

Organic Market Development Grants

Fiscal Year 2023 Request for Applications

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-AMS-TM-OMD-G-23-0019

Publication Date: May 10, 2023

Application Due Date: 11:59 PM Eastern Time on July 11, 2023

Program Solicitation Information

Funding Opportunity Title: Organic Market Development Grants

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-AMS-TM-OMD-G-23-0019

Announcement Type: Initial

Assistance Listing Number: 10.188

Dates: Applications must be received by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on July 11, 2023, through Grants.gov. Applications received after this deadline will not be considered for funding.

Executive Summary: The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), requests applications from certified organic and transitioning producers and handlers, as well as non-profit entities, tribal entities, certified benefit corporations, and state/tribal/local government entities, to the Organic Market Development Grant (OMDG) Program. These grants will create new and improved markets for domestically produced organic products through investments in expanded certified organic processing capacity; activities that develop, maintain, or expand commercial organic markets; and organic product developments which create new uses for producers that currently lack markets, such as rotational grains. These investments are anticipated to increase the consumption of domestic organic agricultural commodities by expanding or aiding in the expansion of markets or by developing or aiding in the development of new and additional markets, marketing facilities, and uses for such commodities.

Approximately $75 million is available in FY 2023 to fund applications under this solicitation. Awards will range from $100,000 to $3 million for to support Market Development and Promotion or Processing Capacity Expansion projects. A non-federal match of 50% of the total proposed project cost (with a reduced match for underserved producers and business owners) is required for these project types.

AMS is also offering a Simplified Equipment-Only application with no matching funds requirement for projects that solely request the cost of equipment and range from $10,000 up to $100,000 and do not include renovation or staffing costs. This option is designed to reduce administrative burden for the applicant.

Recipients are expected to execute projects from FY 2023 through FY 2026. This announcement identifies the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply.

USDA will prioritize applications from pinpointed markets such as organic grains livestock feed, legumes and other rotational crops, dairy, fibers, and ingredients currently unavailable in organic form. AMS encourages and may also prioritize applications that benefit smaller farms and ranches, and historically underserved producers. For projects intending to serve these entities, applicants should engage and involve those beneficiaries when developing projects and applications.

During application review, USDA will consider geography, project size, operation size, species, ownership structure, and business model to maximize diversity among awards.

USDA promotes climate-resilient landscapes and rural economic systems, including tools to support agriculture, forests, grazing lands, and rural communities. AMS encourages applicants to consider

including goals and activities related to mitigating or adapting to climate change in their project's design and implementation. AMS also encourages applicants to prioritize investments which improve worker safety and wellbeing.

Application Checklist

AMS expects applicants to read the entire RFA prior to submitting their application to ensure that they understand the program's requirements. This application checklist provides the required and conditionally required documents for an application package.

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

- ☐ SF-424 – Application for Federal Assistance (in Grants.gov)
- ☐ SF-424A – Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs (in Grants.gov)
- ☐ Project Abstract Summary (in Grants.gov)
- ☐ Project Narrative Form (PDF Attachment)
    - Market Development and Promotion or Processing Capacity Expansion (***section 5.2.4***)
    - Simplified Equipment-Only Projects – (***section 5.2.5***)

    For all project narrative forms:

    - ❖ Ensure the required template is used
    - ❖ Ensure the executive summary is no more than 250 words
    - ❖ Ensure the Project Narrative does not exceed the page limit (***section 5.2.4 and 5.2.5***)
    - ❖ Ensure project excludes unallowable costs and activities (***section 4.4***)
- ☐ *Market Development and Promotion* & *Processing Capacity Expansion Projects* – Signed Letter (s) Verifying Matching Funds for each match resource in the application (***section 5.2.6***)
- ☐ *Simplified Equipment-Only Projects* – Documentation to substantiate the costs of each piece of proposed equipment per ***section 5.2.5***.
- ☐ Signed Letters (s) of Support from partners listed in the application (***section 5.2.7***)

If applicable, packages may also be required to include a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) (PDF Attachment).

Tip for Applicants

- To do business with the Federal Government and to submit your application electronically using Grants.gov, you must—
    - Have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and a Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN);
    - Be registered in SAM.gov, 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, during the project period.

- Register in Grants.gov and submit applications early. **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE DAY OF THE APPLICATION DEADLINE**. AMS encourages to submit your application at least two weeks before the application deadline to ensure all certifications are met.
- Thoroughly read this RFA and follow all instructions.
- Thoroughly review the AMS General Terms and Conditions and Specific Terms and Conditions to understand allowable and unallowable costs.
- Ensure the application excludes unallowable costs and activities per ***section 4.4***.
- Ensure the narrative does not exceed the page limit specified per ***section 5.2.4***.
- Apply to the correct grant program in Grants.gov using the correct Assistance listing number "**10.188**" and Funding Opportunity Number "**USDA-AMS-TM-OMDG-G-23-0019**."
- Ensure you have the most recent copy of Adobe Reader installed on your computer and that it is compatible with Grants.gov software. Grants.gov supports Adobe Reader version 9.0.0 and higher.
- Limit Application File Size/ File Name Characters (50 or less).
- Avoid Special Characters in File Names ($, %, &, *, Spanish "ñ", etc.).
- When uploading attachments, click the "Add Attachments" button (do NOT use the "paperclip" icon in Adobe Reader)
- Do not password-protect your documents and make sure all tracked-changes are "accepted."
- Input the correct UEI (formerly DUNS) number on the SF-424 form cover page.
- Review the Grants.gov Applicant User and Registration Guides:
  http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-faqs.html
  https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/workspace-overview.html

Timing to Obtain and Submit Grants.gov Required Elements

Required Action	*Timing to Obtain/Submit*
AMS Deadline to receive final application and all supporting materials through Grants.Gov	July 11, 2023 – 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time
Obtaining Your Organization's UEI Number (if you do not already have one)	7-10 business days
Establishing an Active SAM.gov Account (if you do not already have one)	7-10 business days
Obtaining a TIN/EIN (if you do not already have one)	Up to 2 weeks
Creating your Grants.gov profile and registering your Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) authorization	Up to 2 weeks

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1.0 FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

1.1 LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The Organic Market Development Grants (OMDG) program is authorized by section 5(e) of the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) Charter Act, (15 U.S.C. 714(e)).

1.2 PURPOSE

This program will support the development of new and expanded organic markets by providing additional resources for businesses transitioning to organic or initiating new organic production and processing capacity. These investments in certified organic infrastructure, expanding capacity for aggregation, processing,[1] manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, distribution, or consumer markets, and supporting activities which develop new markets, are anticipated to increase demand for domestically produced organic agricultural products and provide additional market paths. Domestic organic producers and handlers have identified the development of new and expanded organic infrastructure, capacity, and markets as critical needs through public comments and listening sessions.

