

Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program (MPPEP)—Phase 4 Fortifying the American Beef Industry

Fiscal Year 2026 Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

Funding Opportunity Number: RD-RBS-26-04-MPPEP

Publication Date: May 7, 2026

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

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PROGRAM SOLICITATION INFORMATION

Funding Opportunity Title: Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program - Phase 4 - Fortifying the American Beef Industry

Funding Opportunity Number: RD-RBS-26-04-MPPEP

Announcement Type: Fiscal Year 2026 Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

Assistance Listing Number: 10.381

Submission Deadline: Applications must be received by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on August 7, 2026, through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). Applications received after this deadline are not eligible for funding.

Executive Summary: The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Rural Development (RD) Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBCS or Agency), requests applications for the Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program - Phase 4 (the Program or MPPEP-4) - Fortifying the American Beef Industry. MPPEP-4 is authorized under Section 1001(b)(4) of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA), which provides funding to make “loans and grants and provide other assistance to maintain and improve food and agricultural supply chain resiliency.” Pursuant to this authority, USDA is making competitive grant funding available to Very Small Processors and Small Processors, and to Intermediate Processors to maximize the value and utilization of their existing capacity, with a focus on promoting local supply chains.

Grant funding in the amount of \$60 million is available under this Program. Funding will be divided equally into two separate competitions: one for Very Small Processors and Small Processors, and one for Intermediate Processors. Each competition will have its own ranking and award process. Cost share is required. Applicants will be required to identify sources and amounts that will make up the required cost share in the application and will need to verify cost share funding prior to final award approval. Two types of applications for each of the funding competitions will be accepted:

1. *Processing Expansion Projects.* Awards will range from \$50,000 to \$2 million to support a range of activities to increase and diversify processing capacity of American Meat and Poultry, including Equipment-only purchases over \$250,000, and necessary improvements, upgrades, renovations or retrofits to an existing Facility needed to install the Equipment. A match requirement of 50 percent of the Project Cost is required for *Processing Expansion Projects*.
2. *Simplified Equipment-Only Projects.* Awards will range from \$10,000 to \$250,000 for projects that only request the cost of Equipment and do not include renovation, labor, installation, or certification costs. A match requirement of 25 percent of the Project Cost is required for *Simplified Equipment-Only Projects*.

Eligible applicants for MPPEP-4 include entities that are currently engaged in the Primary Processing of cattle for commercial markets or toll process and have been in business for at least one year. Eligible applicants include For-Profit Organizations, Nonprofit Organizations, Producer-owned cooperatives, Tribes, and Tribal Entities. Privately-owned entities must be Independently Owned and Operated, and all applicants must be Domestically Owned. Additionally, an applicant’s Facility must be physically located and operating in a State. Eligible applicants must be currently operating under a FSIS grant of inspection, grant of inspection under a Cooperative Interstate Shipment Program, or a State Meat and Poultry inspection program with standards at least equal to Federal inspection.

Ineligible applicants include entities that have an active Federal Award through MPPEP Phase 1, MPPEP Phase 2, MPPEP Phase 3, USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) Local Meat Capacity Grants program, or USDA AMS Meat and Poultry Inspection Readiness Grant program. An active award means that the Period of Performance has not ended.

Applicants must meet the definition of a Very Small Processor, a Small Processor, or an Intermediate Processor. Applicants that are nationally dominant in beef, pork, chicken, or turkey processing are ineligible; for the purpose of this NOFO, nationally dominant is characterized as holding a market share greater than or equal to the entity that holds the fourth largest share of the market for beef, pork, chicken, or turkey processing.

Please note, defined terms that are critical to your understanding of the requirements in this NOFO are located in Section 1.3. The first letter of each word in a defined term is capitalized throughout this NOFO for easy identification.

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

The application must include all the information in the checklist located below. Failure to submit all required information with an application will result in the application being ineligible for the Program. Please see Section 4.2 for more information and details on the required documents and supporting information.

Document	Details
<input type="checkbox"/> SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance	Maximum Period of Performance is 24 months for Simplified Equipment-Only Projects and 36 months for Processing Expansion Projects
<input type="checkbox"/> SF-424B, Assurances for Non-Construction Programs	Assurances for Non-Construction Projects.
<input type="checkbox"/> AD-2106 – Questionnaire to Assist in the Assessment of USDA Compliance with Civil Rights Laws	Voluntary; not required.
<input type="checkbox"/> Project Narrative Application	Grant Purpose and Project Details. Narrative is limited to 20 pages, not including application template and Supporting Documents.
<input type="checkbox"/> Business Plan	Business Plan including rationale for proposed project.
<input type="checkbox"/> Financial Documents	Income Statements, Balance Sheets and Cash Flow Projections for the Facility.
<input type="checkbox"/> Key Personnel Information	Name, project role description, credentials, and years of experience of Key Personnel.
<input type="checkbox"/> Letters of Support	Evidence of support for the project.
<input type="checkbox"/> Tribal Resolution of Consent – if applicable	For projects on Tribal lands.

TIPS FOR APPLICANTS

- To do business with the Federal Government and to submit your application electronically using [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov), you must —
 - Have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and a Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN);

- Be registered in [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov) (System for Award Management), the Government's primary registrant database;
- Provide your UEI number and TIN on your application; and
- Maintain an active SAM registration with current information throughout the application review period and, if you are awarded a grant, throughout the life of the Federal Award.
- Register and submit applications early. **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE DAY OF THE APPLICATION DEADLINE.**
- Thoroughly read this NOFO and follow all the instructions.
- Thoroughly review the guidelines and policies as outlined in this NOFO to ensure the application is received and eligible for consideration, and to understand allowable and unallowable costs.

Apply for the correct grant Program (Assistance Listing number “**10.381**” and Funding Opportunity Number “**USDA- RD-RBS-26-04-MPPEP**”).

- Make sure you have the most recent copy of Adobe Reader installed on your computer and that it is compatible with [Grants.gov](https://grants.gov) software. Grants.gov supports Adobe Reader version 9.0.0 and higher.
- Limit Application File Name Characters (50 or fewer).
- When uploading attachments, click the “Add Attachments” button (do NOT use the “paperclip” icon in Adobe Reader). Acceptable file types include .pdf, .doc, .docx, .xls, .xlsx.
- Do not password-protect your documents and make sure all tracked-changes are “accepted”.
- Avoid Special Characters in File Names (\$, %, &, *, Spanish "ñ", etc.).
- Input the correct UEI number on the SF-424 cover page.
- Review the Grants.gov Applicant User and Registration Guides:
 - grants.gov/applicants/applicant-faqs
 - grants.gov/applicants/workspace-overview

Timing to Obtain and Submit Grants.gov Required Elements	
Required Action	Timing to Obtain/Submit
<input type="checkbox"/> Obtaining a TIN/EIN (if you do not already have one).	Up to 2 weeks
<input type="checkbox"/> Obtaining your organization’s UEI number (if you do not already have one).	7 - 10 Business Days
<input type="checkbox"/> Establishing an active SAM.gov account (if you do not already have one).	7 - 10 Business Days
<input type="checkbox"/> Creating your Grants.gov profile.	Up to 2 weeks

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1.0 FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

1.1 LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

MPPEP-4 is authorized by Section 1001(b)(4) of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) ([Pub. L. No. 117-2](#)), which provides funding “to make loans and grants and provide other assistance to maintain and improve food and agricultural supply chain resiliency.” Pursuant to this authority, USDA is making competitive grant funding available to Very Small Processors, Small Processors, and Intermediate Processors to maximize the value and utilization of their existing capacity, with a focus on promoting local supply chains. The Program is being administered by RBCS.

