Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program (LFPA)

Fiscal Year 2022 Request for Applications, Version 3 (updated May 6, 2022)[1]

Application deadline was extended from May 6, 2022 to May 20, 2022

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-AMS-10182-LFPA0000-22-0001

Publication Date: December 6, 2021

Application Due Date: 11:59 pm EASTERN TIME ON May 20, 2022

[1] On May 6, 2022, the application deadline was extended from May 6, 2022 to May 20, 2022.

Program Solicitation Information

Funding Opportunity Title: Local Food Purchase Assistance Program

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-AMS-10182-LFPA0000-22-0001

Announcement Type: Initial

Assistance Listing Number: 10.182

Dates: Applications must be received by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on May 25, 2022, through Grants.gov. Applications received after this deadline will not be considered for funding.

Executive Summary: The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), requests applications from State and Tribal Governments for the Local Food Purchase Assistance Program. The goal will be to establish cooperative agreements with state governments and Tribal governments [2] for the purpose of supporting local producers and socially disadvantaged farmers/producers. State governments and Tribal governments will purchase domestic food from local and regional producers, target purchases from socially disadvantaged farmers/producers, and distribute the food to underserved communities. AMS will make only one award per State government; agencies within the State must coordinate if more than one agency wishes to implement this program. The state and tribal governments can also partner with local organizations. Awards to Tribal Governments are not considered a state agency award, and additional awards will be made to Tribal Governments. Up to $400 million is available from funds authorized under Section 1001(b)(4) of the American Rescue Plan Act (P.L. 117-2). If additional funds are available, USDA will consider awards to local governments.

This announcement identifies the eligibility criteria for LFPA applicants, the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for an LFPA award.

AMS encourages applications that benefit socially disadvantaged farmers/producers and will provide food distribution to underserved communities that are not part of the normal food distribution network. For cooperative agreements intending to serve these entities, applicants should engage and involve those beneficiaries when developing projects and applications. AMS would like these relationships and purchase and distribution channels to continue past the conclusion of this program.

Stakeholder Input: AMS seeks comments about this Request for Applications (RFA). We will consider the comments in developing any future RFAs for the program. Email written comments within one year of the publication date of this RFA to LFPA@USDA.gov . (This e-mail address is intended only for receiving comments and questions regarding this RFA and not requesting information or forms.) In your subject line, include, 'Input LFPA'.

[2] Federally recognized Indian Tribal Governments

Amendment Changes

- The application deadline is extended from May 6, 2022 to May 20, 2022.

Program Highlights

- This RFA is for considering non-competitive applications.
- The RFA and AMS General Terms and Conditions apply to this RFA along with the Uniform Guidance (2 CFR part 200).
- Only State Governments and Tribal Governments will be considered for this RFA

Application Checklist

AMS expects applicants to read the entire RFA prior to submitting applications to ensure the program's requirements are understood.

This application checklist provides the required and conditionally required documents for an application package.

LFPA requires that **all application packages** include the following:

- ☐ SF-424 – Application for Federal Assistance (in Grants.gov)
- ☐ Project Narrative Form
  - Ensure the required template is used
  - Ensure the executive summary is no more than 250 words
  - Ensure the Project Narrative does not exceed the page limit

If applicable, packages may also be required to include the following documents:

- ☐ Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) (PDF Attachment)

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1.0 FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

1.1 LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program (LFPA) is authorized by Section 1001(b)(4) of the American Rescue Plan Act (P.L. 117-2).

1.2 PURPOSE

The purpose of this program is to maintain and improve food and agricultural supply chain resiliency. The program achieves this purpose in the overarching goals below:

1. Provide an opportunity for States and Tribal Governments to strengthen their local and regional food system.
2. Help to support local and socially disadvantaged farmers/producers through building and expanding economic opportunities.
3. Establish and broaden partnerships with farmers/producers and the food distribution community, and local food networks, including non-profits to ensure distribution of fresh and nutritious foods in rural, remote, or underserved communities.

1.2.1 DEFINITIONS

Local or regional producers are farmers, ranchers, producer, processors or distributors and other businesses involved in food production or distribution that are located in the state or tribal region or within 400 miles of the delivery destination.

Local or regional food. Locally and Regionally Produced Food means food that is raised, produced, aggregated, stored, processed, and distributed in the locality or region where the final product is marketed to consumers, so that the total distance that the product travels between the farm or ranch where the product originates and the point of sale to the end consumer is at most 400 miles, or both the final market and the origin of the product are within the same State, territory, or tribal land.