Organic production and markets play a critical, expanding role in further diversifying food systems. Consumer demand for organically produced goods surpassed $63 billion in 2021, and multi-year trends of strong growth in the sector provide market incentives for U.S. farmers across a broad range of products. Organic sales account for over 4 percent of total U.S. food sales and organic products are now available in nearly 20,000 natural food stores and nearly three out of 4 conventional grocery stores.

However, stakeholders have conveyed that producers may be less willing to commit to the three-year transition to organic certification because of risks related to inadequate organic processing, storage, and handling capacity, cost barriers due to limited markets for rotational crops, a lack of certainty about market access, and insufficient supply of certain organic ingredients. The organic livestock and processed product markets depend heavily on imported agricultural products for feed grains and key ingredients. These longstanding market issues facing organic livestock feedstocks, rotational crops, dairy, fiber, and ingredients were brought into sharp focus due to the impacts of COVID and international conflicts in critical overseas organic supply areas, resulting in limitations on certain organic products in the face of rising demand.

Further, existing organic producers lack market access because of bottlenecks in certified organic processing, storage, specialized equipment, and handling/shipping, which have not kept up with the growth in organic crops or the demand for organic products. Producers of organic commodities often lack the resources or the capacity to build processing infrastructure, which is also outside the business model for end-use consumer food manufacturers or animal feed buyers. Certain regions also lack certified organic processing capacity, meaning that local and regional organic producers must either pay

[1] As defined in the USDA Organic Regulations at 7 C.F.R. § 205.2, processing includes cooking, baking, curing, heating, drying, mixing, grinding, churning, separating, extracting, slaughtering, cutting, fermenting, distilling, eviscerating, preserving, dehydrating, freezing, chilling, or otherwise manufacturing food and agricultural commodities. Processing also includes packaging, canning, and jarring food.

increased shipping costs or sacrifice organic price premiums by processing their commodities at non-organic facilities, which removes the ability to sell the product as "organic" to the consumer. These middle-of-the-supply-chain bottlenecks limit markets for raw organic commodities and cause some producers to sell organic commodities at conventional prices, missing premium prices for organic animal feed and processed consumer products.

Implementation of the Organic Market Development Grants program is intended to align with numerous policy goals and objectives across government, including, but not limited to:

- Ensure equitable access to USDA programs and benefits from USDA-funded projects and support the policies of Executive Order 13985 (Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government).
- Contribute to the resilience of the food and agricultural supply chains through support for diversified, value-added agriculture such as organic production and support the policies of Executive Order 14017 (Executive Order on America's Supply Chains).
- Promote competition in the organic sector and support the policies of Executive Order 14036 (Promoting Competition in the American Economy).
- Implement the Build America, Buy America (BABA) Act. Guidance on BABA requirements for USDA award recipients is available at USDA's Implementation of BABA Act.

1.3 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Organic Market Development Program supports projects that:

- Increase domestic organic supply chain capacity for producers, handlers, suppliers, and processors;
- Facilitate market development for domestically produced organic food products;
- Demonstrate a clear benefit to organic communities in defined regions; and
- Remove barriers to entry to organic certification for historically underserved entities.
- Expand capacity for processing, aggregation, and distribution of agricultural products to create more and better markets for producers;
- Modernize manufacturing, tracking, storage, and information technology systems specific to the purposes of this program, such as process control or organic ingredient tracking systems;
- Improve the capacity of entities to comply with regulatory requirements or quality standards required to access markets, such as food safety and organic certification; and
- Market and promotional activities that help build commercial markets for U.S. organic agricultural products and commodities.

This program focuses on investments which will aid in the expansion of new and additional markets for U.S. organic commodities, opening markets for producers and/or addressing inadequate capacity in certified organic processing, storage, and handling/shipping. Capacity in the middle of the organic supply chain has not kept pace with the growth in organic crops or the demand for organic products, and it therefore limits market access for transforming domestic organic crops into organic feed grains or consumer products. Expanded processing capacity will increase consumption of domestic organic

commodities through increased manufacturing of finished products for human food, animal feed, and fiber.

USDA encourages projects which are targeted to specific production regions or crops to ensure meaningful impacts that facilitate the movement of agricultural products in key markets.

1.4 PROJECT TYPES

OMDG offers three project types: 1) Market Development and Promotion 2) Processing Capacity Expansion 3) Simplified Equipment-Only

A project is a set of interrelated tasks with a cohesive, distinct, specified, and defined goal. It follows a planned, organized approach over a fixed period of time and within specific limitations (cost, performance/quality, etc.). Additionally, it uses resources that are specifically allocated to the work of the project and usually involves a team of people.

Projects are different from other ongoing operations in an organization because, unlike operations, projects have a definitive beginning and end – they have a limited duration. A project has an overarching goal that the applicant wants to accomplish through a series of individual activities or tasks.

1.4.1 MARKET DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION

Market Development and Promotion supports the development or expansion of new or existing organic markets to create access between organic producers, handlers, and consumers. This may include:

- Product development activities which create uses for organic commodities that currently lack markets, such as rotational row crops.
- Market development related to producer and consumer education that creates or increases demand for new or existing organic product categories domestically or abroad.
- Create or strengthen farm to institution market channels, farm to local retail, or other markets that build local and regional food systems opportunities in organic agriculture.
- Exploring and promoting domestic and international opportunities for organically grown and processed agricultural commodities.
- Developing marketing strategies for organic producers to help strengthen new or emerging markets.

1.4.2 PROCESSING CAPACITY EXPANSION

Processing capacity expansion supports the infrastructure to improve organic agriculture production, processing capacity, and exploring emerging technologies to help keep the demand of organic products. This may include:

- Purchase and installation of equipment to support on-farm or cooperatively owned processing facilities to help agricultural producers add value to their products at the farmgate level by generating new or enhanced products.
- New or expanded aggregation, processing, storage, marketing, and distribution mechanisms for organic commodities to create a path to market for producers, including purchase and installation of equipment.

- Expanding processing capacities within existing facilities to increase organic production volumes, process additional commodities, create parallel production needed to segregate organic production lines, and/or add new value-added product types.
- Projects to support on-farm or cooperatively owned processing to help multiple agricultural producers add value to their products at the farmgate level to generate new products and increase producer income, including purchase and installation of equipment.

1.4.3 SIMPLIFIED EQUIPMENT-ONLY PROJECTS

Simplified Equipment-Only Projects will fund equipment-only grants of up to $100,000. Applicants will use a simplified application form, and applications will be reviewed on the same timeframe as other projects. The goal for this project type is to have new equipment purchased and installed within 6 months, or as quickly as practicable, after issuance of the award. This option is a Fixed Price Grant, meaning it will fund only equipment purchases and not associated facility upgrades, staffing, or other costs.