1.2 PURPOSE

The primary purpose of MPPEP-4 is to support the American Beef Industry by increasing processing capacity and promoting more competition in the sector, which is particularly vulnerable to disruption, consolidation and concentration. Based on public input, USDA identified an urgent need to expand and diversify Meat and Poultry processing capacity; increase producer income; assist with Equipment purchases to enable access to new market or sales channels or to support process improvement; support employee training of Equipment operations, butchery skills, Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) and Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures (SSOP) compliance, and achieving product specifications and consistency; and waste management. MPPEP-4 is targeted to support Very Small Processors, Small Processors, and Intermediate Processors engaged in the Primary Processing of cattle, with a focus on promoting local supply chains. MPPEP-4 funds will help the American Beef Industry diversify the Meat and Poultry supply chain and open local market opportunities. The applicant’s Facility must Primary Process cattle in order for the project to be eligible for the Program, however, funds or Equipment may be used for processing Meat and Poultry at the Facility.

MPPEP-4 is aligned with USDA’s plan to fortify the American Beef Industry through three coordinated priorities:

1. *Protecting And Improving The Business Of Ranching*: Strengthening the foundation of U.S. cattle production through endangered species reforms, enhanced disaster relief, increased grazing access, increased access to capital, and affordable risk management tools.
2. *Expanding Processing, Consumer Transparency, And Market Access*: Lowering long-term costs, increasing marketing options, and ensuring consumers have clear, truthful information about American beef.
3. *Building Demand Alongside Domestic Supply*: Growing the domestic herd while boosting domestic and international demand so that ranchers are not trapped in the boom/bust cycle that has defined past cattle markets.

1.3 DEFINITIONS

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

Agency means the Rural Business-Cooperative Service or any successor agency directed by the Secretary of Agriculture to administer the Program.

Business Plan means a formal statement describing the Applicant’s business goals, the reasons why they are attainable, and the Applicant’s plan for achieving those goals, including Pro Forma Financial Statements appropriate to the term and scope of the project and sufficient to evidence the viability of the project. It may also contain background information about the applicant and its officers and employees.

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

Cost Sharing has the meaning located at [2 CFR § 200.1](#).

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

Equipment has the meaning located at [2 CFR § 200.1](#).

Facility means a single Meat Processing plant designed, built, equipped, etc., for Processing.

Federal Award has the meaning located at [2 CFR § 200.1](#).

Financial Assistance Agreement or *FAA* means an agreement between the Agency and the Recipient setting forth the terms and conditions under which the Federal Award will be administered. The FAA is executed using Form RD 4280-2, or its successor form.

For-Profit Organization has the meaning located at [2 CFR § 200.1](#).

Further Processing or *Further Processed* means conversion of raw Meat and Poultry products, through smoking, curing, salting, fermenting, cooking, canning, refining, or rendering into cooked, cured, and preserved products. Also known as Value-Added Processing.

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

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

Indian Tribe (Tribe) has the meaning located at [2 CFR § 200.1](#).

Intermediate Processor means a Processor with 500 or more employees but fewer than 3,000.

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

Local Government has the meaning located at [2 CFR § 200.1](#).

Meat means species amenable to USDA inspection including cattle, sheep, swine, goats, Siluriformes (catfish), and equine. Also, nonamenable species eligible for voluntary inspection including exotic species as described in [9 CFR part 352](#) and rabbit as described in [9 CFR part 354](#).

Nonprofit Organization has the meaning located at [2 CFR § 200.1](#).

Period of Performance has the meaning located at [2 CFR § 200.1](#).

Poultry means species amenable to USDA inspection including chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese, guineas, ratites, squabs (young pigeons). Also, nonamenable species subject to voluntary inspection, including migratory waterfowl and game birds as described in 9 CFR part 362.

Primary Processing or *Primary Processed* means slaughtering, cutting and boning of raw Meat and Poultry for human consumption.

Processing means Primary Processing and Further Processing.

Processor means a business engaged in Primary Processing or Further Processing .

Program or *MPPEP-4* means the Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program authorized by

Section 1001(b)(4) of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, and administered by the Agency.

Project Cost has the meaning located at [2 CFR § 200.1](#).

Real Property has the meaning located at [2 CFR § 200.1](#).

Recipient has the meaning located at [2 CFR § 200.1](#).

Small Processor means a Processor with 10 or more employees but fewer than 500.

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

Tribal Entities means all entities falling under the eligible legal structures, including but not limited to: tribally-owned corporations, intertribal non-profits and associations, Alaska Native Corporations, Native entities within the State of Alaska recognized by and eligible to receive services from the U.S. Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs, Native Hawaiian organizations including Homestead Associations, State recognized Tribes/non-profits, and individually-owned Native American entities.

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

Very Small Processor means a Processor with fewer than 10 employees or annual sales of less than \$2.5 million.

1.4 APPLICATION OF AWARDS

The Agency will review, evaluate and score MPPEP-4 applications received based on the specific selection criteria contained in this NOFO. Awards under MPPEP-4 will be made on a competitive basis. The Agency advises all interested parties that the applicant bears the full burden in preparing and submitting an application in response to this NOFO regardless of whether or not an applicant is selected for funding and whether or not funding is made available for MPPEP-4 in FY 2026.

1.5 ALLOWABLE USES OF FUNDS

1. *Processing Expansion Projects*. Processing Expansion Projects will be funded by grants ranging from \$50,000 to \$2 million to support a range of activities to increase and diversify processing capacity of American Meat and Poultry including Equipment-only purchases over \$250,000, and necessary improvements, upgrades, renovations or retrofits to an existing Facility needed to install the Equipment. Funds may be used for any Meat or Poultry processing performed at the Facility.

Allowable uses of grant funds for Processing Expansion Projects include, but are not limited to:

- Purchasing or upgrading old or outdated processing Equipment, including refrigeration, cold storage expansion, packaging and labeling Equipment, smokers, vacuum tumblers, mixers, grinders, slicers and other Further Processing and value-added Equipment;
- Purchasing and installing virtual grading Equipment, special-purpose inventory management and traceability software, x-rays, and other Equipment designed to improve Processing capacity across multiple product lines;
- Purchasing or upgrading composting and other solid or liquid waste treatment Equipment;
- Upgrading Equipment to ensure food safety;

- Purchasing or updating Equipment to increase byproduct and other types of carcass utilization;
- Developing, customizing, and installing Equipment, devices, and technology that automates processing functions to improve worker conditions and safety;
- Purchasing new or retrofitting existing mobile or modular processing units;
- Developing, customizing, and installing Equipment that reduces greenhouse gas emissions, and/or increases efficient water use;
- Making internal or minimal external improvements, upgrades, renovations or retrofits (modifications) to an existing Facility needed/necessary to install the new Equipment; allowable construction activities include necessary electrical upgrades, HVAC-related improvements, and room reconfigurations (usually involves more than a room), and all expenses must be allocable/necessary to the Equipment installation;
- Marketing costs targeted specifically towards 1) local producers to increase the supply of livestock or poultry or number of producers requesting toll processing services from the Facility, 2) local consumers such as schools, restaurants, boutique stores, local grocery stores, etc., and 3) development of local markets for offal, hides, tallow, pet food, etc., to reduce operational expenses;
- Training on the use of all Equipment purchased under the grant and associated new processes;
- Processor costs associated with obtaining certification under the USDA National Organic Program or Process Verified Program;
- Ensuring compliance with occupational and other safety requirements under applicable law; including revising existing Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) plans; and
- Personnel and fringe benefits costs directly related to the implementation of the project, to include financial and performance report development, award compliance, and other management costs associated with procurement for the project. Costs must be reasonable and cannot include day-to-day operations expenses.

2. *Simplified Equipment-Only Projects.* Simplified Equipment-Only Projects will be funded by grants ranging from \$10,000 to \$250,000 for Equipment purchases to Processors engaged in the Primary Processing of cattle. The Equipment may be used for any Meat or Poultry processing performed at the Facility. Grant funds used to fund Simplified Equipment-Only Projects can only be used to fund Equipment purchases, but not associated renovation, labor, installation, or certification costs.