Domestic Food. "Agricultural Commodity" means a product grown, processed, and otherwise prepared for sale or distribution exclusively in the United States or its territories, except with respect to minor ingredients. Minor ingredients from nondomestic sources will be allowed to be utilized as a United States product if such ingredients are not otherwise: (1) produced in the United States; and (2) commercially available in the United States at fair and reasonable prices from domestic sources. The following ingredients are determined by AMS Commodity Procurement as not available at fair and reasonable prices and are waived from U.S. origin restrictions: (1) Vitamin A (Retinol Palmitate), (2) Vitamin D, (3) Carageenan (stabilizing agent), (4) Sorbic Acid (preservative), (5) Potassium Sorbate (preservative), (6) Rennet (coagulant), (7) Items excepted from the Buy American Act under FAR 25.104 Nonavailable Articles.

Socially Disadvantaged producers. Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher is a farmer or rancher who is a member of a Socially Disadvantaged Group. A Socially Disadvantaged Group is a group whose members have been subject to discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and, where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program.

Underserved communities are those defined in accordance with Exec Order 13985, Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government, Jan 20, 2021:

> Sec. 2. Definitions. For purposes of this order: (a) The term "equity" means the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment, such as Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.
>
> (b) The term "underserved communities" refers to populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life, as exemplified by the list in the preceding definition of "equity."

1.3 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) will establish cooperative agreements with state and Tribal governments for the purpose of supporting local, regional, and socially disadvantaged farmers/producers through food purchasing under the "Build Back Better Initiative." State and Tribal governments will purchase food from local and regional farmers/producers, targeting socially disadvantaged farmers/producers. These cooperative agreements will allow for entities to procure local, domestic foods that are unique to their geographic area and meet the needs of the populations. In addition to increasing local food consumption, funds are expected to help build and expand economic opportunity for local and socially disadvantaged farmers/producers.

USDA will provide the state or Tribal government funding for food purchases as well as guidance, technical assistance, instruction, and monitoring throughout the life cycle of the cooperative agreement. Initial agreements will be distributed incrementally to ensure all interested applicants have an opportunity for an award. Initial awards will be to State Governments and Tribal Governments. Depending on demand, additional agreements may be made available for local governments.

The expectation of this program is for recipients to spend the pre-dominance of awarded funds on food purchases. Food purchases can include both fresh and processed foods. Applicants may also request direct and indirect costs associated with developing and administering the program in accordance with 2 CFR § 200.414. All food purchased must meet the definition of domestically produced as well as the definition of local as defined in section 1.2.1. The period of performance for the Cooperative Agreements will be two years from the time of award. State agencies and Tribal governments should determine funding amounts based on their local food purchase availability and the needs of underserved communities. Funds may also be used to cover the activities associated with program development, administration, food storage and food distribution.

States and Tribal governments will submit proposals indicating how they will use the funds to purchase commodities to meet the specified objectives within their state or region. These funds will be awarded through a non-competitive process based on the statutory The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) funding formula. This formula considers the poverty rate and unemployment levels in each state to ensure the distribution of funds corresponds to feeding needs in each state. Cooperative Agreement applications will be awarded based on acceptability and ability to meet the goals of the program.

1.3.1 SUBAWARDS

State agencies will ensure that subrecipients maintain appropriate records and follow all applicable Federal statutes and regulations as well as the Grant Agreement and AMS General Terms and Conditions

2.0 AWARD INFORMATION

2.1 TYPE OF FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

AMS will use a Cooperative Agreement to provide the Federal award to applicants.

2.2 TYPE OF APPLICATIONS

New application. AMS will review all applications for conformance with the criteria in ***section 5.0*** and may require the applicant to provide additional information or clarification by a specified date.

2.3 AVAILABLE FUNDING

Initial agreements will be distributed incrementally to ensure that all interested applicants have an opportunity for an award. For states with federally recognized tribal governments, initial awards will not exceed 60 percent of the TEFAP allocation to ensure tribal governments are given an opportunity to respond. Amendments to award amounts or additional awards to local governments may occur, depending on initial demand for the program and the availability of funds. Final adjustments may occur to the award once the application due date has closed. The total funding available for the program is up to $400 million.

2.4 FEDERAL AWARD PERIOD DURATION

Projects must be completed within 2 years from time of award. It is acceptable to complete a project before the scheduled performance period end date. The applicant must indicate the start and end dates on the SF-424, “Application for Federal Assistance” in block 17.