Applicants must attach documentation to substantiate the costs of each piece of proposed equipment, which can include contracts, catalog pricing or binding quotes provided by license commercial entities. Applicants are required to provide a project narrative that describes the need for the equipment and the estimated increases in production that will result, as well as other program indicators and outcomes provided on the Project Narrative Template.

The simplified application instructions and description of the AMS review process can be found in **section 5.2.5**.

1.4.4 PROJECT EXAMPLES

- Market Development and Promotion: An organic grain cooperative seeks funds to convene conferences that connect growers to processors and buyers, as well as paying for travel and booth space at trade shows to open new markets.
- Processing Capacity Expansion: An ingredient manufacturer proposes a study assessing market demands for organic meat casings and uses the findings from that study to both develop new product formulations and invest in the processing equipment necessary to produce these casings in the appropriate commercial form.
- Processing Capacity Expansion: A small pizza crust manufacturer proposes to purchase new equipment dedicated exclusively to organic products, increasing its processing capacity. The project includes costs associated with moving an interior wall to accommodate the machinery, as well as related electrical upgrades to power the additional equipment.
- Simplified Equipment-Only Project: A cooperative of alfalfa growers proposes to purchase and install pellet mills to make their product more transportable, opening new markets and increasing demand for organic alfalfa. This proposal has no alteration or renovation costs.

1.4.5 AWARD AND ACTIVITIES LIMITATIONS

Applicants may submit multiple projects applications to OMDG. If recommended for more than one award, applicants are limited to receiving **one** award. If the applicant is recommended for multiple

awards, AMS staff will contact the applicant to discuss the options. All projects must show a clear link between the proposed activities and increased market access for more than one producer or handler.

Applicants should note that while activities such as developing marketing plans or conducting feasibility studies may be included in project proposals, a project cannot be limited to solely information gathering and dissemination activities. Projects including information gathering work must demonstrate how such work will support implementation activities, such as increasing certified organic processing capacity and/or product formulation.

1.4.6 PINPOINTED MARKET PRIORITY

AMS will give priority consideration to projects addressing the specific pinpointed markets needs below, identified through organic stakeholder comments and feedback.

- Organic grains and livestock feed, building domestic supply of organic grain and feed and associated processing capacity to respond to growing demand and reduce reliance on imports.
- Organic dairy, targeting investments in specialized organic dairy processing infrastructure.
- Organic fibers, the largest and fastest-growing non-food sector in organic – yet where less than 1% of domestic production acreage is certified organic.
- Organic legumes and other rotational crops, including but not limited to processing capacity and consumer product development for peanuts, oats, beans, field peas, barley, and lentils.
- Organic ingredients currently unavailable in commercial form, as evidenced either by inclusion on the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances or by data cited in the application. The Organic Foods Production Act envisioned "sunsetting" such allowances, but such ingredients are often in short supply.

While funding may be provided for other market segments, projects serving markets other than those listed above will not be given priority. Applications for projects which do not address these pinpointed market segments must clearly explain the market needs, supply chain constraints, or gaps which the project would address.

1.4.7 ADDITIONAL FUNDING PRIORITIES

Within the above pinpointed market priorities, AMS will prioritize applications that demonstrate engagement with and benefit to organic producers, including underserved producers and/or low-income communities with areas of persistent poverty.

AMS may prioritize applications based on:

- Diversity in applicants funded in geographic regions and across size, scale, or product types.
- For Processing Expansion and Market Development projects: Leverage significant non-Federal financial and technical resources, as appropriate to the scope and scale of the project. Any match above and beyond the match requirement (see ***section 4.1***) may lend support to the application.

- A focus on developing, customizing or installing climate-smart equipment that reduces greenhouse gas emissions, increases efficiency in water use, improves air and/or water quality, and/or meets one or more of USDA's climate action goals.
- On-farm and/or cooperative projects which support multiple producers.

1.5 PROJECT ACTIVITIES ELIGIBLE AND NOT ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

1.5.1 ACTIVITIES ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

Activities or tasks that could be a part of such projects might include, but are not limited to:

- Modernizing equipment or facilities through upgrades, repairs, or retooling; (e.g., adapting product lines for institutional procurement or adding parallel processing capacity to prevent commingling of organic and non-organic products);
- Expanding processing capacities to increase production volumes, process additional organic crops or animal products, or add new value-added product types;
- Installation of holding pens, wastewater management systems, or other improvements that do not require breaking new ground or constructing new facilities;
- Consumer advertising, public relations, point-of-sale demonstrations, participation in trade fairs and exhibits, and value chain coordination; or
- Specialized equipment purchases, such as processing components, sorting equipment (e.g., equipment which prevents commingling between organic and non-organic products), packing and labeling equipment, or delivery vehicles.

The following activities are eligible for funding but cannot be funded in isolation. These activities must be conducted in conjunction with one of the activities listed above, or with a similar market intervention that demonstrably increases the consumption of domestically produced organic products:

- Hiring personnel;
- Develop marketing plans, conduct feasibility studies, analyze potential facility upgrades and changes that meet regulatory requirements, obtain design and/or architecture services, etc.;
- Planning for Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) or other food safety plans;
- Developing worker safety measures;
- Technical assistance that focuses on enhancing "middle of the supply chain" organic processing and product development; or
- Training on the use of equipment purchased under the grant and/or on new processes developed as the result of the grant.

1.5.2 ACTIVITIES NOT ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

The following activities are not eligible for funding.

- New construction and/or structural changes to an existing building/facility resulting in a square foot expansion or changes to the building's floor, foundation, and exterior or load bearing walls.
- Routine maintenance and repair of an organization's buildings and operational facilities.
- Purchasing land, buildings or facilities~~,~~ or any interest therein.

- Paying ongoing staffing or operational costs not specifically tied to the proposed expansion project.
- Expenses that have been or will be reimbursed under any Federal, State, or local government funding, including but not limited to certification activities funded under the Organic Certification Cost Share Program.
- Activities already funded by another Federal award program.

Due to restrictions outlined in the Commodity Credit Corporation Charter Act, the following activities are also ineligible for funding.

- Purchase or construction of refrigerated cold storage facilities.
- Research, per Section 4(m).
    - The prohibition on research does not extend to information gathering activities outlined in ***section 1.4.***

1.6 EQUIPMENT

As outlined in the Program Specific Terms and Conditions and the AMS General Terms and Conditions, equipment purchases that support producer access to new markets and/or benefit organic supply chains are generally allowable as special purpose equipment. Special purpose equipment purchases may include the following:

1. Processing, aggregation, or storage investments;
2. Value chain/supply chain innovation or upgrades, including equipment or technology upgrades or investments to support process adaptations;
3. Food safety equipment, processing equipment, or packaging equipment;
4. Vehicles which specifically alleviate supply chain bottlenecks, such as delivery vans or milk trucks; and
5. Product development, packaging, and marketing of agricultural products.

Purchases over $5,000 must be approved in writing and the resulting purchased equipment monitored by AMS, as required by 2 CFR § 200.313.