1.6 UNALLOWABLE USES OF FUNDS

The following uses of funds are not allowable:

- Research and development;
- Purchase or lease of Real Property;
- Purchase, lease, maintenance, or repair of vehicles with the exception of mobile processing units;
- New Facility construction or expansion of existing facilities, build out of an existing space that would increase the footprint of the Facility and require breaking ground during construction;

- Construction expenses not directly related or allocable to the installation of Equipment included in the project budget;
- Construction expenses that require new ground disturbance;
- Equipment, including cold storage, that will be disconnected from or operate independently of the Facility, with the exception of retrofitting mobile processing units;
- Further Processing activities at a Facility that does not have Primary Processing capacity for cattle;
- Routine maintenance and repair of buildings and Equipment;
- Raw materials or labor used in Primary Processing or Further Processing;
- Project planning, such as business plans and feasibility studies;
- Expenses or activities that have been or will be reimbursed under any federal, State, or local government funding, unless part of the Cost Sharing for this Project;
- Costs incurred outside the Period of Performance;
- Paying for indirect project costs;
- Subawards;
- Costs that support or oppose union organizing;
- Grant application preparation costs;
- Further Processing that sources more than 20 percent of inputs from entities that hold market share greater than or equal to the top four processors in beef, pork, chicken, or turkey, at the time of application; and
- Primary Processing or Further Processing that provides more than 20 percent of output to entities that hold market share greater than or equal to the top four processors in beef, pork, chicken, or turkey, at the time of application.

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

2.0 FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

2.1 TYPE OF FEDERAL ASSISTANCE AND AWARD ESTIMATE

The Federal Award will be a grant. Approximately 75 MPPEP-4 grants will be awarded in FY 2026.

2.2 AVAILABLE FUNDING AND AWARD SIZE

Approximately \$60 million is available to fund projects, split equally between two competitions:

1. Very Small Processors and Small Processors; and
2. Intermediate Processors.

For *Processing Expansion Projects*, awards will range from \$50,000 to \$2 million. For *Simplified Equipment-Only Projects*, awards will range from \$10,000 to \$250,000.

Requests for less than the minimum or more than the maximum award amount for each type of project will not be considered for funding. USDA does not guarantee minimum funding levels or a specific number of awards. Partial awards may be offered by the Agency. If partial awards are offered, a new Work Plan and budget will be negotiated for a revised Project Cost. RBCS may at its discretion, increase the total level of

funding available in this funding round, or in any category in this funding round, from any available source provided the awards meet the requirements of the statute which made the funding available to the Agency.

2.3 FEDERAL AWARD PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE

The maximum Period of Performance for *Processing Expansion Projects* is 36 months. The maximum Period of Performance for *Simplified Equipment-Only Projects* is 24 months. MPPEP-4 grant funds may only support costs incurred during the Period of Performance of the Federal Award.

2.4 ANTICIPATED AWARD DATE

The anticipated award selection date is October 22, 2026. Your Period of Performance cannot start before the date the award is made.

2.5 TYPE OF ASSISTANCE INSTRUMENT

RBCS will enter into a Financial Assistance Agreement (Form RD 4280-2) to provide a Federal Award to each successful applicant.

2.6 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE & RESOURCES

RBCS provides resources and information on its website (rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-programs/meat-and-poultry-processing-expansion-program) that may be helpful to applicants, including Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's), required application forms and Agency contact information. RBCS staff is available to provide timely responses to questions emailed to mppep@usda.gov.

USDA AMS offers no-cost technical assistance to applicants to help prepare grant applications through its Meat and Poultry Processing Capacity -Technical Assistance Program (MPPTA). Applicants are encouraged to contact the MPPTA network of providers for broad-scope technical support from preapplication to post-award grant management, business planning and processing, operational resources, supply chain development expertise, and resources specific to historically underserved USDA stakeholders. Visit <http://www.ams.usda.gov/mppta> to connect with these services. While services offered through MPPTA will not include co-drafting grant application elements, MPPTA service providers may be able to assist with activities such as writing a business plan.

Technical assistance includes educational and informational help either through one-on-one meetings or publicly available resources. Specific forms of assistance may include:

- Business plan development for processed products, strategic planning assistance, financial statement development, cash flow projections, capitalization plans, and distribution and supply chain innovation; and
- Assistance in providing innovative, yet practical, planning for the systematic aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storage, transportation, wholesaling, or distribution of food.

FSIS District Offices Points of Contacts: [Office of Field Operations \(OFO\) | Food Safety and Inspection Service \(usda.gov\)](#)

FSIS Small Plant Help Desk: [Small Plant Help Desk | Food Safety and Inspection Service \(usda.gov\)](#)

3.0 ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

3.1 APPLICANTS ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

Eligible applicants include For-Profit Organizations, Nonprofit organizations, Producer-owned cooperatives, Tribes, and Tribal Entities.

Eligible applicants must also meet the following requirements:

- Meet the definition of Very Small Processor, Small Processor, or Intermediate Processor;
- Be currently engaged in the Primary Processing of cattle for commercial markets or toll process and been in operation for at least one year (as of the date of the application);
- Currently operate under an FSIS grant of inspection, grant of inspection under a Cooperative Interstate Shipment Program, or a state meat and poultry inspection program with standards at least equal to Federal inspection;
- Be Independently Owned and Operated;
- Be Domestically Owned; and
- Operate their Processing facility in a State.

For the purposes of this Program, Processors who perform Further Processing activities must be primarily conducting Further Processing of Meat and/or Poultry Primary Processed at their own Facility. For example, a Processor cannot be Primary Processing one head of cattle at its facility and purchase the majority of beef to be Further Processed from one of the top four processors to create Further Processed products.

3.2 APPLICANTS NOT ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

The following entities are not eligible for MPPEP-4 funding:

- Entities that have an active Federal Award through MPPEP Phase 1, MPPEP Phase 2, MPPEP Phase 3, USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) Local Meat Capacity Grants program, or USDA AMS Meat and Poultry Inspection Readiness Grant program. An active award means that the Period of Performance has not ended.
- Entities that are not Domestically Owned or that are headquartered in countries determined to be foreign adversaries as defined by 15 CFR 791.
- Entities that hold a domestic market share greater than or equal to the entity that holds the fourth largest share of the market for beef, pork, chicken, or turkey processing.
- Meat and Poultry processing entities that are custom-exempt or otherwise uninspected and do not operate under Federal inspection or State equivalent inspection.
- Meat and Poultry processing entities that are exclusively for non-commercial use.
- Entities that are debarred or suspended or are otherwise excluded from, or ineligible for participation in, Federal assistance programs under Executive Order 12549, "Debarment and Suspension."
- Entities against whom an outstanding judgment has been obtained by the United States in a Federal court (other than U.S. Tax Court).
- Entities that are delinquent on Federal debt.
- Entities having unpaid Federal tax liability that has been assessed, for which all judicial and administrative remedies have been exhausted or have lapsed, and that is not being paid in a timely manner pursuant to an agreement with the authority responsible for collecting the tax liability.
- Entities that have affiliates that are also submitting applications in circumstances in which all entities have identical or greater than 75 percent common ownership, or entities that have a parent, subsidiary or affiliated organization (as defined by the Small Business Administration in 13 CFR 121.103, or successor regulation) that has also submitted an application.
- Entities submitting an application that includes unallowable costs in excess of 10 percent of

the Project Cost will not be eligible to compete for funds. Applications that include unallowable costs totaling 10 percent or less of the Project Cost must remove those costs from the Project budget or replace them with allowable costs, if selected for an award.

- Entities that submit an application to the wrong grant program.
- Entities that are not responsive to the requirements of this NOFO.
- Entities that submit an incomplete application.