2.5 AWARD SIZE

These funds will be awarded through a noncompetitive process using The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) funding formula as guidance. This formula considers the poverty rate and unemployment levels in each state to ensure the distribution of funds corresponds to nutrition assistance needs in each state.

Initiatives should apply for an amount that meets their needs considering the guideline amount for their state. After initial awards are made, AMS will determine the best course of action to redistribute remaining funds.

TEFAP ALLOCATION WORKSHEET (FY22 FORMULA)

ALLOCATION OF AMS COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS

REGION/STATE	**Allocation**
NORTHEAST	
Connecticut	$4,400,000
Maine	$1,300,000
Massachusetts	$7,500,000
New Hampshire	$900,000
New York	$26,700,000
Rhode Island	$1,200,000
Vermont	$500,000
Virgin Islands	$200,000
MID-ATLANTIC	
Delaware	$900,000
District of Columbia	$1,100,000
Maryland	$6,100,000
New Jersey	$9,700,000
Pennsylvania	$15,200,000
Puerto Rico	$9,800,000
Virginia	$8,000,000
West Virginia	$2,400,000

SOUTHEAST	
Alabama	$5,900,000
Florida	$24,800,000
Georgia	$12,500,000
Kentucky	$5,500,000
Mississippi	$4,700,000
North Carolina	$12,700,000
South Carolina	$6,100,000
Tennessee	$8,200,000
MIDWEST	
Illinois	$14,400,000
Indiana	$6,900,000
Iowa	$2,700,000
Michigan	$11,000,000
Minnesota	$4,600,000
Ohio	$13,500,000
Wisconsin	$4,900,000
SOUTHWEST	
Arizona	$8,700,000
Arkansas	$3,700,000
Louisiana	$7,400,000
New Mexico	$3,300,000

Oklahoma	$4,400,000
Texas	$37,800,000
Utah	$2,200,000
MOUNTAIN PLAINS	
Colorado	$6,500,000
Kansas	$2,500,000
Missouri	$6,100,000
Montana	$1,000,000
Nebraska	$1,600,000
North Dakota	$700,000
South Dakota	$800,000
Wyoming	$600,000
WESTERN	
Alaska	$900,000
California	$51,300,000
Guam	$300,000
Hawaii	$1,800,000
Idaho	$1,500,000
Nevada	$4,400,000
N Mariana Isl.	$200,000
Oregon	$4,400,000
Washington	$7,200,000

3.0 ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

3.1 ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible entities include the State agencies, commissions, or departments that are responsible for agriculture, procurement, food distribution, emergency response or similar activities within the State. AMS will make only one award per State or territory; agencies within the State must coordinate if more than one agency wishes to implement this program. Awards to Tribal Governments are not considered a state agency award; additional awards will be made to Tribal Governments.

3.2 ELIGIBLE BENEFICIARIES

Eligible beneficiaries of purchases include those involved in the production and distribution of local domestic food. Contracts shall be awarded to farmers, producers, processors, or distributors of local domestic product that meet the definition of a local or regional producer as defined in 1.2.1. All food purchased must meet the definition of local and domestic. States and Tribal governments are required to target purchases from beneficiaries that meet the definition of socially disadvantaged.

Purchases must comply with Section 7, Procurement, of the AMS General Terms and Conditions. In accordance with Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Memorandum M-20-20, Appendix 3, Section VII, AMS may waive, upon request, the procurement requirements contained in 2 CFR § 200.319(c) regarding geographical preferences for this cooperative agreement program. Recipients must maintain records and documentation to support the charges against the Federal awards.

Eligible beneficiaries to receive the food are those members of communities in need of food. The program requires that distributions target communities that meet the definition of underserved. Food distribution may occur through state agencies, non-profit organizations engaged in food distribution, and other entities capable of ensuring program requirements are met.

An applicant may subcontract or subaward with partners and collaborators. Only the applicant must meet the eligibility requirements listed in this RFA.

- A *partnership* is a relationship involving close cooperation between parties having specified and joint rights and responsibilities in the management of the project.
- A *collaborator* is a person or an organization unaffiliated with the applicant that cooperates with the applicant in the conduct of the project and is not immediately connected to the management of the project.

Partners and collaborators may come from private or public, for-profit, or nonprofit entities. Applicants must show evidence of existing community or industry support and engagement.