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

Applicants that have questions concerning the allowability of costs after reviewing this document should contact AMS staff using the contact information in ***section 8.0***.

1.7 CONSULTATION WITH USDA TRANSITION TO ORGANIC PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

During the development of project proposals, USDA encourages applicants to consult with the USDA's Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP) to identify market gaps and market opportunities affected by projected transitioning farms and food businesses. The TOPP partners can provide information regarding regional markets for organic products, as well as aggregate information about trends in transition to organic certification, which can help applicants to forecast unmet market needs. See https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/organic-certification/topp for more information. The six

regions of the TOPP network can provide key insights into the regional processing infrastructure needed to create new markets for organic products produced in those same regions.

Applicants will be asked to indicate if they are coordinating with a TOPP partner in their Project Narrative (***section 5.2.4***).

1.8 NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT

All activities funded under this RFA must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and related applicable agency regulations and instructions, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), the Endangered Species Act (ESA), other laws and regulations as outlined therein, and any applicable state, local, or tribal laws. A review for NEPA compliance is required prior to the award of grant funds.

If selected for an award, applicants must provide AMS with all requested information to support compliance with NEPA, NHPA, ESA, and all other federal environmental laws and regulations. The costs associated with satisfying environmental review requirements and permits are also eligible for reimbursement as pre-application expenses. See Program Specific Terms and Conditions for allowable pre-application costs for environmental review process and permitting.

AMS reserves the right to deny an application that does not meet NEPA or permitting policies, or an applicant that fails to provide the necessary environmental review documentation within the established time frame. More information on the NEPA Policy is in the Program Specific Terms and Conditions.

2.0 AWARD INFORMATION

2.1 TYPE OF FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

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

2.2 TYPE OF APPLICATIONS

New application. AMS will review all applications for conformance with the criteria in ***section 6.1*** and may require the applicant to provide additional information or clarification by a specified date.

2.3 AVAILABLE FUNDING AND FEDERAL AWARD PERIOD DURATION

AMS anticipates approximately $75 million to be available in FY2023. OMDG funding is made available through the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC).

Funding may be contingent on Federal appropriations or authorizations. USDA does not guarantee minimum funding levels or a specific number of awards.

2.4 FEDERAL AWARD PERIOD, DURATION, AND SIZE

AMS expects applicants to complete their projects within the performance period of the grant. It is acceptable to complete a project before the scheduled performance period end date. However, AMS

encourages applicants to take the full grant period to allow ample time to complete projects. The applicant must indicate the start date and end date on Block 17 of the SF-424 "Application for Federal Assistance".

Award size varies by project type. Applicants may not request less than or more than the respective minimum/maximum amounts. Applicants must justify the requested funding amounts within the Project Narrative.

Project Type	Duration (Months)	Start Date	Completion Date	Minimum Award	Maximum Award
Market Development & Promotion	36	November 30, 2023	November 29, 2026	$100,000	$3,000,000
Processing Capacity Expansion	36	November 30, 2023	November 29, 2026	$100,000	$3,000,000
Simplified Equipment -Only	24	November 30, 2023	November 29, 2026	$10,000	$100,000

3.0 ELIGIBILITY AND PARTNERSHIP INFORMATION

3.1 ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants for Organic Market Development grants include business entities (regardless of legal structure) who produce or handle organic foods. Producer and handler applicants must either be certified to the USDA organic standards or in transition to organic certification, consistent with 7 C.F.R. §205. Such applicants must be registered in the Organic INTEGRITY Database before the date of the Notice of Award. This requirement does not apply to non-profit or government entities.

Eligible applicants also include non-profit or government entities. Eligible government entities include but are not limited to tribal, state, territory, and local government entities such as economic development authorities and regional conservation districts. Eligible non-profit entities may include trade associations.

AMS may prioritize funding to individual or groups of agricultural producers majority-controlled producer-based ventures, farmer or rancher-controlled cooperatives, or government entities.

Separate entities who are at least 51 percent owned and operated by the same parent company may not submit multiple applications. Such entities may submit a single joint application. AMS may remove applications from consideration, if the applicants are found to be owned and operated by the same parent company and are applying separately.

All applicants must be domestic entities owned, operated, and located within the 50 United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the United States Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, or Tribal Governments.

Producer or handler operations which are suspended or revoked at the time of application are ineligible for funding. Suspension and revocation are defined by 7 C.F.R. §205.662(e).

3.2 PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS

Projects that aim to develop markets or support supply chains for multiple producers should document evidence of existing organic community or industry support and engagement. In the project narrative (***section 5.2.4***), applicants must describe how the requested funding will support expanding organic processing capacity and/or develop products to create market paths for domestic organic agricultural producers.

4.0 FUNDING CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 COST SHARING OR MATCHING

For Market Development and Promotion Projects and Processing Capacity Expansion Projects:

- **Match requirements.** Grant recipients are required to contribute 50% of the total federal proposed project cost as a match to Federal funding. This applies to all applicants except those who qualify for the reduced match described in the next bullet point.
- **Reduced Match for Small and Underserved Business Owners.** For grant recipients that are Historically Underserved Farmers or Ranchers or for other businesses that qualify under the Small Business Administration (SBA) categories of Small Disadvantaged Business, Women-Owned Small Business, and Veteran-Owned Small Business, the match requirement is reduced to 25% of the total federal proposed project cost as a match to the Federal funding. Applicants will be required to self-certify in their Project Narrative Template to being eligible for this reduced match.

Note: Entities other than farmers and ranchers may be certified as small, disadvantaged businesses, women-owned small businesses, or veteran-owned small businesses. To complete this certification, entities must register through SAM.gov using the Small Business Administration (SBA) categories. Information on the SBA Certification process can be found on the program pages for the Small Disadvantaged Business program, Women-Owned Small Business Federal Contract program, and the Veteran Contracting Assistance Program.

For Simplified Equipment -Only projects:

- **No match** is required for, and voluntary match will not be considered in selecting projects.

Match funding may be cash or in-kind. In-kind contributions are defined, when used as a cost share or match for a grant, as the value of goods or services provided for the benefit of the grant program, where no funds transferred hands. For example, a partner, such as a tribal community member, may volunteer their professional expertise as a match contribution to the project as described in 2 CFR § 200.306(e). These contributions cannot satisfy a cost sharing or matching requirement for this grant program if they are used toward satisfying a match requirement under any other Federal grant agreement to which the applicant is a party.

All matching contributions **must be committed or secured** at the time an applicant is recommend for an award.

Applicants must indicate the total amount of match and how it will specifically align with their requested funding when completing the fiscal plan and resources section of the Organic Market Development Program Project Narrative, ***section 5.2.4***. Additionally, applicants must submit signed letters or other documentation verifying the match for EACH cash and/or in-kind resource. Refer to ***section 5.2.6***, Matching Funds and Letters of Verification for more information. An award will not be issued unless all matching funds over the life of the grant are secured. Additional anticipated matching funds not in place by the time the project commences cannot be counted toward the matching requirement.