3.3 COST SHARING

For *Processing Expansion Projects*, recipients are required to contribute 50% of the Project Cost as a match to Federal funding. For *Simplified Equipment-Only Projects*, recipients are required to contribute 25% of the Project Cost as a match to Federal funding. Evidence of Cost Sharing will be verified by the Agency at the time of award. If the applicant cannot verify Cost Sharing within the time frame specified in the letter of conditions for the award, the Agency may offer funding to the next highest ranked project.

The applicant is responsible for defining the Project Cost of the MPPEP-4 project. In-kind donations cannot be used to meet the cost sharing requirement. Additionally, project activities that are unallowable may not be used to meet the cost sharing requirement. If program income is expected during the period of performance as a result of Project activities, it is subject to the requirements of [2 CFR 200.307](#). Program income is not an eligible source of cost share.

4.0 APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

4.1 ADDRESS TO REQUEST APPLICATION PACKAGE

This funding opportunity is located on Grants.gov. Applicants can find the opportunity under either the Assistance Listing number 10.381 or the Funding Opportunity Number “RD-RBS-26-04-MPPEP.”

The Application Template is located at rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-programs/meat-and-poultry-processing-expansion-program. Applicants are encouraged to use the provided Application Template to ensure all required application elements are addressed, however it is not required. Applicants who choose not to use the Application Template and do not provide all the required information will not be eligible to receive an award.

4.2 CONTENT AND FORM OF APPLICATION SUBMISSION

1. *Required Forms.*

- (a) Form SF 424, Application for Federal Assistance;
- (b) Form SF 424B, Assurances - Non-Construction Programs; and
- (c) Form AD-2106, Questionnaire to Assist in the Assessment of USDA Compliance with Civil Rights Laws. Submission of this form is optional.

2. *Project Narrative and Supporting Documents.*

- (a) *Required format.* Applicants are required to prepare and submit a project narrative. The project narrative and all supporting documents must be submitted as one of the following file types: .pdf, .doc, .docx, .xls, .xlsx, and attached to the Grants.gov application package.

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

applications will not be accepted.

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

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

(b) *Application Template*. Sections in the template include:

(1) *Applicant Information*. Provide information for the Agency to confirm that applicant is eligible for the Program. See Section 3.1 for Applicant Eligibility requirements. The information provided must include the following:

(i) *Entity type*. The application must identify the type of entity applying.

(ii) *Type of Processor*. The application must identify which definition of Processor the applicant meets (Very Small Processor, Small Processor, or Intermediate Processor) as well as the annual revenue and the number of employees employed by the entity during the 365 days prior to the date of application. The number of employees includes all individuals employed on a full-time, part-time, or other basis. This includes employees obtained from a temporary employee agency, professional employee organization or leasing concern. Part-time and temporary employees are counted the same as full-time employees. Volunteers (*i.e.*, individuals who receive no compensation, including no in-kind compensation, for work performed) are not considered employees.

(iii) *Engaged in Primary Processing*. The application must indicate that the applicant is currently engaged in the Primary Processing of cattle for commercial markets or toll process.

(iv) *Existing business*. The application must state whether the applicant has been in operation for at least one year.

(v) *Inspection*. The application must indicate that the applicant currently operates under an FSIS grant of inspection, grant of inspection under a Cooperative Interstate Shipment Program, or a state meat and poultry inspection program with standards at least equal to Federal inspection.

(vi) *Facility Information*. Applicants must provide the project location. Applicants must also describe who owns the land upon which the Facility is located, who owns the Facility and the relationship between Facility ownership and the business located at the Facility.

(vii) *Independently Owned and Operated*. The application must describe how the applicant meets the definition of Independently Owned and Operated.

(viii) *Domestically Owned*. The application must describe how the applicant meets the definition of Domestically Owned.

(ix) *Confirmation of Primary Processing and Further Processing*. The application must state whether the applicant is primarily conducting Further Processing of Meat and/or Poultry Primary Processed at its own Facility.

(2) *Project Information*. Provide information for the Agency to confirm that the project is eligible for the Program. The information provided must include the following:

- (i) *Project Description*. In 500 words or fewer, describe your project's purpose and what it aims to accomplish. Discuss the species you will harvest and process; the proposed size of your operation, including the number of full-time and part-time employees and number of animals you anticipate harvesting; and the product(s) to be produced and/or type of Equipment to be purchased.
- (ii) *Work Plan*. The application must include a description of the tasks, steps, or activities that are needed to complete the proposed project within the Period of Performance. Each task, step, or activity must be described separately and include the expected timeframe during which it will be accomplished, the Key Personnel who will work on the task, and the expected outcome.
- (iii) *Budget*. The application must include a budget that includes all expenses (grant and Cost Sharing) for the proposed project. Refer to Section 1.5 for a list of allowable uses of funds and to Section 1.6 for unallowable uses of funds. The expenses must be organized according to the following categories:
 - a. *Salaries and wages*. List each employee who will be performing work for the project, including Key Personnel and administrative personnel, and the amount associated with the work. These costs must be reasonable for the services provided and be in accordance with the established written policy of your organization.
 - b. *Fringe benefits*. Provide the fringe benefits rate and amount for each of the employees who will be performing work for the project. You must also provide a narrative description of the items that are included in the fringe benefits (for example, health insurance, paid time off). The costs of the fringe benefits must be reasonable and in accordance with the established written policies of your organization.
 - c. *Travel expenses*. Provide a summary and cost for each trip, including the destination, the expected date(s) of travel, the purpose for the trip, the name(s) of the traveler(s), and the total amount for the trip. Note that travel costs are limited to those allowed by the written procedures for your organization. In the case of air travel, project participants must use the lowest reasonable commercial airfares. For organizations that have no formal travel policy, allowable travel costs must not exceed those established by the Federal Travel Regulations, issued by GSA, including the maximum per diem and subsistence rates described in those regulations. This information is available at www.gsa.gov.
 - d. *Equipment*. List all items that qualify as Equipment (see 2 CFR 200.1 for the definition) that will be purchased as part of the proposed project. You must include a description of the item, the purpose for which it will be used, the cost per unit, the number of units, the expected date of purchase, and the total cost.
 - e. *Construction*. List allowable construction costs associated with any Equipment purchases identified.
 - f. *Contractual*. List all procurement contracts that are planned for the proposed project and include the name of the vendor, the purpose of the contract, and the cost of the contract.
 - g. *Supplies*. List all items that cost less than \$10,000 per unit and describe

the item, its purpose, the cost per unit, the number of units, the expected purchase date, and the aggregate amount for that item.

- h. *Other*. List all expenses that are not covered under the previous categories, including a description of the expenses, the purpose of the expense, the expected date or time period during which the expense will be incurred, and the amount of the expense.
- i. *Cost Sharing*. List the source and amount of all Cost Sharing for the proposed project.
- j. *Program Income*. Describe how program income will be earned and calculated. See 2 CFR 200.1 for the definition of program income as well as references to how it is calculated.

