DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Commodity Credit Corporation and Foreign Agricultural Service

Foreign Market Development Cooperator Program

A. Program Description

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

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 10.600

CFDA Title: Foreign Market Development Cooperator Program

Notice of Funding Opportunity Title: Foreign Market Development Cooperator Program

NOFO Number: 2022–02

Authorizing Authority for Program: The Foreign Market Development Cooperator Program (Cooperator program) is authorized by Section 203(c) of the Agricultural Trade Act of 1978 (7 U.S.C. 5623(c)), as amended. Cooperator program regulations appear at 7 CFR Part 1484.

Appropriation Authority for Program: Funding for the Cooperator program is provided under 7 U.S.C. 5623(f).

Announcement Type: New.

Program Overview, Objectives, and Priorities: The Cooperator program is designed to maintain and develop foreign markets for United States agricultural commodities and products through cost–share assistance. Financial assistance under the Cooperator program will be made available on a competitive basis and applications will be reviewed against the evaluation criteria contained herein and in the Cooperator program regulations. All U.S. agricultural commodities, except tobacco, are eligible for consideration.

FAS allocates funds in a manner that effectively supports the strategic decision–making initiatives of the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) of 1993. In deciding whether a proposed project will contribute to the effective creation, expansion, or maintenance of foreign markets, FAS considers whether the applicant provides a clear, long–term agricultural trade strategy, has the broadest producer representation and affiliated industry participation of the commodity being promoted, and includes an effective program time line against which results can be measured at specific intervals using quantifiable product or country goals. FAS also considers the extent to which a proposed project targets markets with the greatest growth potential. These factors are part of the FAS resource allocation strategy to fund applicants who can best demonstrate performance and address USDA and FAS goals and objectives. Cooperator program participants must adhere to GPRA and USDA Monitoring and Evaluation guidance..

B. Federal Award Information

Award Amounts, Important Dates, and Extensions

Available Funding for this Announcement: The Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 provides no less than $34.5 million for the Cooperator program for each of the fiscal years (FY) 2019 through FY 2023. 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 2022 is provided.

Total Award Funding: No less than $34,500,000

Estimated number of awards: 20–30 awards

Estimated funding per award: Funding per award under the Cooperator program is anticipated to range from $10,000 to $10,000,000 per eligible applicant, subject to programmatic approval, review, and available funding. FAS may, at its discretion, not fund requests in full through the initial allocation of funding. Subject to available funding and program priorities, FAS may provide additional funding to approved program participants through subsequent funding tranches throughout the fiscal year. Such funding will be at FAS's sole discretion and may exceed the applicant's initial funding request or be approved for activities that were not proposed in the applicant's initial application, subject to the appropriate review and approval process.

Projected Number of Awards: 20–30 awards

Period of Performance: Awards will be generally granted for a project period of up to three years.

Projected Period of Performance Start Date(s): 01/01/2022

Projected Period of Performance End Date(s): 12/31/2025

Funding Instrument: Grant.

C. Eligibility Information

Eligible Applicants

To participate in the Cooperator program, an entity must be a nonprofit U.S. agricultural trade organization that promotes the exports of one or more U.S. agricultural commodities, does not have a business interest in or receive remuneration from specific sales of agricultural commodities, and contributes at least 50 percent of the value of resources reimbursed by CCC for activities conducted under the agreement. 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. Applicants that do not meet the eligibility criteria will be considered ineligible.

Eligibility Criteria

Eligible commodities: Eligible commodities for the Cooperator program are 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. Applicants that do not meet the eligibility criteria will be considered ineligible.

Eligible Activities: Under the Cooperator program, FAS enters into agreements with eligible nonprofit U.S. trade organizations to share the cost of certain overseas marketing and promotion activities. Cooperators may receive assistance only for generic activities that do not involve promotions targeted directly to consumers purchasing in their individual capacity. The Cooperator program generally operates on a reimbursement basis. Applicants that do not meet the eligibility criteria will be considered ineligible.