Indirect costs may count toward your match. Refer to ***section 4.2.1***, Indirect for more information.

Program income (as defined in 2 CFR § 200.1) or any other Federal funds is an ineligible source of match or cost share.

4.2 INDIRECT COSTS

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

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

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

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

4.2.1 USING INDIRECT COSTS FOR COST SHARING OR MATCHING

The maximum indirect costs allowed for a project may be included under the Federal portion of the budget or, alternatively, may be offered as an in-kind matching contribution if no indirect costs are

requested on the Federal portion of the budget. For example, if a proposed project's maximum allowable indirect costs are $8,000, the applicant may include $8,000 on the Federal portion of the budget or $8,000 as a matching in-kind contribution, but not both.

The applicant may split the indirect cost allocation between the Federal and non-Federal portions of the budget only if the total amount of indirect costs does not exceed the maximum indirect costs allowed. Alternatively, the recipient may request any other combination that, when combined, does not exceed the maximum indirect costs allowable. Refer to 2 CFR §§ 200.413 and 200.414 for additional information on determining if costs charged to the award are direct or indirect.

4.3 SUBAWARDS

Subawards or contracts with partners, collaborators, or other parties that provide additional knowledge, expertise, or resources for the purposes of the proposed project are permitted.

4.4 ALLOWABLE AND UNALLOWABLE COSTS AND ACTIVITIES

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

Applicants that have questions concerning the allowability of costs after reviewing this document should contact AMS staff using the contact information listed under ***section 8.0*** Agency Contacts.

In general, grant funds may not be used for the following:

- Pay costs that have been or will be reimbursed by a third party.
- Pay costs incurred prior to the date the grant is executed without prior authorization from AMS and subject to grant award terms and conditions.
- Pay costs that support or oppose union organizing.
- Pay costs associated with conducting research and development.

5.0 APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

5.1 ELECTRONIC APPLICATION PACKAGE

Only electronic applications may be submitted via Grants.gov in response to this RFA. We urge applicants to submit early to the Grants.gov system. For an overview of the Grants.gov application process see Grants.gov's Apply for Grants webpage. This RFA contains the information needed to obtain and complete required application forms and AMS-specific attachments. More information about applying through Grants.gov can be found in ***section 5.3***.

Applicants can find the opportunity under either the Assistance Listing number "**10.188**," or the OMDG Funding Opportunity Number "**USDA-AMS-TM-OMDG-G-23-0019**."

5.2 CONTENT AND FORM OF APPLICATION SUBMISSION

5.2.1 FORM SF-424 APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

Required. Form SF-424 is available via the opportunity at Grants.gov. Applicants must use the following supplemental instructions associated with specific blocks on form SF-424.

Box	Instruction
1 - Type of Submission	Select Application
2 - Type of Application	Select New
8.a Legal Name	Must match SAM.gov exactly
8.c - Organizational Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)	Enter applicant UEI for the Organization submitting the application.
8.d – Address	The applicant street address as it appears in SAM.gov. P.O. Boxes will not be accepted. Enter a 9-digit zip code.
10 - Name of Federal Agency	AMS, USDA
11 -Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number (Assistance Listing Number)	10.188
12 - Funding Opportunity Number	USDA-AMS-TM-OMD-G-23-0019
14 - Areas Affected by Project	Enter cities, counties, States affected by project.
15 - Descriptive Title of Applicant's Project	Provide a short descriptive title of the project (do not include applicant organization name).
16.a - Congressional Districts for Applicant	Enter the Congressional district where your main office is located.
16.b - Congressional Districts for Program/Project	Enter the Congressional district where your project will be performed. Write "All" if the projects will be performed in more than one location.
17 - Proposed Project Start Date and End Date	Start date: November 30, 2023 End date: No later than November 29, 2026
18 - Estimated Funding	Total Federal funds requested.
19 - Is Applicant Subject to Review by State Under Executive Order 12372 Process?	Not covered. See ***section 5.6***.

5.2.2 FORM SF-424A BUDGET SUMMARY

Required. SF-424A is available via the application package in Grants.gov. Most information blocks on the required form are either self-explanatory or adequately explained in the form instructions. However, the following supplemental instructions must be used for specific boxes on the form. **Do not use instructions found on Grants.gov or elsewhere on the internet for the boxes below.**

On SF-424A, please complete **only** Sections A, B and C. Do **not** complete Sections D - F.

Section A – Budget Summary

Box	Instructions
1.a – Grant Program Function or Activity	Enter "OMDG" – Federal
1.b – Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number	Enter "10.188"
1.e – Federal	Enter the amount of Federal funding requested for the project
1.f – Non-Federal	Enter the **total** match contribution amount provided for the project

Section B – Budget Categories

Box	Instructions
6.a – 6.j – Object Class Categories	In Column 1, enter the amount of Federal funds requested for each Object Class Category. Do **not** include match funding. For example, if you are requesting $2,000 in Federal funds for "Travel", enter 2000 in Column 1, box 6.c

Section C – Non-Federal Resources

Box	Instructions
8.a – Grant Program	Should auto-populate from Section A, Box 1.a
8.b – 8.d	Enter the match amount being provided from each source (Applicant, State, or Other) for the project

5.2.3 PROJECT ABSTRACT SUMMARY

Required. The Project Abstract Summary form will be used as the award description for the overarching Federal award. This is required and separate from the project summary in the OMDG Project Narrative or Simplified Equipment-Only Project Narrative. The Project Abstract box must include:

- Project purpose
- Activities to be performed
- Deliverables and expected outcomes
- Intended beneficiary(ies): Who will benefit from this beyond the applicant organization?
- Subrecipient, key partner, and collaborator activities. Identify the key partners, collaborators and subrecipients you know will be part of the work are and how their engagement will support the program goals.

5.2.4 PROJECT NARRATIVE – MARKET DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION OR PROCESSING CAPACITY EXPANSION PROJECT TYPES

Required. Applicants are required to prepare and submit a narrative using the OMDG Project Narrative form. The narrative should be explicitly responsive to the evaluation criteria (***section 6.1***) and the RFA guidance in general. The narrative must identify needs and/or problems specific to your community and

business and how your proposed work will address those needs. It should describe project objectives and goals, types and sequence of project activities, monitoring and evaluation strategies associated with the proposed activities.

Your project narrative should be detailed and specific to your community. You must include a realistic implementation timeline and milestones. Consider key factors which will impact activities, capability to manage the proposed project, and commitment to continue enhanced or expanded processing activities after the grant period. Make sure that your project narrative also describes community impact and support, and you document this through the inclusion of at least one letter of support from State, local, or Tribal leadership.