3.3 COST SHARING AND MATCHING

LFPA does not have a Federal cost sharing or matching requirement.

4.0 APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

4.1 ELECTRONIC APPLICATION PACKAGE

Only electronic applications may be submitted via Grants.gov in response to this RFA. We urge applicants to submit early to the Grants.gov system. For an overview of the Grants.gov application process, please visit the Grants.gov website. This RFA contains the information needed to obtain and complete required application forms and AMS-specific attachments.

Applicants can find the opportunity under the Assistance Listing number "10.182."

4.2 CONTENT AND FORM OF APPLICATION SUBMISSION

4.2.1 FORM SF-424 APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

Required: Form SF-424 is available via the opportunity at Grants.gov. Most information blocks on the required form are either self-explanatory or adequately explained in the instructions. However, applicants must use the following supplemental instructions associated with specific blocks on form SF-424.

Block	Instruction
#1 Type of Submission	Application.
#2 Type of Application	New.
#4 and #5	Not applicable.
# 8c Organizational Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) or System for Award Management (SAM.gov) Unique Entity ID (UEI)[3]	Applicant DUNS# or SAM UEI for the Organization submitting the application. See D&B Request a DUNS Number.
#8d Address	The organization street address as it appears in SAM.gov. P.O. Boxes will not be accepted. Enter a 9-digit zip code.
#10 Name of Federal Agency	AMS, USDA
#11 Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number (Assisted Listing Number)	10.182
#12 Funding Opportunity Number	USDA-AMS-10182-LFPA0000-22-0001
#13Competition Identification Number	Not applicable.
#14 Areas Affected by Project	Enter State or Tribal region affected by project.
#15 Descriptive Title of Applicant's Project	Provide a short description of the project.
#16a Congressional Districts for Applicant	Enter the Congressional district where your main office is located.
#16b Congressional Districts for Program/Project	Enter the Congressional district where your project will be performed. Write "All" if the projects will be performed in more than one location.
#17 Proposed Project Start Date and End Date	Enter proposed start date and end date. End date must be within 24 months of award
#18 Estimated Funding	Total Federal funds requested.
#19 Is Applicant Subject to Review by State Under Executive Order 12372 Process?	

4.2.2 PROJECT NARRATIVE

Required: Applicants are required to prepare and submit a narrative using the LFPA narrative form. The narrative must describe how the recipient will meet the program objectives and goals, provide resources, financial controls, meet reporting requirements (progress and financial), manage risks, and mitigate potential fraud. A timeline of activities and milestones must be included that contains proposed time of procurements and delivery periods.

In order to meet the goals of the program, it is important that recipients have a well thought out plan that includes responses to program objectives and activities planned. The submission must address how the funds increase local food consumption and help build and expand economic opportunity for local, regional farmers/producers and for socially disadvantaged farmers/producers. Include how the

[3] After April 4, 2022, the DUNS number is no longer used as the entity identifier for federal awards. More information on the transition from DUNS number to the new Unique Entity Identifier is available at https://www.gsa.gov/about-us/organization/federal-acquisition-service/office-of-systems-management/integrated-award-environment-iae/iae-systems-information-kit/unique-entity-identifier-update

distribution of food will target underserved communities and those communities not normally served through traditional food distribution networks.

The narrative must also include a budget narrative and justification section. The line item for procurements/contractual/subawards should include the amount of the proposed budget dedicated to the purchase of food either by the recipient or through subawards. Applicants that wish to include expenses for food storage and distribution should add a line for those line items. The predominance of the budget should be dedicated to the purchase of food. The individual subaward budgets are not expected at the submission of this application.

The narrative must be typed, single-spaced, in an 11-point font, not to exceed twenty (20) pages, excluding existing form content. The narrative form is 10 pages. The narrative form including completed content cannot exceed 30 pages. DO NOT modify the margins of the Project Narrative form.

Prior to submitting the application to Grants.gov, please make sure no tracked changes or mark-up edits and comments are visible.

Applicants must submit the LFPA Project Narrative form as a PDF and attached to the Grants.gov application package using the "Project Narrative Attachment Form" on the application package. Handwritten applications or applications in MS Word will not be accepted.

The supporting documents in subsequent sections do not count toward the 20-page limit for the Project Narrative.

PLEASE NOTE: AMS does not require Congressional letters of support and such letters do not carry additional weight during the evaluation process.