Limits on Activities: Cooperator program activities are approved for a single program year, with the approval dates specified in the allocation approval letter that is provided as part of the award approval package. Only those Cooperator program activities that are approved in each applicant's allocation approval letter or are subsequently approved by FAS may be implemented, and those activities must be implemented during the 12–month program year specified in the allocation approval letter. Requests for activity changes during the program year must be approved in advance by FAS. Cooperators must re–apply for the program every year.

Eligibility Requirements: In accordance with the Office of Management and Budget's policy (68 FR 38402 (June 27, 2003)) regarding the need to identify entities that are receiving government awards, all applicants must submit a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering

System (DUNS) number. Instructions for obtaining a DUNS number can be found at http://www.dnb.com/duns–number.html. An applicant may request a DUNS number at no cost by calling the dedicated toll–free DUNS number request line at (866) 705–5711.

In addition, per 2 CFR Part 25, each entity that applies to the Cooperator program and does not qualify for an exemption under 2 CFR §25.110 must:

(i) Be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) at www.sam.gov prior to submitting an application or plan;

(ii) 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 FAS; and

(iii) Provide its DUNS number, or a unique identifier as a DUNS replacement, in each application or plan it submits to FAS.

Applicants are encouraged to register or update their SAM registration early to avoid delays in processing their application. Applicants with pending or expired registrations are ineligible. This requirement must be met before an application will be considered and will not be waived. Applicants whose names are published as ineligible in SAM due to a violation of a Federal statue are not eligible to apply to the Cooperator program. Applicants should check their SAM status prior to submitting their application or plan.

FAS will not make an award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM 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. For questions about this requirement, please contact Curt

Alt at (202) 690–4784, Senior Director, Program Operations Division, Global Programs or at curt.alt@usda.gov.

Other Submission Requirements and Information

Applicants are limited to submitting one application or plan per this announcement. Applications should include a justification for funding assistance from the program – an explanation as to what specifically could not be accomplished without Federal funding assistance and why participating organizations are unlikely to carry out the project without such assistance.

Cost–Share or Match

To participate in the Cooperator program, an applicant must agree to contribute resources to its proposed promotional activities. The Cooperator program is intended to supplement, not supplant, the efforts of the U.S. private sector. The contribution must be at least 50 percent of the value of resources provided by CCC for activities conducted under the project agreement.

The amount of cost share will be specified in the approval letter. Promised contributions may be specified in dollars or as a percentage of the amount reimbursed by CCC. If the required promised contribution is not met, the applicant is required to either return to CCC the necessary amount of funds reimbursed by CCC to increase its actual cost share percentage to the required level or pay to CCC, 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 end of the Cooperator program year.

The degree of commitment of an applicant to the promotional strategies contained in its application, as represented by the cost–share contributions specified therein, is considered by FAS when determining which applications will be approved for funding. Cost–share may be actual cash invested or in–kind contributions, such as professional staff time spent on the design and implementation of activities. The Cooperator program regulations, including sections 1484.50 and 1484.51, provide detailed discussion of eligible and ineligible cost–share contributions.

D. Application and Submission Information

Key Dates and Times

Date Posted to Grants.gov: April 23, 2021

Application Submission Deadline: All applications, including the required Standard Form–424 and Standard Form–424A, must be received by FAS by 5 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time, Friday, June 25, 2021. Incomplete applications or applications that do not otherwise conform to this announcement and the Cooperator program regulations by the program deadline will not be accepted for review.

Anticipated Funding Selection: FAS anticipates that the final funding selections will be made by the end of October 2021.

Anticipated Award Date: FAS estimates that the awards will be announced by the end of December 2021.

Address to Request Application Package

This announcement contains all information needed to apply to the Cooperator program. For a hardcopy of this announcement or to obtain more information on how to apply to the Cooperator program, please contact the Program Operations Division, Global Programs, Foreign Agricultural Service *by courier:* Room 6512, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., Washington, DC 20250, or *by phone*: (202) 720–4327, or *by fax*: (202) 720–9361, or *by e–mail*: uesadmin@usda.gov.

Content and Form of Application Submission

To be considered for the Cooperator program, an applicant must submit to FAS an application package consisting of a:

(1) 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); and

(3) Standard Form 424A "Budget Information – Non–Construction Programs" (SF–424A).