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

- (i) Processing volume
 - a. Current number of Meat and/or Poultry processed in Primary Processing annually;
 - b. Target number of Meat and/or Poultry processed in Primary Processing annually as a result of MPPEP-4 funding;
 - c. Number of pounds of Meat and/or Poultry currently Further Processed; and
 - d. Target number of pounds of Meat and/or Poultry to be Further Processed as a result of MPPEP-4 funding.
- (ii) Valued-Added product lines
 - a. Current number of Value-Added product lines produced by the Facility; and
 - b. Target number of new Value-Added product lines produced by the Facility as a result of MPPEP-4 funding.
- (iii) Producers served
 - a. Current number of Meat and/or Poultry producers who sell live animals to the Facility;
 - b. Target number of Meat and/or Poultry producers who sell live animals to the Facility as a result of MPPEP-4 funding;
 - c. Current number of toll processing customers served by the Facility (i.e., fee-for-service processing); and
 - d. Target number of toll processing customers served by the Facility as a result of MPPEP-4 funding.
- (iv) Sales channels
 - a. Current number of sales channels sold into by the Facility; and
 - b. Target number of sales channels sold into by the Facility as a result of MPPEP-4 funding.
- (v) Jobs

- a. Current number of employees at the Facility; and
 - b. Target number of employees at the Facility as a result of MPPEP-4 funding.
- (4) *Labor and safety violations.* The application must disclose the Facility's current violations (i.e., alleged violations that are currently under investigation) or past violations of Federal and state safety and labor laws (including violations associated with third-parties that occurred at the Facility) and how and when any such violations were resolved.
- (5) *Merit Evaluation.* The application must provide a response to each evaluation criterion in Section 5.1. In addition, the application must provide the following items to address the information needed for the merit evaluation.
 - (i) *Letters of support.* The application must attach letters of support from State or local leadership or the Tribe where the proposed project will take place. Letters of support must be submitted with the application in Grants.gov to be considered. Letters can be addressed to the RBCS Administrator. Qualifying leaders may include but are not limited to State government officials, local government officials, and trade associations of agricultural producers, processors, or other enterprises. All letters must include the following items:
 - a. Identification of the stakeholder producing the letter and their connection to the project activities;
 - b. A description of the sustained community impact that will be supported by expansion activities to be carried out under the grant; and
 - c. Additional information relative to the project's impact on the long-term needs and goals of the community.
 - (ii) *Tribal Resolution of Consent.* For a project located on Tribal Lands where the applicant is not a member of the Tribe nor an entity owned or operated by that Tribe, a Tribal Resolution of Consent must be provided. Other documentation such as a Letter of Support from the Tribal Council for the governing body of the Tribe with jurisdiction over the Tribal Lands where the project is located (if applicable) is also an acceptable acknowledgement of Tribal consent. Any applicant that fails to provide a Tribal Resolution or Letter of Consent from the Tribe will not be considered for funding.
- 3. *Other Supporting Information.* Applicants are required to submit the following supporting information. Please refer to the Tips for Applicants section for a list of acceptable file types.
 - (a) *Business Plan.* For Processing Expansion Projects only, provide a Business Plan that meets the definition in Section 1.3.
 - (b) *Evidence of Customer Demand.* Provide letters of commitment or interest from existing customers for the proposed project. Customers may include distributors, retailers, or other purchasers of finished product; and customers may be ranchers or meat companies who purchase processing services from the Facility. Customer letters should specify estimated volumes of purchasing by product line or service. Letters that do not identify specific products, services, or estimated volumes will not be considered evidence of customer demand. Letters do not have to identify a specific proposed activity associated with their commitment or interest, but the application should be clear which sales channels or customers are associated with the proposed activities.
 - (c) *Financial Documents.* Provide the following to assist the Agency in determining financial

viability of the project:

- (i) Current balance sheet and income statements (dated within 90 days of application).
 - (ii) Three years of projected financials including but not limited to (A) balance sheet, (B) income statement, and (C) cash flow statement. Include an explanation of assumptions used in development of projections. Ensure grant funds are included in the financial projections.
- (d) *Key Personnel Information.* Provide the name, project role description, credentials, and years of experience for all Key Personnel.
- (e) *Paid Preparer.* If a third-party such as a grant writer was paid to develop and/or assemble grant application materials, provide their individual name, business name, physical address, email address, and phone number.
4. *Applicant certifications.* By signing and submitting the SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance, as a part of the grant application package, applicants are certifying that they agree to the following statements:
- (a) The applicant does not have a known relationship or association with an Agency employee. If there is a known relationship, the applicant must identify each Agency employee with whom the applicant has a known relationship.
 - (b) The applicant is a legal entity in good standing and operating in accordance with the laws of the State(s) or Tribe(s) where the applicant has a place of business, including child labor laws.
 - (c) The applicant has not been found or may not be found to be unfit to maintain a grant of Federal or State equivalent inspection because of convictions, in a Federal or State court, of a felony, or multiple misdemeanors involving the acquisition, handling, or distribution of adulterated or misbranded meat or fraud in connection with transactions in food, or other factors.
 - (d) The applicant who receives an award must comply with FSIS standards and must possess a Federal Grant of Inspection during the Period of Performance for the MPPEP-4 grant. In addition, if inspection services have been suspended or any enforcement actions have occurred in the past five years, the applicant must disclose the reasons for the suspension or other enforcement action and how the action(s) was resolved.
 - (e) The applicant has disclosed all of its violations of Federal and state health, safety and labor laws, regulations and standards that occurred up to 5 years prior to the date of the application, including any remedial actions that have been taken by the applicant to rectify such violations, and whether the applicant is currently in compliance with such laws, regulations and standards.
 - (f) The applicant has the necessary certifications in place to ensure regulatory compliance with all food safety measures providing safe products to consumers.
 - (g) Any Equipment required for the project is available, can be procured and delivered within the proposed project development schedule, barring any unforeseen supply chain disruptions to availability, and will be installed in conformance with manufacturer's specifications and design requirements.
 - (h) The applicant has identified the balance of funding necessary (25 -50 percent of the Project Cost as applicable to type of submission) to complete the project in accordance with the timeline and budget proposed in its MPPEP-4 application. Evidence of Cost

Sharing will be verified at the time of award.

- (i) The project will be constructed in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, agreements, permits, codes, and standards.
- (j) The applicant entity has an active entity registration in the System for Award Management; has not been debarred or suspended from participating in USDA covered transactions; is not listed on the Credit Alert Verification Reporting System; and is not listed on the Treasury Offset Program.
- (k) The applicant entity principals have not been debarred or suspended from participating in USDA covered transactions.
- (l) The applicant is responsible for resolving any issues that are reported in the Do Not Pay System. If issues are not resolved by the time the Agency makes Program awards, the Agency may proceed to award funds to other eligible applicants.

4.3 SYSTEM FOR AWARD MANAGEMENT AND UNIQUE ENTITY IDENTIFIER

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

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

(c) Applicants must ensure they complete the Financial Assistance General Certifications and Representations in SAM.

(d) Applicants must provide a valid UEI in the application, unless determined exempt under 2 CFR 25.110.

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

4.4 SUBMISSION DATE AND TIME

Applications must be submitted electronically through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). Ensure that all components of the application are complete before submission. Allow enough time for the application process as it may take more than one attempt before your application is successfully submitted. RBCS encourages you to submit your application at least two weeks prior to the application deadline to ensure all certifications and registrations are met.

Only applications submitted and validated by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on August 7, 2026, on [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) will be accepted.

4.5 INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW

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

4.6 GRANTS.GOV APPLICATION SUBMISSION AND RECEIPT PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS

1. *How to Register to Apply Through Grants.gov*

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.

Instructions for entities interested in applying for this grant funding opportunity can be found here: grants.gov/applicants/applicant-registration. If further assistance is needed, MPPTA providers can provide applicants with assistance (please see Section 2.6 for details).