4.2.3 NEGOTIATED INDIRECT COST RATE AGREEMENT (NICRA)

Required if the applicant has a NICRA: The NICRA must be in PDF format **and** attached to the Grants.gov application package using the "Add Attachments" button under SF-424 item #15.

4.3 SUBMISSION DATE AND TIME

Applicants must submit applications via Grants.gov by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on May 25, 2022. AMS cannot consider applications received after this deadline for funds. Your application **may not be reviewed or considered for funding** if it is:

- Received by Grants.gov after the submission deadline;
- Submitted via any method other than through Grants.gov;
- Submitted to the wrong grant program; or
- Not responsive to the requirements of this RFA (eligibility, incomplete application, not providing all required documents, etc.)

See AMS' Late and/or Non-Responsive Applications Policy for more information.

4.4 INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW

This program is not subject to Executive Order 12372, which requires intergovernmental consultation with state and local officials.

4.5 FUNDS NOT APPLIED FOR

State agencies or Tribal Governments who do not apply for or do not request all available funding during the specified application period will forfeit all or that portion of available funding not requested. AMS will allocate funds not applied for, by a date determined by AMS. This distribution may include State agencies, Tribal governments, or local governments.

4.6 FUNDING RESTRICTIONS

4.6.1 INDIRECT COSTS

Indirect costs (also known as "facilities and administrative costs"—defined at 2 CFR § 200.1) are those costs incurred for a common or joint purpose benefitting more than one cost objective, and not readily assignable to the cost objectives specifically benefitted, without effort disproportionate to the results achieved.

As stated in the regulations (2 CFR § 200.414), any non-Federal entity that does not have a current negotiated (including provisional) indirect cost rate, except State and Local Government and Indian Tribe Indirect Cost Proposals, may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10 percent of modified total direct costs (MTDC) which may be used indefinitely. No documentation is required to justify the 10% de minimis indirect cost rate. As described in 2 CFR § 200.403, costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs, but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both. If chosen, this methodology once elected must be used consistently for all Federal awards until such time as a recipient chooses to negotiate for a rate, which the recipient may apply to do at any time.

All applicants who elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10 percent must use the MTDC as the base. MTDC are defined in 2 CFR § 200.1 as all direct salaries and wages, applicable fringe benefits, materials and supplies, services, travel, and up to the first $25,000 of each subaward (regardless of the period of performance of the subawards under the award). MTDCs exclude equipment, capital expenditures, charges for patient care, rental costs, tuition remission, scholarships and fellowships, participant support costs, and the portion of each subaward in excess of $25,000. Other items may be excluded only when necessary to avoid a serious inequity in the distribution of indirect costs, and with the approval of the cognizant agency for indirect costs.

If an applicant has a negotiated indirect cost rate approved by its cognizant agency, the applicant must submit a copy of its approved NICRA with its application. Entities that would like to negotiate an indirect cost rate must contact their cognizant agency. For assignments of cognizant agencies see 2 CFR § 200.1.

4.6.2 ALLOWABLE AND UNALLOWABLE COSTS AND ACTIVITIES

All AMS awards are subject to the terms and conditions, cost principles, and other considerations described in the AMS General Terms and Conditions.

In addition to food purchases, eligible entities may propose direct costs for outreach, program development, program administration, food storage, and distribution expenses.

Applicants that have questions concerning the allowability of costs after reviewing this document should contact AMS staff using the contact information listed under ***section 7.0***.

4.6.3 SUPPLANTING

The funds awarded through this RFA must increase, expand, or replace, and not duplicate, existing activities of the host initiatives.

4.6.4 SUPPORT FOR DOMESTIC BUSINESSES

Technical assistance and subawards will not be made available to a foreign entity making direct investment in the United States, as defined in 15 CFR § 801.2, where the assistance is provided to a specific business and is not publicly available.

4.7 HOW TO REGISTER TO APPLY THROUGH GRANTS.GOV

4.7.1 STEPS TO REGISTER

The registration process can take **up to four weeks** to complete. Therefore, complete your registration allowing sufficient time to ensure it does not impact your ability to meet required application submission deadlines.

Organization applicants can find complete instructions here:
https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html

1) *Obtain a DUNS Number*: All entities applying for funding, including renewal funding, must have a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number from Dun & Bradstreet (D&B). Applicants must enter the DUNS number in the data entry field labeled "Organizational DUNS" on the SF-424 form. After April 4, 2022, the DUNS number is no longer used as the entity identifier for federal awards. Information about finding your Unique Entity ID (UEI) or registering for a UEI is available at https://www.gsa.gov/about-us/organization/federal-acquisition-service/office-of-systems-management/integrated-award-environment-iae/iae-systems-information-kit/unique-entity-identifier-update.