The SF–424 and SF–424A are standard forms that FAS is requesting as part of the submission of applications under the Cooperator program. All applicable parts of the SF–424 and SF–424A must be completed, and the forms must be signed by the applicant. FAS will return incomplete SF–424 and SF–424A forms, which may cause delays in processing an application.

Applicants must, to the best of their ability, provide a breakout of their total program request by the cost categories delineated on the SF–424A, and the submission must be accompanied by a supporting budget narrative that explains how the costs were estimated. FAS will use the budget narrative and the funding requests for each activity to assess the reasonableness of the costs. In the budget narrative, applicants should discuss each cost category, how it was estimated, and key expenses included in the category, including the number of personnel working on the program. Applicants that have previously participated in the program may base their budget estimates on the applicant's average historical spending across the various cost categories. New applicants without prior history in the program should contact Curt Alt in the Program Operations Division for assistance in generating the necessary budget estimates. FAS has developed a sample budget narrative, which is attached to this announcement. FAS stands ready to answer any questions about the budget narrative and the SF–424A and can provide support and guidance to applicants that need help in meeting this request.

In addition to the required SF–424 and SF–424A forms, each applicant must also complete and certify to the grants “Representations and Certifications” and “Grants Certifications” in SAM.gov by the application deadline. All applicants must also answer “Yes” to the question in the Grants Certification section of SAM asking whether the applicant “Wishes to apply for a Federal financial assistance project or program, or is currently the recipient of funding under any Federal financial assistance project or program?” FAS will verify in SAM.gov that the proper forms are completed. If they have not been, the applicant will be contacted and directed to do so. Your award will not be issued until the proper forms are completed within the SAM.gov portal. If required, the SF–LLL form, “Disclosure of Lobbying Activities,” must also be submitted.

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

(1) The name, address, and URL for the home page of the applicant organization;

(2) The name of the applicant’s Chief Executive Officer;

(3) The name, telephone number, fax number, and email address of the applicant’s primary contact person;

(4) The name(s) of the person(s) responsible for managing the proposed program;

(5) A description of the applicant organization, including the type of organization of the applicant (e.g., nonprofit SRTG), its mission, and the statutory authorities by which it is constituted and under which it operates, if applicable;

(6) Tax exempt identification number of the applicant, if applicable;

(7) Beginning and ending dates for proposed program year (mm/dd/yy–mm/dd/yy);

(8) Total dollar amount of CCC resources requested;

(9) Percentage of CCC resources requested for general administrative expenses;

(10) A Dun and Bradstreet DUNS number for the applicant;

(11) A description of the applicant organization's membership and membership criteria;

(12) A list of organizations affiliated with the applicant, including parent organizations, subsidiaries, and partnerships;

(13) A description of the applicant's management and administrative capability;

(14) A description of the applicant's prior export promotion experience;

(15) 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;

(16) Value, in U.S. dollars, of proposed contributions from other sources;

(17) A description of the promoted U.S. agricultural commodity(s), its harmonized tariff classification, the applicable commodity aggregate code (available from the UES Web site), and the percentage of U.S. origin content by weight, exclusive of added water;

(18) A description of the anticipated supply and demand situation for the promoted U.S. agricultural commodity(s);

(19) The volume and value of exports of the promoted U.S. agricultural commodity(s) to the targeted markets for the most recent 3–year period;

(20) A certification (and a written explanation supporting the certification, if requested by CCC) that any funds received will supplement, but not supplant, any private or third–party funds or other contributions to program activities. The explanation, if one is requested, shall indicate

why the applicant is unlikely to carry out the activities without Federal financial assistance. In determining whether Federal funds would supplement or supplant private or third–party funds or contributions, CCC will consider the applicant's prior overall marketing budget in the Cooperator program from year–to–year, variations in promotional strategies within a country, and new markets;

(21) An explanation of the organization's strategic planning process and identification of priority target markets, including a summary of proposed budgets by country and commodity aggregate code;

