration and communication within their industry.
- Methodology and Approach (10 points): Applicants will be evaluated based on the extent to which they demonstrate a well-defined program methodology, appropriate approach to achieve the stated objectives, and a clear timeline for program activities.
- Quality of Constraints/Opportunities and Performance Measures (10 points): Applicants will be evaluated based on the percentage of constraint/opportunities that are appropriate, specific, actionable, and contain at least one outcome performance measure.

- Evaluation and Metrics (10 points): Applicants will be evaluated based on the extent to which they demonstrate a clear plan for measuring the success and outcomes of the program and how well they use appropriate metrics to assess progress and impact.
- Budget and Budget Justification (5 points): Applicants will be evaluated based on the extent to which their proposed budget is well–organized, detailed, and reasonable for the proposed activities and a clear explanation of why Federal funding assistance is needed and why the applicant is unlikely to carry out the programs without assistance.
- Data Management and Reporting (5 points): Applicants will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which they present plans for data collection, management, and reporting, and demonstrating a commitment to data sharing and reporting requirements.
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (5 points): Applicants will be evaluated based on the extent to which they show consideration of diversity, equity, and inclusion in program design and implementation, reflecting a broad effort to grow export opportunities for diverse stakeholders (including gender, ethnic, and geographic diversity, historically underserved groups, and veterans) and demonstrating commitment to equity and accessibility of its program.
- Program Sustainability and Long–Term Plans (5 points): Applicants will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which they demonstrate a commitment to sustaining program outcomes beyond the program period of performance.

After the Phase 3 reviewer scores the application, they will provide a determination whether or not to fund the application based upon their evaluation of the application materials and the review score given and will provide their expertise and evaluation of the feasibility of project success in consideration of the total sum of the reasonable budgets established in Phase 2.

The Funding Recommendation (Phase 4): CoPD management will review the results of the Phase 2 and Phase 3 reviews. Working from those results, applications will be ranked based on the application scores, from highest to lowest, and the total amounts of the reasonable budgets established for the Phase 2 priority 1, 2, and 3 activities in the various market categories will be calculated.

CoPD management will then determine funding recommendations by working through the ranked applications established in Phase 4 in order and reviewing the total Phase 2 reasonable budgets in the following stages:

- a) Priority 1 activities in Emphasized Regions
- b) Priority 1 activities in All Other Regions/Markets
- c) Priority 2 activities in Emphasized Regions
- d) Priority 2 activities in All Other Regions/Markets
- e) Priority 3 activities in Emphasized Regions
- f) Priority 3 activities in All Other Regions/Markets

If additional funding remains after reviewing all activities/budgets in each stage, CoPD management will move on to consider the activities in the next stage. Once all available funding is exhausted, the process will stop.

At each stage in the Phase 4 review process, CoPD management may elect to increase or decrease a particular application's total reasonable budget after consideration of factors including: the application's score from Phase 3 and position in the ranked list of applications, input from the Phase 2 and 3 application reviewers, Phase 2 activity priority rankings, emphasized regional markets, and the applicant's market development program history and experience, if applicable.

Final Review and Allocation Decision Making (Phase 5): A summary of all applications and the recommended funding levels for each will be provided to the Office of the Deputy Administrator, Global Programs for the purpose of finalizing the RAPP funding recommendations among the applicants. Once finalized, the recommendations will be presented to the FAS Administrator for final deliberation, determination, and approval. FAS leadership (including the Deputy Administrator, Associate Administrator, and Administrator) may elect to review and adjust the funding recommendations based on factors including, but not limited to: agency priorities, priority markets, program impact, the record of performance of the organization in managing past market development funds, and the organization's likelihood of success.

F. Federal Award Administration Information

Notice of Award

FAS will approve those RAPP applications that it determines best satisfy the criteria and factors specified in this announcement. Successful applicants will be notified of the status of their application/award by email. This notification is not authorization to proceed, and such notification should be construed as provisional. Funding for successful applications will be provided through specific agreements. FAS will send an agreement, an approval letter, a signature card, and a civil rights self-certification form to each successful applicant.