- (a) *Obtain a UEI.* All entities applying for funding, including renewal funding, must have a UEI from SAM.gov. Instructions for obtaining the UEI are available at sam.gov/content/entity-registration. Applicants must enter the UEI number in the data entry field labeled "UEI" on the SF-424 form.
- (b) *Register with SAM.* In addition to having a UEI number, entities applying online through [Grants.gov](https://grants.gov) must register with [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov). Each current SAM.gov registrant has already been assigned a UEI number and can view it within [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov). All organizations must register with SAM.gov to apply for a grant. Failure to register with SAM.gov 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.
- (c) *Create a Grants.gov Account.* The next step in the registration process is to create an account with [Grants.gov](https://grants.gov). Applicants must know their organization's UEI number to complete this process. Completing this process automatically triggers an email request for applicant roles to the entity'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.gov. To apply for grants on behalf of your organization, you will need designation as the Authorized Organization Role (AOR).
- (d) *Authorize Grants.gov Roles.* After creating an account on Grants.gov, the EBiz POC receives an email notification regarding registration and request for roles. The EBiz POC will then log in to [Grants.gov](https://grants.gov) and authorize the appropriate roles, including the 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 after you have been approved as an AOR.
- (e) *Track Role Status.* After registering with Grants.gov and authorizing the applicant AOR, Grants.gov allows you to track your status.
- (f) *Electronic Signature.* When applications are submitted through Grants.gov, the name of the entity'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 to act as an AOR; **this step is often missed, and it is crucial for valid and timely submissions of applications.**

2. How to Submit an Application to RBCS via Grants.gov

Applicants may use the [Grants.gov Workspace](https://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, an applicant creates a new project workspace.

- (a) *Create a Workspace.* This allows you to complete your Workspace online and route it through your organization for review before submitting.
- (b) *Complete a Workspace.* Add participants to the workspace, complete all the required forms, and check for errors before submission.
 - (i) *Adobe Reader.* If you decide not to apply by filling out the webforms you can download individual PDF forms in Workspace so that they will appear similar to other Standard or RD forms. The individual PDF forms can be downloaded and saved to

your local storage device, network drive(s), or external drives, then accessed through Adobe Reader.

NOTE. You may need to visit the Adobe Software Compatibility page on Grants.gov at grants.gov/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility to download the appropriate version of the software. There is no cost for Adobe Reader Software.

- (ii) *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.
 - (iii) *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 UEI number. To trigger this feature, an applicant must complete the SF-424 information first. Once it is completed, the information will transfer to the other forms.
- (c) *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 your application package **at least 24-48 hours prior to the application deadline** to provide you with time to correct any potential technical issues that may prevent application submission.

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

- (d) *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.
 - (e) *Applicant Support.* Additional training and support can be found on the Grants.gov website at grants.gov/applicants/applicant-training. 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 to which you and Grants.gov can refer if the issue is not resolved. For questions related to the specific grant opportunity, refer to section 7.0, "Agency Contacts".
3. Timely Receipt Requirements and Proof of Timely Submission

All applications must be received by the due date established in Section 4.4., "Submission Date and Time". 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 RBCS 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. Applications will be deemed to have been received at the date and time that Grants.gov receives your application.

RBCS will not accept application packages by fax, email, or postal mail. Applications received after the established due date for the Program will be considered late and will not be considered for funding by RBCS. Supplemental information will not be accepted as part of the application package for competitive review after the application deadline.

SPECIAL NOTE FOR APPLICANTS WITH SLOW INTERNET CONNECTIONS. Applicants using slow internet, such as dial-up connections, may experience significantly longer transmission times when

submitting applications via Grants.gov, especially if there are large attachments contained in the upload. Grants.gov will provide either an error message or a successfully received transmission notification via email to the applicant AOR.

5.0 APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

5.1 MERIT EVALUATION CRITERIA

1. Criteria for Processing Expansion Projects

Eligible Processing Expansion Project applications will be evaluated based on the scoring criteria below. The most competitive applications will describe project objectives that align with the MPPEP program's purpose as described under Section 1.2 and that are specific to the applicant's project, market, business operations, and community. Failure to address all or part of a criterion, or to insufficiently communicate relevant project information, will result in a lower score. The maximum score is 100 points.

(a) *Alignment and Intent (0 – 20 points)*. The Agency will award points for this criterion as follows:

- (i) *Project objectives and throughput constraints (0 – 5 points)*. The application identifies specific constraints or challenges in Meat and/or Poultry processing throughput, and describes the project's objectives, including how the applicant will address those issues related to processing capacity and Value-Added product development.
- (ii) *Processing constraints (0 – 5 points)*. The application describes specific constraints or challenges in Meat and/or Poultry processing operations, including access to available labor, regulatory compliance, byproduct handling, waste management, and energy efficiency, and describes how the project will address those issues.
- (iii) *Producer benefits (0 – 5 points)*. The application describes in specific detail the producers that will benefit from increased Processing capacity. Descriptions should include the general location and business size of producers served and encompass the number of producers who sell live animals into the Facility versus the number who use toll processing, and how the project will drive value to those producers. Processors should identify the percentage of processing capacity dedicated to toll processing.
- (iv) *Operations (0 – 5 points)*. The application provides clear and sufficient details about existing business operations and how the Project will improve the business' financial health, producer impact, and operational efficiency. The Project should represent a logical outgrowth of current business operations, including Primary Processing.

(b) *Market Impact and Opportunities (0 – 20 points)*. The Agency will award points for this criterion as follows:

- (i) *Animal Procurement (0 – 10 points)*. The application describes a clear plan for procuring animals from Meat and/or Poultry producers and outlines how the project will provide more opportunities for Meat and/or Poultry producers relative to the existing processing opportunities in their geographic area. The description should quantify whether or not the project will increase throughput for Primary Processing as well as the anticipated increase in toll processing customers served by the Facility.
- (ii) *Market Development (0 – 10 points)*. The application describes specific opportunities in meeting demonstrated market demand. The market demand should be characterized by customer type, the size of the estimated market, and geographic area. Customer type may include but is not limited to toll processing customers, purchasers of finished products, and/or purchasers of processing byproducts such as hides or compost. Application claims related to market demand should be supported by letters of commitment or interest from

actual customers.

- (c) *Financial Viability (0–20 points)*. The Agency will award points for this criterion as follows:
- (i) *Financial viability (0–4 points)*. The application describes how the project will improve the financial viability of the existing Facility, such as through increased profitability, evidence of which is supported by comparing historical and pro forma financial projections for three years.
 - (ii) *Producer commitments (0–4 points)*. The application provides a description of commitments from producers to demonstrate reliability of supply.
 - (iii) *Customers and sales (0–4 points)*. The application provides a general description of customers and sales channels served by the Facility, including existing customers and any new customers associated with the project, to demonstrate product demand and robust sales. Customer and sales channel descriptions align with letters of commitment or interest.
 - (iv) *Optimal processing capacity (0–4 points)*. The application provides a description of the plan and timeline for achieving optimal processing capacity at the existing Facility. Additionally, the application should provide an overview of any cost reduction measures associated with the project to lower long-term operational costs (e.g., utility expenses, transportation of offal, etc.) as well as how the project will improve labor conditions at the Facility.
 - (v) *Producer viability (0–4 points)*. The application provides a description of how the project will contribute to ongoing financial viability of local producers, including the price paid to producers for live animals and/or opportunities for toll processing services.
- (d) *Technical Merit and Achievability (0–20 points)*. The Agency will award points for this criterion as follows:
- (i) *Work Plan (0–5 points)*. The application presents a clear, detailed, and complete Work Plan and includes a realistic schedule with timelines for implementing the proposed project activities during the Period of Performance.
 - (ii) *Budget (0–5 points)*. The application must include a budget that provides a clear, detailed description for each budget line item, and each line item is directly linked to project activities and Key Personnel. The proposed activities and budget are reasonable, allocable, and relevant to the scale and scope of the project including how each activity contributes to achieving the outcome.
 - (iii) *Key Personnel (0–5 points)*. The application describes the Key Personnel and demonstrates that they have the experience and capacity to implement the project and maintain expanded operations after the Period of Performance ends.
 - (iv) *Major risks (0–5 points)*. The application identifies major risks (e.g., product recall; current and past and violations of Federal and state health and safety laws, regulations and standards; labor risks; access to operating capital risk; and other legal risks) and appropriate risk mitigation strategies.
- (e) *Labor and Personnel (0–8 points)*. The Agency will award points for this criterion as follows:
- (i) *Compensation (0–2 points)*. The application demonstrates how the project enhances worker recruitment and productivity through payment of wages that are commensurate with the type of work carried out, the knowledge required, and the cost of living for the area in which the Facility is located.
 - (ii) *Essential benefits (0–2 points)*. The application demonstrates how the project enhances worker benefits such as health care, work-life balance, personal time off, and other benefits.