(22) A description of the world market situation for the exported U.S. agricultural commodity(s);

(23) A description of competition from other exporters;

(24) A description of overall long term strategic goals to be advanced by the proposed activities for the ensuing 3–5 years;

(25) For each country or region for which activities are proposed:

i. A market assessment, including the constraint(s) impeding U.S. exports, the export growth opportunities, the performance of competing suppliers, expected changes in demand, etc.

ii. The long–term strategy that will be used to counteract the constraints and achieve additional U.S. exports

iii. Previous activities, performance, and evaluation results

iv. Projected export goals and U.S. market share

v. Performance indicators against which future success in addressing the constraint(s) or opportunities may be measured

(26) A description of all proposed activities, including the requested FAS resources and the specific goals and benchmarks to be used to measure the effectiveness of each activity;

(27) A justification for any new overseas office, including a list of job titles, corresponding position descriptions, salary ranges, and any request for approval of salaries above the Foreign Service National (FSN) salary plan. To request approval of a salary above the FSN salary plan, the Cooperator shall include a detailed description of both the duties and responsibilities of the position, and of the qualifications and background of the individual concerned. The Cooperator shall also justify, based on a verifiable local salary survey or other documented local salary information, why the highest FSN salary level is inappropriate;

(28) 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 plans to be used to determine the effectiveness of the Cooperator's strategy in meeting specified goals. The overall goal of the Cooperator program and of individual Cooperators' programming is to achieve or maintain sales that would not have occurred in the absence of Cooperator program funding. A Cooperator may modify and resubmit this plan for re–approval at any time during the program year.

Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management

In accordance with the Office of Management and Budget's policy (68 FR 38402 (June 27, 2003)) regarding the need to identify entities that are receiving government awards, all applicants must submit a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number. Instructions for obtaining a DUNS number can be found at http://www.dnb.com/duns–number.html. An applicant may request a DUNS number at no cost by calling the dedicated toll–free DUNS number request line at (866) 705–5711.

In addition, in accordance with 2 CFR Part 25, each entity that applies to the Cooperator program and does not qualify for an exemption under 2 CFR §25.110 must:

(i) Be registered in SAM at www.sam.gov prior to submitting an application or plan;

(ii) 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 FAS; and

(iii) Provide its DUNS number, or a unique identifier as a DUNS replacement, in each application or plan it submits to FAS.

Applicants are encouraged to register or update their SAM registration early to avoid delays in processing their application. This requirement must be met before an application will be considered and will not be waived. Applicants with pending or expired registrations are ineligible. Applicants whose names are published as ineligible in SAM due to a violation of a Federal statue are not eligible to apply in the Cooperator program. Applicants should check their SAM status prior to submitting their application or plan.

FAS will not make an award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM 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. For questions about this requirement, please contact Curt Alt at (202) 690–4784, Senior Director, Program Operations Division, Global Programs or at curt.alt@usda.gov.

Intergovernmental Review

An intergovernmental review may be required. Applicant(s) must contact their State's Single Point of Contact (SPOC) to comply with the State's process under Executive Order 12372 (see https://www.archives.gov/federal–register/codification/executive–order/12372.html. Name and addresses of the SPOCs are maintained at the Office of Management and Budget's home page at: https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp–content/uploads/2020/01/spoc_1_16_2020.pdf

Funding Restrictions

In general, Cooperator program funding may not be used for any activities prohibited by 2 CFR Part 200 and 2 CFR Part 400 and the provisions set forth in this announcement. Certain types of expenses are not eligible for Cooperator program reimbursement and there are limits on other categories of expenses that may be eligible for Cooperator program reimbursement.

FAS also will not reimburse unreasonable expenditures or expenditures for any activity made prior to approval of that activity or after the conclusion of a program year. Certain types of expenses are not eligible for reimbursement by the program, and there are limits on other categories of expenses. Cooperator program funds also may not be used for expenses, fines, settlements, judgments, or payments relating to legal suits, challenges, or disputes filed against the U.S. Government or any other government entity. 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. In addition, Federal employees cannot be compensated, in any form (in cash or gifts), for their participation in the development of the applicants' marketing plan or application. FAS may determine, on a case–to–case basis, whether any cost not explicitly listed in the Cooperator program regulations is eligible for reimbursement. Full details are available in sections 1484.54 and 1484.55 of the Cooperator program regulations.