The narrative also includes a budget narrative and justification section. A general line-item for "grants" may be provided under contracts in the application's budget. The individual subaward budgets are not expected at the submission of this application. However, the applicant will be expected to provide a comprehensive plan detailing each subgrant project, associated outcomes, and applicable expenses in order to draw down on the funds associated with this line item.

The Project Narrative must be typed and single-spaced in an 11-point font and must not exceed fifteen (15) 8.5 x 11 pages (excluding pre-existing form content). For example, if the form is 15 pages before you begin entering your project narrative information, your form may be up to 30 pages in length when completed (15 original pages + 15 pages of applicant content). DO NOT modify the margins of the Project Narrative form. Applicants must submit the OMDG Project Narrative form as a PDF and attached to the Grants.gov application package using the "Project Narrative Attachment Form" on the application package. Handwritten applications or applications submitted in MS Word will not be accepted.

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

Applicants must submit the Project Narrative form as a PDF and attached to the Grants.gov application package using the "Project Narrative Attachment Form" on the application package.

The supporting documents in subsequent sections do not count toward the 15-page limit for the Project Narrative.

5.2.5 PROJECT NARRATIVE–SIMPLIFIED EQUIPMENT-ONLY PROJECT TYPE

Required. Applicants applying for the simplified equipment -only project type must use the Simplified Equipment-Only Project Narrative form to create the application narrative statement. This simplified project narrative will require a clear needs statement, identification of the equipment being purchased, a description of the planned increase in capacity or product types of the equipment will provide, and an overview of the benefits to organic producers in the region that will be impacted by the project activities. There is no matching fund requirement for equipment-only applications.

Applicants must provide documentation to substantiate the costs of each piece of proposed equipment, which can include contracts, catalog pricing or binding quotes provided by license commercial entities.

The documentation must be attached to the Grants.gov application package using the "Add Attachments" button under SF-424 item #15.

The Project Narrative must be typed and single-spaced in an 11-point font and must not exceed fifteen (15) 8.5 x 11 pages (excluding pre-existing form content).

5.2.6 MATCHING FUNDS AND LETTERS OF VERIFICATION – MARKET DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION OR PROCESSING EXPANSION PROJECTS ONLY

Required for Market Development and Promotion or Processing Expansion Projects ONLY. Each application must include or be accompanied by written verification of match commitments from any party, including the applicant, who will contribute cash or in-kind matching from non-Federal resources to the project.

Submit one match verification letter for EACH cash or in-kind resource signed by the matching organization.

AMS highly encourages you to use the Suggested Match Verification Template Letter on the grant program's website. If you do not use this template or if you are an applicant submitting a match, your match verification document must minimally include the following:

- Project Applicant
- Project Title
- Cash Commitment per year (if applicable) and Total Cash Match
- In-kind Contribution per year (if applicable) and Total In-kind Match. Break down items into categories as applicable:
- Salaries (employee name, title, duties, pay rate/hr., amount matched per year)
- Items/Activities (fair market value per unit, how value determined, and amount matched per year)
- Explanation of how each type of match will correspond to the budget or be used by the Applicant
- Signature of Matching Organization Representative with typed name and title

Submit Matching Funds and Letters of Verification on letterhead and address them to the applicant (i.e., Project Director). Clearly indicate at the top of the documents that they are **MATCH VERIFICATION LETTERS**. Letters must accompany the proposal at the time of application. Unsigned letters will not be accepted.

Letter(s) must be attached to the Grants.gov application package using the "Add Attachments" button under Form SF-424 item #15.

5.2.7 LETTERS OF SUPPORT FROM PRODUCERS

Applicants in both project types are encouraged to provide letters of support from producers at the time of application, in order to demonstrate engagement with and benefit to local and/or underserved producers and their support for the proposed project.

AMS has posted a Letter of Support Template on the grant program's application website. We highly encourage you to use this template. If you do not use this template, the Letters of Support must include at least the following information:

- Project Applicant
- Project Title
- A short introduction describing the partner entity's mission and its reason(s) for support
- The specific role(s) the entity is committing to for the project, including the participation of specific individuals, as applicable
- A statement that these individuals and the entity agree to abide by the management plan contained in the application

Submit *Letters of Support* on letterhead and address them to the applicant (i.e., Project Director). Clearly indicate at the top that they are **LETTERS OF SUPPORT**. Letters must accompany the proposal at the time of application. Unsigned letters or letters emailed separately will not be accepted.

Letter(s), if used, must be attached to the Grants.gov application package using the "Add Attachments" button under SF-424 item #15.

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

5.2.8 NEGOTIATED INDIRECT COST RATE AGREEMENT (NICRA)

Required if the applicant has a NICRA. Refer to ***section 4.2*** for more information. The NICRA must be in PDF format **and** attached to the Grants.gov application package using the "Add Attachments" button under SF-424 item #15.

5.3 GRANTS.GOV APPLICATION SUBMISSION AND RECEIPT PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS

5.3.1 HOW TO REGISTER TO APPLY THROUGH GRANTS.GOV

The applicant **organization registration** process can take **up to four weeks** to complete. You must complete your organization registration to allow enough to meet the required application submission deadlines.

If individual applicants are eligible to apply for this grant funding opportunity, refer to: https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration.html.

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

1. *Obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) Number:* All entities applying for funding, including renewal funding, must have a Unique Entity Identifier from SAM.gov. Applicants must enter the UEI number in the data entry field labeled "Organizational UEI" on the SF-424 form. Getting a UEI number requires validation steps in SAM.gov. Applicants are encouraged to start this process as early as possible.
2. *Register with the System for Award Management (SAM):* In addition to having a UEI number, organizations applying online through Grants.gov must register with SAM. Current SAM.gov registrants have already been assigned their Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and can view it within

SAM.gov. All organizations must register with SAM to apply online. Failure to register with SAM will prevent your organization from applying through Grants.gov. **SAM.gov accounts must be updated annually, and your organization must have an active SAM.gov account to submit your application to Grants.gov.**

3. *Create a Grants.gov Account:* The next step in the registration process is to create an account with Grants.gov. Applicants must know their organization's UEI number to complete this process. Completing this process automatically triggers an email request for applicant roles to the organization's E-Business Point of Contact (EBiz POC) for review. The EBiz POC is a representative from your organization who is the contact listed for SAM. To apply for grants on behalf of your organization, you will need the Authorized Organization Role (AOR).
4. *Authorize Grants.gov Roles:* After creating an account on Grants.gov, the EBiz POC receives an email notifying him or her of your registration and request for roles. The EBiz POC will then log in to Grants.gov and authorize the appropriate roles, including the AOR role, thereby giving you permission to complete and submit applications on behalf of the organization. You will be able to submit your application online any time after you have been approved as an AOR.
5. *Track Role Status:* After registering with Grants.gov and authorizing the applicant AOR, Grants.gov allows you to track your status.
6. *Electronic Signature:* When applications are submitted through Grants.gov, the name of the organization's AOR who submitted the application is inserted into the signature line of the application, serving as the electronic signature. The EBiz POC must authorize individuals who are able to make legally binding commitments on behalf of the organization to act as an AOR; **this step is often missed, and it is crucial for valid and timely submissions.**

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

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

1. *Create a Workspace*: This allows you to complete your Workspace online and route it through your organization for review before submitting.
2. *Complete a Workspace*: Add participants to the workspace, complete all the required forms, and check for errors before submission.