2) *Register with SAM*: In addition to having a DUNS number, organizations applying online through Grants.gov must register with the System for Award Management (SAM). All organizations must register with SAM to apply online. Failure to register with SAM will prevent your organization from applying through Grants.gov. **SAM.gov accounts must be updated annually, and your organization must have an *active* SAM.gov account to submit your application to Grants.gov.**

3) *Create a Grants.gov Account*: The next step in the registration process is to create an account with Grants.gov. Applicants must know their organization's DUNS number or UEI to complete this process. Completing this process automatically triggers an email request for applicant roles to the organization's E-Business Point of Contact (EBiz POC) for review. The EBiz POC is a representative from your organization who is the contact listed for SAM. To apply for grants on behalf of your organization, the EBiz POC will need to identify and assign an individual to the Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) role.

4) *Authorize Grants.gov Roles*: After creating an account on Grants.gov, the EBiz POC receives an email notifying him or her of your registration and request for roles. The EBiz POC will then log in to Grants.gov and authorize the appropriate roles, including the Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) role, thereby giving you permission to complete and submit applications on behalf of the organization. You will be able to submit your application online any time after you have been approved as an AOR.

5) *Track Role Status*: After registering with Grants.gov and authorizing the applicant AOR, Grants.gov allows you to track your status

b. *Electronic Signature*: When applications are submitted through Grants.gov, the name of the organization's AOR who submitted the application is inserted into the signature line of the application, serving as the electronic signature. The EBiz POC **must** authorize individuals who are able to make legally binding commitments on behalf of the organization as AORs. **This step is often missed, and it is crucial for valid and timely submissions.**

4.7.2 HOW TO SUBMIT AN APPLICATION TO AMS VIA GRANTS.GOV

Applicants may use the Grants.gov Workspace, a shared, online environment where members of a grant team may simultaneously access and edit different webforms within an application. For each funding opportunity announcement, you can create individual instances of a Workspace.

1) *Create a Workspace*: This allows you to complete your Workspace online and route it through your organization for review before submitting.

2) *Complete a Workspace*: Add participants to the workspace, complete all the required forms, and check for errors before submission.

    a. *Adobe Reader*: If you decide not to apply by filling out webforms you can download individual PDF forms in Workspace so that they will appear similar to other Standard or AMS forms. The individual PDF forms can be downloaded and saved to your local device storage, network drive(s), or external drives, and then accessed through Adobe Reader.

    NOTE: You may need to visit the Adobe Software Compatibility page on Grants.gov to download the appropriate version of the software.

    b. *Mandatory Fields in Forms:* Fields marked with an asterisk and a different background color are mandatory fields you must complete to successfully submit your application.

    c. *Complete SF-424 Fields First*: The forms are designed to fill in common required fields across other forms, such as the applicant's name, address, and DUNS number or UEI. To trigger this feature, an applicant must complete the SF-424 form information first. Once it is completed, the information will transfer to the other forms.

3) *Submit a Workspace*: Submit your application through Workspace by clicking the Sign and Submit button on the Manage Workspace page, under the Forms tab. Grants.gov recommends submitting the application package **at least 24-48 hours prior to the due date** to provide you with time to correct any potential technical issues that may disrupt the application submission.

    SPECIAL NOTE: Grants.gov **does not** check for AMS required attachments. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all required attachments listed in ***section 4.2*** are included.

4) *Track a Workspace*: After successfully submitting a workspace package, Grants.gov automatically assigns a Tracking Number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) to the package, which will be listed on the Confirmation page generated after submission.

Applicant Support: Grants.gov provides additional training resources, including video tutorials. Applicants may also call the 24/7 toll-free support number 1-800-518-4726, or email support@grants.gov. Grants.gov will issue a ticket number that you and Grants.gov can refer to if the issue is not resolved. For questions related to the specific grant opportunity, contact the person(s) mentioned in ***section 7.0***.

4.7.3 TIMELY RECEIPT REQUIREMENTS AND PROOF OF TIMELY SUBMISSION

All applications must be received by the due date established in ***section 4.3***. Proof of timely submission is automatically recorded by Grants.gov using an electronic date/time stamp generated when the application is successfully received by Grants.gov. The applicant AOR will then receive an acknowledgement of receipt and a tracking number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) from Grants.gov. Applicant AORs will also receive the official date/time stamp and Grants.gov Tracking number in an email serving as proof of their timely submission.