Management and Administration (M&A) Costs

M&A costs are not allowable under the Cooperator program.

Other Submission Requirements

Organizations interested in applying to the Cooperator program are encouraged to submit their applications to FAS through the web–based Unified Export Strategy (UES) system. The UES system is currently 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.

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/mainPages/index.aspx/. FAS recommends creating a Level 2 eAuthentication account.
2) Users then must complete and submit to FAS a UES Access Request form, which may be obtained by contacting the Program Operations Division, Global Programs, Foreign Agricultural Service *by phone*: (202) 720–4327, or *by fax*: (202) 720–9361, or *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 the Cooperator program should use this same contact information for assistance.

E. <u>Application Review Information</u>

Prior to making an award, FAS will review all proposals for eligibility and completeness. FAS will, subject to the availability of funds, approve those applications that it considers to represent the best opportunity for developing, maintaining, or expanding export markets for U.S. agricultural commodities. When considering eligible nonprofit U.S. trade organizations, FAS may also weigh which organizations have the broadest producer representation and affiliated industry participation of the commodity being promoted. FAS may, when appropriate to the subject matter of the proposal, request the assistance of other U.S. Government experts in evaluating the merits of a proposal. All reviewers will be required to sign a conflict of interest form, and when conflicts of interests are found the reviewer will be recused from the objective review process.

Application Evaluation Criteria

FAS is required, as per 31 U.S.C. 3321 and 41 U.S.C. 2313, to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM, the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS), and the Federal Audit Clearinghouse (FAC). An applicant, at its choice, may review this information 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, FAPIIS, and FAC. FAS 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 C.F.R. §200.205 “Federal awarding agency review of risk posed by applicants.”

Review and Selection Process

The purpose of the application review is to identify meritorious proposals, recommend an appropriate funding level for each proposal, and submit the proposals and funding recommendations to appropriate officials for decision making. FAS conducts the following process in reviewing applications and allocating available Cooperator program funds:

Sufficiency Review (Phase 1): In Phase 1, FAS conducts an initial review (sufficiency check) 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. If an application is determined to be incomplete, FAS will notify the applicant and request that the applicant send in the missing information within 30 days to complete its application. Applications that meet the requirements and are found to be responsive to this announcement will be passed to FAS' Cooperator Programs Division for the Phase 2 review.

Divisional Review (Phase 2): The appropriate Commodity Branch office of FAS' Cooperator Programs Division will review each eligible application and will score and recommend funding for each application using the following criteria, with the numbers in parenthesis indicating the percentage weights attached to each criterion:

(1) Strategic planning (25%): This factor includes an assessment of the: overall quality of the plan; nature of the applicant's organization and exported products, with greater weight given to those organizations with the broadest base of producer representation and the degree to which product exported consists of U.S. commodities and value–added processing in the United States; systematic strategic planning with broad industry involvement; executive summary/UES submission reflects industry

country/region and issue priorities; past market development experience; analysis of U.S. and world market, and identified credible growth potential.

(2) Program implementation (25%). This factor includes an assessment of the: quality of constraints/opportunities; quality of performance measures; risk of audit findings and compliance issues; soundness of internal controls; expenditure rates; appropriate staffing; and operational effectiveness; and

(3) Program results and evaluation (50%). This factor includes an assessment of the: annual performance measure results reported against constraints; quantifiable and traceable progress in markets and between identified market strategies and activities in maintaining and/or increasing exports; past performance and FAS evaluation feedback clearly used to adjust programming in current UES; and quantity and credibility of success stories submitted.

The Commodity Branches may also solicit and consider feedback on the proposals from appropriate overseas Posts and other program areas of FAS in their review and in determining the recommended funding level for each applicant.