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

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

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

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

   SPECIAL NOTE: Grants.gov **does not** check for AMS required attachments. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all required attachments listed in ***section 5.2*** are included.

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

Applicant Support: Grants.gov provides additional training resources, including video tutorials. Applicants may also call the 24/7 toll-free support number 1-800-518-4726, or email support@grants.gov. Grants.gov will issue a ticket number that you and Grants.gov can refer to if the issue is not resolved. For questions related to the specific grant opportunity, contact the person(s) mentioned in ***section 8.0***.

5.4 APPLICATION SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

AMS will not consider any applications received after the deadline, any applications submitted by fax, email, or postal mail and any applications not responsive to the requirements of this RFA (eligibility, incomplete application, missing required attachments documents, etc.). See AMS' Late Applications, Denials and/or Appeal Procedures Policy.

Ensure that all components 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. AMS encourages you to submit your application at least two weeks before the application deadline to ensure all certifications and registrations are met.

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.

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 their application to Grants.gov, especially if there are large attachments contained in the upload. Again,

Grants.gov will provide either an error message or a successfully received transmission notification via email to the applicant AOR.

5.5 SUBMISSION DATE AND TIME

Applicants must submit applications electronically via Grants.gov by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on July 11, 2023. AMS cannot consider applications received after this deadline for funding. See AMS' Late Applications, Denials and/or Appeal Procedures Policy.

5.6 INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW

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

6.0 APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

6.1 PROJECT EVALUATION CRITERIA

Each application that meets the initial qualifications screening requirements will be reviewed and scored competitively using the following criteria:

Alignment and Intent ……25 Points

1) The application identifies the market segment (s) (either aligning with a pinpointed market segment or justifying a proposal to serve other markets segments), problem, or regional need addressed by the project, and how the objectives for the project will address these needs.

3) The application describes how it will foster, coordinate, and expand organic agricultural market development through concrete plans to enhance specific supply chains. The application further describes how it will create clear market channels and incentives for organic production, strengthen connections between growers and handlers providing new paths to market, and/or improve handling, processing or distribution capacity in a way that increases consumption of domestic organic products.

4) The application identifies and demonstrates engagement with the intended benefits of the project for organic producers and specifies how partners will be involved in achieving them. Where possible, the application specifies the number of beneficiaries the project will serve and whether any beneficiaries come from small farms and/or underserved communities.

5) The application demonstrates how the current project is linked to a larger intervention that opens new markets or facilitates the movement of commodities, to increase consumption of domestic organic agricultural products.

6) The application complies with all written instructions and requirements described within the RFA and Project Narrative Template.

Market Impact & Opportunities …… 15 Points

1) The application describes the unique investment needs in the region and industry sector it proposes to serve.

2) The application describes proposed value chain and supply chain coordination activities targeted to these specific needs.

3) The narrative discusses the current or anticipated numbers of the producers involved in the project or those who would be served by the market demand created by the project.

4) The application describes how the investments will foster markets that will be sustained beyond the agreement's period of performance (without federal funds) and/or how the project will lay the foundation for future organic market growth in the region after the project ends.

5) The proposed activities target investments to historically underserved or persistent poverty areas.

Achievability ..... 15 Points

1) The outcomes and indicator(s) are appropriate for the scale and scope of the project, including:

a. How indicator numbers were derived with a clear means to collect feedback to evaluate and achieve each relevant outcome indicator; and

b. The anticipated key factors that are predicted to contribute to or restrict progress toward the applicable indicators, including action steps for addressing identified restricting factors.

2) The application presents a realistic schedule for implementing the proposed project during the award project period.

Expertise and Partners ..... 20 Points

1) The proposed project represents substantial, effective, diverse, and strong qualifications of the applicant (individual and team) and the relevant partnerships and collaborators to accomplish the project's goals and objectives and to meet the needs of the intended beneficiaries including:

a. The key staff who will be responsible for managing the projects and names and titles of the individuals who comprise the Project Team;

b. The expertise and experience of the Project Team necessary to successfully manage and implement the proposed project; and

c. The extent to which the application describes how the project, and its partnerships and collaborations, will be sustained beyond the project's period of performance.

2) The application describes a commitment to collaboration and engagement among partners, particularly historically underserved producers, or regions, to ensure high levels of participation or provides a clear and concise plan for how such engagement will occur.

a. Commitment from the key partners and/or collaborators demonstrated through the Project Narrative and letters of commitment; and

b. The degree to which applicants collaborate with historically underserved producers as part of their projects.

Fiscal Plan and Resources…… 25 Points

1) The application budget narrative or justification provides a clear description for each budget line item including:

a. How the budget is consistent with the size and scope of the project; and

b. How the budget relates logically to the narrative describing the project.

2) The application provides evidence that critical resources and infrastructure that are necessary for the initiation and completion of the proposed project are currently in place.

6.2 REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

Step 1: Initial Qualification Screening

Each application is initially reviewed for overall completeness, as well as compliance with eligibility and program requirements set forth in this RFA. If an application does not meet these requirements, it is removed from consideration. Please see AMS's Late and/or Nonresponsive Applications Policy for more information.

Step 2: Technical Review

Each application that passes initial screening (Step 1) is evaluated by a panel of independent peer reviewers. AMS makes every attempt to match reviewers with applications in their areas of expertise. Each reviewer signs a conflict of interest and confidentiality agreement regarding any assigned applications. The peer review panels evaluate their assigned applications using instructions prepared by AMS officials. Individual reviewers score applications and then confer with other panel members. The scoring and discussion serve as a basis for awarding and allocating grant funds and focuses on strengths and weaknesses of each proposal.

Step 3: Administrative Review

AMS will conduct a final administrative evaluation of each review panel's top recommendations. In addition to the rank and scores, AMS reviews each application to ensure that potential recommended projects align with the scope of the RFA, allowability of budget items, available funding, geographic diversity, and USDA priorities. USDA will also consider other factors in selecting projects for funding as outlined in Section 1.4.6 and 1.4.6 Funding Priorities. AMS staff will work with top-ranked applicants to negotiate any revisions, as necessary. AMS will also assess an organization's ability to account for the use of Federal funds and monitor the performance associated with these monies using the guidance provided by 2 CFR § 200.206.

7.0 AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

7.1 AWARD NOTICES

Upon announcement of the Federal awards, AMS will prepare and send a Notice of Award (NOA) to each recipient for signature by the appropriate official. The NOA will be signed by AMS and the AOR.