When AMS successfully retrieves the application from Grants.gov and acknowledges the download of submissions, Grants.gov will electronically acknowledge receipt of the application to the applicant AOR's email address. Again, proof of timely submission shall be the email from Grants.gov stating the official date and time that Grants.gov receives your application. Applications received by Grants.gov after the established due date for the program will be considered late and will not be considered for funding by AMS.

AMS will not accept applications packages by fax, email, or postal mail. Applications received by Grants.gov after the established due date for the program will be considered late and will not be considered for funding by AMS. See AMS' Policy on Late Applications.

Special Note for Applicants with Slow Internet Connections. Applicants using slow internet connections, such as dial-up connections, may experience significantly longer transmission times when submitting their application to Grants.gov, especially if there are large attachments contained in the upload. Again, Grants.gov will provide either an error message or a successfully received transmission notification via email to the applicant AOR.

4.8 EZFedGrants.gov Requirements and Cooperative Agreement Management

Cooperative Agreements will be processed and managed using the online grants management system, ezFedGrants (eFG). Recipients **are required to use** eFG system to manage LFPA Agreements throughout the entire agreement lifecycle, which include, digitally signing agreements, and preparing reimbursement claims, repayment requests, and financial and performance reports.

In order to access eFG system, recipients must obtain a USDA Verified Identity eAuthentication Account Level 2 and submit an Access Request (to identify the Organization(s) represented and select the appropriate primary user role).

The eFG system requires each recipient to have a minimum of at least one Grants Administrative Officer (GAO) and one Signatory Official (SO). It is best practice to have at least one back up in each role to keep items, such as claims or reporting, moving through the system.

The chart below identifies the various roles a recipient can designate and the actions they can take in eFG system.

ezFedGrants Role	Role Functions
Grants Processor	• Prepare and submit financial and performance reports • Create and edit applications and claims • Search and view opportunities, applications, claims, reports, and amendments • Be designated as a Certifying Official (secondary role)
Grants Administrative Official (GAO)	• Grants processor functions, PLUS • Approve access requests, change user roles, and deactivate user access • Reassign draft or returned Applications, Claims, and Reports • Generate work item and user administration reports
Signatory Official (SO)	• Prepare and submit financial and performance reports • Search and view opportunities, applications, claims, reports, and amendments • Review and digitally sign applications, agreements, and amendments • Be designated as a Certifying Official (secondary role)

For eAuthentication issues contact the eAuthentication helpdesk at eAuthHelpDesk@ftc.usda.gov. or dial 1-800-457-3642. Recipients new to eFG should review the Job Aids located in the Training Section of the OCFO.usda.gov/ezFedGrants.

4.8.1 TIPS FOR APPLICANTS

- Register and submit applications through Grant.gov early. **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE DAY OF THE APPLICATION DEADLINE**.
- Thoroughly read this RFA and follow all the instructions provided by AMS.
- Thoroughly review the AMS General Terms and Conditions to understand allowable and unallowable costs.
- Apply for the correct grant program
    - Assistance Listing number "**10.182**" and "**Funding Opportunity Number USDA-AMS-10182-LFPA0000-22-0001**"
- 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).
- 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 DUNS number or UEI on the SF-424 cover page.
- Review the EZFedGrants.gov Applicant User and Registration Guides.

5.0 APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

This is a non-competitive RFA. AMS will review each project narrative to ensure that it meets the statutory purpose of the program, all application criteria are fulfilled in accordance with ***section 4.0***, and all costs are allowable. A review of applications will be completed to ensure a complete work plan is provided that includes plan and objectives, resources, financial controls, reporting and evaluation, risk and fraud mitigation plans and a timeline for your program.

AMS will notify the individual listed on the SF-424 "Application for Federal Assistance" in block 8f if additional information is required after the initial review of the application. AMS will work with applicants to negotiate any revisions if necessary and possible. Failure to provide requested information in a timely manner may result in a project not receiving funding.

6.0 AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

6.1 AWARD NOTICES

Upon announcement of the Federal awards, AMS will prepare and send a Notice of Award and Cooperative Agreement to each recipient for signature by the appropriate official. Cooperative Agreements consist of a 1-page Agreement Face Sheet (AMS-33) that will be signed by AMS and the AOR.