Competitive Review (Phase 3): Applicants then will compete for funds on the basis of the following allocation criteria, with the number in parentheses represents the percentage weight of each factor:

(a) Applicant's Contribution Level (40): The applicant's 6–year average share (2017–2022) of all contributions under the Cooperator program compared to the applicant's 6–year average share (2017–2022) of the funding level for all Cooperator program participants.

(b) Past U.S. Export Performance (20): The 6–year average share (2016–2021) of the value of U.S. exports promoted by the applicant compared to the applicant's 6–year average share (2016–2021) of the funding level for all Cooperator participants plus, for those groups participating in the MAP program, the 6–year average share (2016–2021) of all MAP budgets.

(c) Past Demand Expansion Performance (20): The 6–year average share (2016–2021) of the total value of world trade of the commodities promoted by the applicant compared to the applicant's 6–year average share (2016–2021) of all Cooperator program expenditures plus, for those groups participating in the MAP program, a 6–year average share (2016–2021) of all MAP expenditures.

(d) Future Demand Expansion Goals (10): The total dollar value of projected world trade of the commodities being promoted by the applicant for the year 2027 compared to the applicant's requested funding level.

(e) Accuracy of Past Demand Expansion Projections (10): The actual dollar value share of world trade of the commodities being promoted by the applicant for the year 2020 as reported in the 2022 Cooperator program application compared to the projection of world trade of the commodities being promoted by the applicant for 2020 as specified in the applicant's 2017 Cooperator program application.

The Commodity Branches' recommended funding levels for each applicant in Phase 2 are adjusted by each weight factor as described above to determine adjusted funding recommendations for each applicant.

Final Review and Allocation Decision Making (Phase 4): Meritorious applications and the recommended funding levels for each are provided to the Office of the Deputy

Administrator, Global Programs for the purpose of finalizing the Cooperator program funding recommendations among the applicants. Once finalized, the recommendations are presented to the FAS Administrator for final deliberation, determination, and approval. The FAS leadership (including the Deputy Administrator, Associate Administrator, and Administrator) may elect, in consultation with senior staff and other subject matter experts, to review and adjust the funding recommendations and/or take recommendations out of order based on factors such as Agency priorities, priority markets, program impact, the record of performance of the organization in managing past Cooperator program funds, and the organization's likelihood of success.

F. Federal Award Administration Information

Notice of Award

FAS will approve those Cooperator program applications that it determines best satisfy the criteria and factors specified in this announcement. FAS will notify each approved applicant in writing that its application for the Cooperator program has been approved for funding. Funding for successful proposals 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 approved applicant.

The agreement and the approval letter will outline which activities are approved and will specify approved budget amounts and any special terms and conditions applicable to a Cooperator, including any requirements with respect to cost share and program evaluations. An applicant who decides to accept the terms and conditions contained in the agreement and the approval letter must indicate its acceptance by having its Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or designee sign the agreement and the approval letter and submit these to FAS. 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 Cooperator program agreement between FAS and the approved applicant. The Cooperator should designate at least two individuals in its organization to sign agreements and amendments, approval letters, reimbursement claims, and advance requests.

The Cooperator shall submit to FAS the signature card signed by their designated individuals and by their CEO prior to the start of the program year. Should there be any changes in signatories (*e.g.,* removal or addition of individuals, name changes, etc.), the Cooperator must immediately notify FAS by submitting a revised signature card. The Cooperator 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.

Before accepting the award, the recipient must carefully read the approval letter and program agreement for instructions on administering the grant award and the terms and conditions associated with responsibilities under Federal Awards. Cooperators must accept all conditions in this announcement as well as any special terms and conditions in the approval letter and program agreement to receive an award under the Cooperator program. Failure to comply with any terms in its agreement or approval letter will result in FAS taking one or more of the enforcement actions in 2 CFR part 200 and, if appropriate, initiating a claim against the Cooperator, following the procedures set forth in Section 1484.82 of the Cooperator regulations.

Administrative and National Policy Requirements

All successful applicants for all grant and cooperative agreements are required to comply with the Standard Administrative Terms and Conditions, which are available online at: https://www.fas.usda.gov/grants/general_terms_and_conditions/default.asp. The applicable Standard Administrative Terms and Conditions will be those in effect for the program year in which the award was originally made unless explicitly stated otherwise in subsequent mutually–agreed amendments to the award.