The agreement and the approval letter will outline which activities are approved and will specify approved budgets and any special terms and conditions applicable to a RAPP Participant's program, including any requirements with respect to cost share and program evaluations. Final agreement shall occur when both parties sign the agreement and the approval letter. The agreement, approval letter, and the program regulations shall establish the terms and

conditions of a RAPP agreement between FAS and the RAPP Participant. The RAPP Participant should designate at least two individuals in its organization to sign agreements and amendments, approval letters, reimbursement claims, and advance requests.

The RAPP Participant shall have a signed signature card, with the individuals in the RAPP participant's organization that have designated authority, on file with FAS prior to the start of the budget period. Should there be any changes in signatories (*e.g.*, removal or addition of individuals, name changes, etc.), the Participant must immediately notify FAS by submitting a revised signature card. The RAPP Participant shall also submit a completed civil rights form designed to assist the organization's compliance with Federal, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and FAS civil rights requirements.

Administrative and National Policy Requirements

All successful applicants for all grant and cooperative agreements are required to comply with the applicable General Administrative Terms and Conditions, which can be found at https://www.fas.usda.gov/grants/general_terms_and_conditions/default.asp. The applicant is presumed to have read, understood, and accepted these terms when accepting a USDA/FAS award. Applicants with questions about the applicable terms should contact the program officer(s) listed in Section G, Federal Awarding Agency Contact.

The applicable Terms and Conditions will be for the last year specified at that URL. Before accepting an award, the applicant should carefully read the award package (agreement and approval letter) for instructions on administering the award and the terms and conditions associated with responsibilities under Federal Awards. Recipients must accept all conditions in this NOFO as well as any Special Terms and Conditions in the Notice of Award to receive an award under this program.

Subaward and Executive Compensation Reporting

Applicants must ensure that they have the necessary processes and systems in place to comply with the subaward and executive total compensation reporting requirements established at [2 CFR 170](#), unless they qualify for an exception from the requirements, should they be selected for funding.

Mandatory Disclosures

As required by [2 CFR 200.113](#), non-federal entities or applicants for a Federal award must disclose, in a timely manner, in writing to the Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity all violations of Federal criminal law involving fraud, bribery, or gratuity violations potentially affecting the Federal award. Failure to make required disclosures can result in any of the remedies described in [2 CFR 200.339](#) including suspension and debarment.

Reporting

Consistent with [7 CFR 1489.21](#), FAS requires various financial and performance reporting from RAPP Participants in accordance with their agreement with FAS. The regulations provide details on each required report and associated deadline. If a Participant requires an extension of a reporting deadline, it must ensure that FAS receives an extension request at least five business days prior to the reporting deadline. FAS may decline to consider a request for an extension that it receives after this time period. FAS will consider requests for reporting deadline extensions on a case-by-case basis and will make a decision to grant an extension based on the merits of each request.

A RAPP Participant shall also complete a program evaluation when directed by FAS. A program evaluation is a review of the RAPP Participant's entire program, or an appropriate portion of the program as agreed to by the RAPP Participant and FAS, to determine the

effectiveness of the RAPP Participant's strategy in meeting specified goals. FAS encourages annual evaluations but will require an evaluation at least every three years. A RAPP Participant may contract with an independent evaluator to satisfy this requirement. There are additional reporting requirements for trip reports and research reports. If requested by FAS, a Participant must provide to FAS additional information or reports relating to their agreement. Full reporting requirements are detailed in the RAPP regulations in [7 CFR 1489.21](#) and [7 CFR 1489.22](#).

Financial Reporting Requirements

Participants are required to submit all expense claims and a report detailing actual contributions no later than six months after the period of performance end date. All expense claims and contribution reports shall be submitted via the UES system.