The Notice of Award and Cooperative agreement will provide pertinent instructions and information including, at a minimum, the information described in 2 CFR § 200.211 and a reference to the AMS General Terms and Conditions.

6.2 ADMINISTRATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS

All AMS grant and cooperative agreements include the AMS General Terms and Conditions as part of the Notice of Award and Grant Agreement. More information is provided in the most recent version of the AMS General Terms and Conditions under the *Administrative and National Policy Requirements* section.

6.3 REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Reporting and award closeout requirements are included in the AMS General Terms and Conditions. To ensure attainment of program goals and to monitor progress, award recipients are required to complete quarterly, annual, and final financial and progress reports. These reports will provide quantitative data that will be used by USDA to validate the effectiveness of the program and to assist in consideration of future programs. Upon issuance of award, AMS will provide a template to collect information from recipients. Information to be collected will include:

- Name of vendors and dollar value awarded to vendors receiving contracts and type of food purchased (fruit, vegetable, dairy, protein).
- Break-down of number of socially disadvantaged farmers/producers awarded contracts, dollar value of purchases, and type of commodity purchased (fruit, vegetable, protein, dairy).
- Name and location of organizations receiving food aid to include dollar value of product being distributed to underserved communities.

These performance reports must provide a description of the following activities conducted during the reporting period: budget information, deviations from the proposed plan, difficulties encountered, solutions developed to overcome difficulties, and major planned activities for the next quarter.

At the end of each performance year, recipients will be required to provide a final report. This report will include a summary of the data from the quarterly progress reports and a narrative addressing questions 1 through 3 below. The narrative responses will be used to measure the outcome of the program.

1. Percentage of new marketing opportunities established by purchasing from local and regional farmers/producers, and of those, what percentage will likely be sustained after the funding is expended.

2. Percentage of new marketing opportunities established by purchasing from socially disadvantaged farmers/producers, and of those, what percentage will likely be sustained after the funding is expended.

3. Percentage of purchases distributed beyond current food distribution networks to serve underserved communities, and of those, what percentage will likely be sustained after the funding is expended.

Responses to question 1 and 2 should compare the number of partnerships built through the LFPA to partnerships in existence prior to the program, and of those, the percentage that will continue at the conclusion of the program. Responses to question 3 should compare the total deliveries of food products through the LFPA to the deliveries made to underserved communities that are not served by current food distribution networks (such as TEFAP), and the percentage of those food distributions that will continue at the conclusion of the program.

7.0 AGENCY CONTACTS

7.1 PROGRAMMATIC QUESTIONS

After closely reviewing this RFA in its entirety, applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact the LFPA staff by e-mail with questions about the cooperative agreement program at LFPA@usda.gov.

For additional information, please visit the AMS website.

7.2 ADDRESS

Local Food Purchases Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program (LFPA)
USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 2549 South Building
Stop 0201
Washington, DC 20250-0264

7.3 AVAILABLE RESOURCES

AMS provides resources and information on the LFPA website that may be helpful to applicants, including descriptions of funded projects, and required application forms.

7.4 EZFEDGRANTS.GOV QUESTIONS

For assistance using the ezFedGrants Portal, please contact ezFedgrants@cfo.usda.gov. Questions about specific awards, agreements, or policies, please contact ezFedGrants.AMSHelpDesk@ams.usda.gov.

8.0 OTHER INFORMATION

8.1 EQUAL OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender. Recipients must comply with 7 CFR Subpart A; Part 15 (15.1 (a)) "…that no person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity of an applicant or recipient receiving Federal financial assistance from the Department of Agriculture or any Agency thereof".

Cooperative Agreement awardees should be prepared to communicate this opportunity to persons with limited English proficiency.

8.2 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUESTS

The Freedom of Information Act of 1966 (5 U.S.C. § 552) (FOIA) and the Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C. § 552a), as implemented by USDA's regulations (7 CFR part 1, Subpart A) govern the release or withholding of information to the public in connection with this Federal award. The release of information under these laws and regulations applies only to records held by AMS and imposes no requirement on the recipient or any subrecipient to permit or deny public access to their records.

FOIA requests for records relating to this Federal award may be directed to USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service, FOIA/PA Officer, Room 1671-S, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-0273, Telephone: (202) 302-0650; or email: AMS.FOIA@usda.gov.

8.3 PAPERWORK REDUCTION

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. 3501), an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0581-0330. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 4 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information.