Reporting

FAS requires various financial and performance reports from Cooperators in accordance with their agreement with FAS, including annual financial and performance reports.

A Cooperator shall complete a program evaluation as directed by CCC. A program evaluation is a review of the Cooperator's entire program, or an appropriate portion of the program as agreed to by the Cooperator and CCC, to determine the effectiveness of the Cooperator's strategy in meeting specified goals. The actual scope and timing of the program evaluation shall be determined by the Cooperator and FAS and specified in the approval letter. Cooperators 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 Cooperator must provide to FAS additional information or reports relating to their agreement. Full reporting requirements are detailed in sections 1484.70 and 1484.72 of the Cooperator program regulations.

Federal Financial Reporting Requirements

Cooperators are required to submit the Federal Financial Reporting Form (FFR), Standard Form SF–425, no later than 6 months after the end of the program period. A copy of the SF–425 form and instructions on how to complete it is available at *https://www.gsa.gov/portal/forms/download/149786*.

Program Performance Reporting Requirements

Cooperators shall also submit an annual performance report that includes pertinent information about their progress, measured against established indicators, baselines, and targets, towards achieving the expected results specified in the agreement. This reporting 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 Cooperator must provide FAS an explanation in the report as to why the goal was not achieved. Cooperators 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 Cooperator's performance data to determine whether it is accurate and reliable. Cooperators shall comply with all requests made by FAS or representatives designated by FAS in relation to such reviews. For a detailed discussion about the performance reporting requirements, refer to 1484.70 of the Cooperator program regulations.

If a Cooperator 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.

Monitoring

Cooperator projects and activities are subject to review and verification by FAS' Compliance and Security staff, and/or any designated FAS representatives. FAS reserves 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 required. During site visits, FAS will review grant recipients' files related to the grant–funded program. A Cooperator shall provide to FAS documentation that supports the Cooperator's reimbursement claims. FAS may deny a claim for reimbursement if the claim is not supported by adequate documentation.

As part of any monitoring and program evaluation activities, Cooperators must permit FAS, upon reasonable notice, to review grant–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 their grant program. Full details and description of the reviews and notices are contained in Section 1484.74 of the Cooperator program.

Close Out Reporting Requirements

Within 90 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 of the award closeout procedures. The notice will indicate the period of performance as closed, list any remaining funds that will be de–obligated, and address the requirement of maintaining the grant records for three years from the date of the final FFR. The Cooperator 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:

(1) *Program Operations Division Contact(s):* Curt Alt, Senior Director, Program Operations Division, Global Programs, Foreign Agricultural Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture *by courier:* Room 6510, 1400 Independence Ave., SW.,

Washington, DC 20250, or *by phone*: (202) 690–4784, or *by fax*: (202) 720–9361, or *by e–mail* at Curt.Alt@usda.gov.

(2) Grants Management Contact(s): Eric Bozoian, Grants Management Specialist, Foreign Agricultural Service, United States Department of Agriculture, e–mail: Eric.Bozoian@usda.gov, phone: (202) 378–1054.

H. Additional Information

(1) Extensions. Generally, Cooperator program extensions will not be allowed. Cooperators, however, may request a no–cost extension from FAS to complete all project activities by submitting such request 60 days prior to the expiration of the performance period and indicating the reason(s) why the activities were not completed within the budget period. FAS, at its option, will approve extension requests on a case–to–case basis.

(2) Prior Approvals. The Cooperator 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 Cooperator program or activities prior to the approved budget period/performance period. FAS must also approve, in advance, any changes to an agreement. A Cooperator 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 Cooperator 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. 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 Cooperator 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) *Post–Award Program Income.* Section 1484.38 of the Cooperator program regulations defines program income as gross income earned by the Cooperator 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 Cooperator in furtherance of its approved Cooperator program activities in the program year during which the program funds are available for obligation by the Cooperator, or must be returned to FAS. Full details of the program income requirements are described in section 1484.38 of the Cooperator program regulations.