- (iii) *Worker training (0 – 2 points)*. The application demonstrates how the project enhances safety through providing worker training that is based on diverse learning styles; is clear, accurate, and practical; and has a proven track record of improving worker safety.
- (iv) *Quality working conditions (0 – 2 points)*. The application demonstrates how the project enhances the physical environment, health and safety measures, working hours, workload, organizational culture, and job security through providing quality working conditions.
- (f) *Community Impact and Support (0 – 7 points)*. The Agency will award points for this criterion as follows:
 - (i) *Connection to the project (0 – 2 points)*. Letters of community support for the project identify the stakeholder submitting the letter and demonstrate their direct connection to the project activities.
 - (ii) *Community impact (0 – 5 points)*. Letters of community support for the project include a description of the sustained community impact that will be supported by expansion activities to be carried out under the proposed project as well as any additional information relative to the project’s impact on the long-term needs and goals of the community.
- (g) *Prior Assistance (0 – 5 points)*. The Agency will award points to applicants that have not received a prior MPPEP Phase 1, MPPEP Phase 2, MPPEP Phase 3, USDA AMS Local Meat Capacity Grant, or USDA AMS Meat and Poultry Inspection Readiness Grant award. The application must disclose the number of prior awards received in the named programs.

2. Criteria For Simplified Equipment-Only Grants

Eligible Simplified Equipment-Only applications will be evaluated based on the scoring criteria below. Discretionary points may be added to the total score to generate the final score. The most competitive applications will describe project objectives that align with the MPPEP program’s purpose as described under Section 1.2 and that are specific to the applicant’s project, market, business operations, and community. Failure to address all or part of a criterion, or to insufficiently communicate relevant project information, will result in a lower score. The maximum score is 100 points.

- (a) *Program Alignment (0 – 20 points)*. Describe how the use of the Equipment to be purchased aligns with one or more goals of the Program. The Agency will award up to four (4) points for each goal, based on how closely it is aligned with the Program, up to 20 points. Note that if a proposed project meets all six goals listed below, it can only receive a maximum of 20 points. The goals are the following:
 - (i) To increase processing capacity and promote more competition in the sector, with an emphasis on diversifying and strengthening the supply chain;
 - (ii) To increase producer income;
 - (iii) To access new market or sales channels;
 - (iv) To support process improvement;
 - (v) To support employee training of Equipment operations, butchery skills, Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) and Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures (SSOP) compliance, and achieving product specifications and consistency; and
 - (vi) To improve waste management.

- (b) *Operation Constraints (0 – 20 points)*. The Agency will award points for this criterion as follows:
- (i) *Description (0 – 10 points)*. The application describes specific constraints or challenges in Meat and/or Poultry processing operations affecting the applicant, including access to available labor, regulatory compliance, byproduct handling, waste management, and energy efficiency.
 - (ii) *Addressing constraints (0 – 10 points)*. The application demonstrates how the use of the Equipment to be purchased will address the constraints or challenges described.
- (c) *Market Development (0 – 20 points)*. The Agency will award points for this criterion as follows:
- (i) *Market demand (0 – 5 points)*. The application describes how the applicant determined the market demand that it intends/expects to capture as a result of the applicant's utilization of the Equipment to be purchased.
 - (ii) *Customer type (0 – 5 points)*. The application describes the customer type that will be affected by utilizing the Equipment to be purchased. Customer type may include, but is not limited to, toll processing customers, purchasers of finished products, and/or purchasers of processing byproducts such as hides or compost.
 - (iii) *Size of the estimated market (0 – 5 points)*. The application describes the applicant's estimated increase in market share and demonstrates that utilizing the Equipment to be purchased will allow the entity to develop its ability to meet this share.
 - (iv) *Geographic area (0 – 5 points)*. The application describes the geographic area of the market and demonstrates that utilizing the Equipment to be purchased will allow the entity to enter or expand its market into this area.
- (d) *Financial Sustainability and Business Operations (0 – 20 points.)* The Agency will award points for this criterion as follows:
- (i) *Financial sustainability (0 – 10 points)*. The application describes the existing business operations and demonstrates that the use of the Equipment to be purchased will improve the entity's financial health and represents a logical outgrowth of current business operations, including Primary Processing.
 - (ii) *Operational efficiency (0 – 10 points)*. The application describes the existing operational efficiency and demonstrates that the use of the Equipment to be purchased will improve the entity's operational efficiency.
- (e) *Producer Benefits (0 – 15 points)*. The Agency will award points for this criterion as follows:
- (i) *Description of Producers to Benefit (0 – 10 points)*. The application describes the types and estimated number of producers that will benefit from the use of the Equipment to be purchased. Descriptions should include the general location and business size of producers served and encompass the number of producers who sell live animals to the Facility versus the number who use toll processing, and how the project will drive value to each of those types of producers. The applicant must identify the percentage of processing capacity dedicated to toll processing, if applicable.
 - (ii) *Financial benefit (0 – 5 points)*. The application describes the financial benefit to these producers. For example, financial benefit might be that the producers get paid more per pound of Meat/Poultry or that they receive locked-in pricing further in advance.
- (f) *Prior assistance (0 – 5 points)*. The Agency will award points to applicants that have not received a prior MPPEP Phase 1, MPPEP Phase 2, MPPEP Phase 3, USDA AMS Local Meat Capacity Grant, or USDA AMS Meat and Poultry Inspection Readiness Grant award. The

application must disclose the number of prior awards received in the named programs.

5.2 REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

1. *Step 1: Completeness, Eligibility, and Risk Assessment.* Each application is initially reviewed for overall completeness, as well as compliance with eligibility and Program requirements as set forth in this NOFO. If an application does not meet these requirements, it is considered ineligible for assistance and removed from consideration for funding. It will not be scored. The Agency will also conduct a risk assessment, and if the applicant's health, safety or labor law violations are deemed unsatisfactory and represent a reputational risk to the federal government, as determined by the Agency, the application is considered ineligible for assistance and removed from consideration for funding. It will not be scored.
2. *Step 2: Merit Evaluation.* Each application that is determined to be eligible (Step 1) is evaluated by a panel of reviewers through a merit evaluation process. The review panel evaluates applications using instructions prepared by RBCS officials. Individual reviewers confer with other panel members to derive a consensus score based on the strengths and weaknesses identified for each application. The consensus score serves as the basis for awarding points under the criteria identified in section 5.1 of this NOFO.
3. *Step 3: Agency Priority Points (0 – 10 points).* The Agency will review the panel's top-ranking projects, and it may award up to 10 Priority Points, solely at its discretion. When considering whether to award priority points, the Agency may consider the geographic diversity of the awards and the size of award. It may also consider the following RBCS Agency priority areas:
 - Strengthening of domestic manufacturing and industrial supply chains, including food processing and value-added production;
 - Expansion of reliable domestic energy productions, transmission, or processing, including fossil energy (coal, oil, natural gas, LNG), nuclear energy and advanced reactor technologies, biofuels and sustainable aviation fuels, and grid modernization and transmission infrastructure;
 - Enhancement of affordability, reliability, and resilience of domestic energy supply, particularly in rural communities;
 - Creation or expansion of market opportunities for agricultural producers, including biofuels and renewable natural gas, biobased products and chemicals, value-added agricultural processing, meat production, dairy production, vegetable production, export-oriented agricultural manufacturing, agricultural input production (e.g., fertilizer, seed, crop protection), innovative agricultural technologies, and expansion of producer revenue streams;
 - Demonstration of clear linkages between rural production and downstream manufacturing or processing; and
 - Demonstration of strong programmatic integrity practices, including transparent ownership and governance structures, robust financial controls and compliance systems, demonstrated operational capacity and managerial competence, proven technology and strong financial sustainability for the project, demonstrated risk mitigation strategies, and strong performance histories in federal or state programs.
 - Utilization of the "Product of the USA" voluntary labeling standard. See [9 CFR 412.3](#).
4. *Step 4: Ranking of Applications.* RBCS will rank eligible applications based on the sum of the merit

evaluation criteria plus any priority points, for a maximum of 110 points. There will be a separate ranking for each competition; one for Very Small Processors and Small Processors, and one for Intermediate Processors.