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

7.2 UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS

Unsuccessful applicants will be contacted by AMS via email as soon as possible after the awards are announced to inform them of the results. AMS will email unsuccessful applicants the review panel consensus comments regarding their proposals.

7.3 ADMINISTRATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS

As part of the NOA, all AMS recipients must abide by the AMS General Terms and Conditions, which reference applicable *Administrative and National Policy Requirements*.

7.4 REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

As part of the NOA, all AMS recipients must abide by the AMS General Terms and Conditions, which reference applicable *Administrative and National Policy Requirements*.

7.5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF USDA SUPPORT

Proper acknowledgement of your USDA-AMS funding in published solicitations (e.g., for state competitions), presentations, press releases, and other communications is critical for the success of our agency's programs. Grantees must meet the acknowledgement requirements outlined in the applicable AMS General Terms and Conditions.

8.0 AGENCY CONTACTS

8.1 PROGRAMMATIC QUESTIONS

After closely reviewing this RFA in its entirety, applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact the Organic Market Development Program staff by e-mail with questions about the grant program at OMDG@usda.gov.

For additional information, please visit the AMS grants Website: www.ams.usda.gov/grants.

8.2 ADDRESS

Organic Market Development Grants
USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service, Transportation and Marketing Program
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 1510-S South Building
Stop 0264
Washington, DC 20250-0264

8.3 AVAILABLE RESOURCES

AMS provides resources and information on its website at www.ams.usda.gov/grants that may be helpful to applicants, including descriptions of funded projects, and required application forms.

8.4 GRANTS.GOV QUESTIONS

All questions regarding Grants.gov technical assistance must be directed to Grants.gov's Applicant Support.

9.0 OTHER INFORMATION

9.1 DEFINITIONS

Facility: A organic facility, built, equipped, etc., for Primary and/or Further Processing of organic products using sustainable practices.

Handler: Middle person that handles organic products in accordance with National Organic Standards. Handers perform numerous functions, including packing and shipping, manufacturing, and processing, and brokering, wholesaling, or distributing.

Historically Underserved Farmer or Rancher: Four groups are defined by USDA as "Historically Underserved," including farmers or ranchers who are: Beginning; Socially Disadvantaged; Veterans; and Limited Resource as described at Historically Underserved Farmers and Ranchers | Natural Resources Conservation Service (usda.gov).

Organic Infrastructure

Historically Underserved Farmer or Rancher: Four groups are defined by USDA as "Historically Underserved," including farmers or ranchers who are: Beginning; Socially Disadvantaged; Veterans; and Limited Resource as described at Historically Underserved Farmers and Ranchers | Natural Resources Conservation Service (usda.gov).

Mid-tier Value Chain: means a local or regional supply network that links independent producers with businesses and cooperatives that market value-added agricultural product in a manner that: • Targets and strengthens the profitability and competitiveness of small and medium-size farms and ranches that are structured as a family farm; and • Obtains agreement from an eligible agricultural producer group, farmer or rancher cooperative, or majority-controlled producer-based business venture that is engaged in the value chain on a marketing strategy.

Nonprofit Corporation: Any organization or institution, including nonprofits with State or IRS 501 (c) status and accredited institutions of higher education, where no part of the organization or institution's net earnings inure to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual.

Processor: For the purposes of this program, a processor is a business engaged in organic production, primary processing, or further processing of organic products for human consumption

Producer: An owner-operator or tenant that organic products and is entitled to a share of the farm income.

Small Disadvantaged Business: A business that is small according to SBA's size standards for its business type and that is 51% or more owned and controlled by one or more disadvantaged persons. The disadvantaged person or persons must be socially disadvantaged and economically disadvantaged. For the purposes of this designation, disadvantaged persons is defined per eCFR : 13 CFR 124.103 -- Who is socially disadvantaged? as "Those who have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice or cultural bias within American society because of their identities as members of groups and without regard to their individual qualities. The social disadvantage must stem from circumstances beyond their control." See Small Disadvantaged Business (sba.gov) for more information.

Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP): is a network of organizations partnering to support transitioning and existing organic farmers through mentorship, technical assistance training, and education. See Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP) for more information.

Tribal Entities: Tribal Entities is expansive and includes all entities falling under the eligible legal structures, including but not limited to: Tribal 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.

Tribe: means the term as defined in the Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act of 1994 (Public Law 103-454; 108 Stat. 4791, 4792).

Value-Added Agricultural Product: means any agricultural commodity or product that:

Has undergone a change in the physical state or form of the product, such as milling wheat into flour or making strawberries into jam.

- Is produced in a manner that enhances the value of the agricultural commodity or product.
- Is physically segregated in a manner that results in the enhancement of the value of that commodity or product, such as an identity preserved product.
- Is a source of farm- or ranch-based renewable energy, including E–85 fuel; or
- Is aggregated and marketed as a locally produced agricultural food product and, as a result of the change in physical state or the manner in which the agricultural commodity or product is produced and segregated, the customer base for the commodity or product is expanded and a greater portion of revenue derived from the marketing, processing, or physical segregation is made available to the producer of the commodity or product.

Veteran Farmer or Rancher: is a producer who served in the United States Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, or Coast Guard, including the reserve component thereof, was released from service under conditions other than dishonorable, and has not operated a farm or ranch or has operated a farm or ranch for no more than 10 years or who first obtained status as a veteran during the most recent 10-year period.

Veteran-Owned Small Business: A small business, as defined by the SBA size standard for its business type that has no less than 51% of the business owned and controlled by one or more veterans. For those veterans who are permanently and totally disabled and unable to manage the daily business operations of their business, their business may still qualify if their spouse or appointed, permanent caregiver is

assisting in that management. See Veteran contracting assistance programs (sba.gov) for more information.

Women-Owned Small Business: A small business according to SBA size standards for its business type that is at least 51% owned and controlled by women who are U.S. citizens; and have women manage day-to-day operations who also make long-term decisions. See Women-Owned Small Business Federal Contract program (sba.gov) for more information.

9.2 NON-DISCRIMINATION AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

In accordance with Federal civil rights laws and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Mission Areas, agencies, staff offices, employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, 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.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language) should contact the responsible Mission Area, agency, or staff office; the USDA TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY); or the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, *USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form,* which can be obtained online at https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/usda-program-discrimination-complaint-form.pdf, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation.

The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

Mail:
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410
Fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442
Email: program.intake@usda.gov

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9.3 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUESTS

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

FOIA requests for records relating to this Federal award may be directed to USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service, FOIA/PA Officer, Room 2055-S, Stop 0201, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-0201, Telephone: (202) 302-0650; or email: AMS.FOIA@usda.gov.

9.4 PAPERWORK REDUCTION

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. 3501), an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0503-0028.The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 4 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering, and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information.