Program Performance Reporting Requirements

Participants shall submit annual performance reports that includes pertinent information about the Participant's progress, measured against established indicators, baselines, and targets, towards achieving the expected results specified in the agreement. This report should be submitted via the UES. The report must include, for each performance indicator, a comparison of actual accomplishments with the baseline and the targets established for the period. When actual accomplishments deviate significantly from targeted goals, the Participant must provide FAS an explanation in the report as to why the goal was not achieved. Participants also must provide program success stories when appropriate or as required by FAS. At any time during the period of performance of the agreement, FAS may review the Participant's performance data to determine whether it is accurate and reliable. Participants shall comply with all requests made by FAS or representatives designated by FAS in relation to such reviews.

Monitoring

USDA/FAS, through its authorized representatives, has the right, at all reasonable times, to make site visits to review project accomplishments and management control systems and to provide such technical assistance as may be appropriate. During site visits, USDA/FAS will review recipients' files related to the program.

As part of any monitoring and program evaluation activities, grant recipients must permit USDA/FAS, upon reasonable notice, to review assistance agreement–related records and to interview the organization's staff and clients regarding the program, and to respond in a timely and accurate manner to FAS requests for information relating to the program.

Closeout

Within 180 days after the end of the period of performance, or after an amendment has been issued to close out a grant, whichever comes first, FAS will confirm that the participant has supplied all the required reports and will review the reports for completeness and content. Once the required reports are approved, FAS will prepare a closeout letter that advises the participant that the award has been closed out. The notice will indicate that the agreement's period of performance has ended, specify that any remaining funds will be de–obligated, and provide any additional necessary guidance. The RAPP Participant is responsible for returning any unused funds to CCC.

G. Awarding Agency Contact Information

Contact and Resource Information

For additional information and assistance regarding this announcement, please contact the following during regular working hours 8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Eastern Standard Time: Curt Alt, Senior Director, Program Operations Division, Global Programs, Foreign Agricultural

Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture *by phone*: (202) 690–4784, or *by email* at Curt.Alt@usda.gov.

H. Additional Information

(1) *Extensions.* Generally, extensions to RAPP periods of performance will not be allowed.

(2) *Prior Approvals.* The Participant shall not, without the prior written approval of FAS, request reimbursement, incur costs, or obligate funds for any purpose relating to the operation of their RAPP program or activities prior to the start of the approved budget period/period of performance. FAS must also approve, in advance, any changes to an agreement. A Participant may not conduct a new activity without first obtaining from FAS an approved activity budget for such change. To request approval of such activity budget, the RAPP Participant shall submit a notification to FAS for prior approval. Such notification shall contain the activity description, the proposed budget, and a justification for the transfer of funds.

(3) *Changes to Activities and Budgets.* Per [7 CFR 1489.14\(i\)\(2\)](#), advance approval from FAS is required to increase the funding level for existing, approved activities addressing a single constraint or opportunity by more than \$25,000, or 25 percent of the approved funding level, whichever is greater. For significant funding changes below that level, prior notification to FAS is not required, but only if the Participant submits a notification explaining the adjustments to FAS no later than 30 calendar days after the change. Minor adjustments to existing, approved activities and/or funding levels do not require notification.

(4) *Program Income.* [7 CFR 1489.31](#) of the RAPP regulations defines program income as gross income earned by the Participant that is directly generated by a supported activity or earned as a result of the Federal award during the period of performance. Program

income shall be used by the RAPP Participant in furtherance of its approved RAPP activities in the budget period during which the RAPP funds are available for obligation by the RAPP Participant or must be returned to CCC.

(5) *Electronic Signatures.* Consistent with the Electronic Signatures in Global and National Commerce Act (ESIGN Act), USDA/FAS uses and accepts electronic signatures for application and award documents. USDA/FAS will neither solicit nor send physical copies of documents.