5. *Step 5: Funding selected applications.* The Agency will select applications for funding in rank order for each competition until available funds are expended or a minimum score of 50 points is reached. If an application cannot be fully funded, the Agency may offer partial funding to the extent funds are available.
6. *Step 6: Environmental review.* RBCS will review projects that are selected for funding for environmental impacts to determine next steps for the project to achieve compliance under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and applicable regulations as outlined in Section 8.2.

6.0 AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

6.1 FEDERAL AWARD NOTICES

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

6.2 UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS

If an application is not selected for funding, the Applicant will be notified in writing via electronic mail and informed of the dispute resolution process. Funding of successfully appealed applications will be limited to and conditioned upon available funding. RBCS anticipates that this Program will likely be oversubscribed and, as a result, there will be no available funds for successful applicant-appellants once all MPPEP-4 funds are awarded and obligated.

6.3 ADMINISTRATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS

1. *Financial Assistance Agreement.* All recipients must execute Form RD 4280-2, "Financial Assistance Agreement," which includes all terms and conditions for the award.
2. *Additional Requirements.* Additional requirements that apply to recipients selected for this Program can be found in the governmentwide Grants and Agreements regulations codified in 2 CFR parts [25](#), [170](#), [175](#), [180](#), [182](#), [183](#), [184](#), [200](#), [400](#), [415](#), [417](#), [418](#), [421](#); and [48 CFR part 31](#), and successor regulations to these parts.
3. *Subawards and Executive Compensation.* All recipients of Federal financial assistance are required to report information about first-tier sub-awards and executive total compensation in accordance with [2 CFR part 170](#)). The recipient must have the necessary processes and systems in place to comply with the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 ([Pub. L. 109-282](#)) reporting requirements (see [2 CFR 170.210\(b\)](#)), unless exempt under [2 CFR 170.105\(b\)](#)).
4. *Civil Rights.* All awards of Federal financial assistance made under this NOFO are subject to applicable civil rights laws, which may include Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1973, and the Equal Credit Opportunity Act of 1974.
5. *Geospatial Data.* Recipient, and any and all contracts entered into by the Recipient with respect to the Federal Award, shall ensure that geospatial data required to be collected and provided to the agency conforms with the requirements of USDA Department Regulation DR-3465-001 and the Geospatial Metadata Standards set forth in DM 3465-001, which can be obtained online at usda.gov/directives/dr-3465-001 and usda.gov/directives/dm-3465-001.

6. *Notice of Federal Interest.* If MPPEP-4 grant funds will be utilized for improvements and fixtures to real property, the Agency may file a Notice of Federal Interest on the subject property. See 2 CFR [200.310 – 200.316](#) for more information on federal property standards.

6.4 REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The following reports are required.

1. *Form SF-425, “Federal Financial Report.”* Semi-annual and final financial reports are required.
 - (a) *Semi-annual.* Reporting periods are October 1 – March 31 and April 1 – September 30 of each year for semi-annual reports. They are due 30 calendar days after the end of the reporting period.
 - (b) *Final report.* The final report must be cumulative for the entire Period of Performance and is due 120 calendar days after the end of the Period of Performance.
 - (c) *Reporting elements.* The performance reports must include the elements prescribed in the Financial Assistance Agreement (Form RD 4280-2), including but not limited to:
 - Processing volume increase (number of pounds or tons) as a result of the Project.
 - New Value-Added products developed by the Recipient as a result of the Project.
 - Increase in number of cattle producers served by the Recipient as a result of the Project.
 - Number of new sales channels accessed by the Recipient as a result of the Project.
 - Number of jobs created and retained by the Recipient as a result of the Project.
2. *Performance report.* Semi-annual and final financial reports are required.
 - (a) *Semi-annual.* Reporting periods are October 1 – March 31 and April 1 – September 30 of each year for semi-annual reports. They are due 30 calendar days after the end of the reporting period.
 - (b) *Final report.* The final report must be cumulative for the entire Period of Performance and is due 120 calendar days after the end of the Period of Performance.
3. *Processing Capacity Expansion Report.* One year after project completion the applicant must provide a project performance report describing the outcomes in expanding Processing capacity as identified in the MPPEP-4 application and Financial Assistance Agreement, Form RD 4280-2. The report is due 60 days after the first full year following the year in which the expansion project was completed.

6.5 PAYMENTS

There are two options for obtaining payment under MPPEP-4.

- (a) *Single Payment*—Grant funds will be disbursed in full after the project is completed; or
- (b) *Multiple Payments*—Grant funds will be disbursed on a reimbursement basis through 90 percent of grant disbursement as the project is completed. The final 10 percent of grant funds will be held until the project is completed.
 - (1) Recipients may submit requests for payment no more frequently than monthly. Ordinarily, payment will be made within 30 days after receipt of a proper request and adequate documentation for payment.

- (2) Recipients must not request payments for the Federal share of amounts withheld from contractors to ensure satisfactory completion of work until after any such payments have been made to the contractors.
- (3) Recipients must use SF-270, Request for Advance or Reimbursement, to request grant payments. Payment requests must, at a minimum, include documentation that the cost has been incurred and paid by the recipient, including payment date(s). Failure to provide sufficient documentation of costs and evidence of payment, including payment date, may result in a denial of reimbursement.

7.0 FEDERAL AWARD AGENCY CONTACTS

7.1 PROGRAMMATIC QUESTIONS

After closely reviewing this NOFO in its entirety, applicants and other interested parties having questions are encouraged to contact RBCS staff at mppep@usda.gov.

For additional information, please visit the MPPEP-4 website: rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-programs/meat-and-poultry-processing-expansion-program.

7.2 GRANTS.GOV QUESTIONS

All questions regarding Grants.gov technical assistance must be directed to the Grants.gov Applicant Support portal at grants.gov/support.

8.0 OTHER INFORMATION

8.1 PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT

In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. §§ 3501 et seq.), an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0570-0079.

8.2 NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT

All activities funded under this NOFO must comply with the NEPA and related applicable Agency regulations at [7 CFR Part 1b](#) and related instructions, Section 106 of the NHPA, other applicable Federal laws and regulations, and any applicable State, local, or Tribal laws or regulations.

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

8.3 EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

1. Faith-based organizations may apply for this award on the same basis as any other organization, as set forth at, and subject to the protections and requirements of, this part and any applicable constitutional and statutory requirements, including [42 U.S.C. 2000bb et seq.](#) USDA will not, in the selection of recipients, discriminate for or against an organization on the basis of the organization's religious character, motives, or affiliation, or lack thereof, or on the basis of conduct that would not be considered grounds to favor or disfavor a similarly situated secular organization.
2. A faith-based organization that participates in this Program will retain its independence from the Government and may continue to carry out its mission consistent with religious freedom and

conscience protections in Federal law. Religious accommodation may also be sought under many of these religious freedom and conscience protection laws.

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

8.4 FEDERAL FUNDING ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY ACT

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

8.5 NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the State or local Agency that administers the program or contact USDA through the Telecommunications Relay Service at 711 (voice and TTY). Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](#) and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (1) Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Mail Stop 9410
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
- (2) Fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) Email: program.intake@usda.gov

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