

Agriculture Innovation Center Demonstration Program

Fiscal Year 2026 Notice of Funding Opportunity

Funding Opportunity Number: RBCS-2026-AIC

Publication Date: September 9, 2026

Application Due Date: January 31, 2027

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Rural Business Cooperative Service

BASIC INFORMATION

Funding Opportunity Title: Agriculture Innovation Center Demonstration Program

Funding Opportunity Number: RBCS-2026-AIC

Announcement Type: Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO or Notice)

Assistance Listing Number: 10.377

Dates: Completed electronic applications must be submitted via e-mail to the official AIC e-mail address at SM.RBCS.AIC@usda.gov by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time (ET) on January 31, 2027. This program will start accepting applications on September 9, 2026. Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted.

Executive Summary:

The Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBCS, Agency), a Rural Development (RD) agency of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), announces acceptance of applications under the Agriculture Innovation Center Demonstration (AIC) program for fiscal year (FY) 2026. These grant funds will be made to qualified type of applicants to operate Centers that will provide technical assistance to Agricultural Producers who want to develop and/or market Value-Added Agricultural Products. This program has approximately \$2.5 million available for FY 2026. All applicants are responsible for any expenses incurred in developing their applications.

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1.0 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

1.1 RBCS KEY PRIORITIES

The Agency encourages applicants to consider projects that will advance the following RBCS priorities:

- (a) Domestic manufacturing and industrial capacity;
- (b) Domestic energy production and energy security;
- (c) New and expanded markets for American farmers and rural producers; and
- (d) Program integrity, including the prevention and reduction of fraud, waste, and abuse.

1.2 PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM

Through the AIC program, the Agency makes grants to Centers that provide Producer Services to Agricultural Producers seeking to develop and market Value-Added Agricultural Products.

1.3 STATUTORY AND REGULATORY AUTHORITY

The AIC program is authorized under [7 U.S.C. 1632b](#) and implemented by [7 CFR Part 4284 Subpart K](#).

1.4 DEFINITIONS

The definitions applicable to this notice are published at [7 CFR § 4284.1003](#).

1.5 APPLICATION OF AWARDS

The Agency will review, evaluate and score applications received in response to this notice based on the provisions found in [7 CFR Part 4284 Subpart K](#) and as indicated in this notice. Awards under the AIC program will be made on a competitive basis using specific selection criteria contained in [7 CFR § 4284.1040](#).

2.0 FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Type of Award: Grants

Fiscal Year Funds: FY 2026

Available Funds: \$2.5 Million in appropriations. RBCS may at its discretion, increase the total level of funding available under this Notice from any available source provided the awards meet the requirements of the statute which made the funding available to the Agency.

Minimum Award Amounts: \$600,000

Maximum Award Amount: \$1,000,000

Anticipated Award Date: March 31, 2027

Performance Period: 3 years

Renewal or Supplemental Awards: Not applicable

Type of Assistance Instrument: Grant

Approximate Number of Awards: 3

3.0 ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

3.1 ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants must meet the eligibility requirements of [7 CFR § 4284.1020](#).

The applicant and its principals must not be debarred, suspended, or otherwise excluded from participation in USDA programs, in accordance with 2 CFR parts [180](#) and [417](#). The applicant must not be delinquent on any federal debt, nor have any outstanding judgment obtained by the U.S. in a Federal court. Upon receipt of an application, prior to award, and prior to disbursement of federal funds, the Agency will screen the applicant and its principals through the Do Not Pay System, as required by [31 U.S.C. § 3354](#), to verify eligibility with respect to debarment, suspension, and any unresolved federal debts. Applicants are responsible for resolving any issues identified in the Do Not Pay System; if such issues are not resolved by the deadlines specified in this notice, the Agency may proceed to award funds to other eligible applicants. Applicants are responsible for compliance with all applicable regulations, including 2 CFR Parts [180](#) and [417](#).

3.2 COST SHARING OR MATCHING

Matching Funds are required for at least one-third of the Project Cost. See [7 CFR § 4284.1022\(a\)\(3\)](#) for additional information.

3.3 OTHER

See [7 CFR § 4284.1021](#) for ultimate beneficiary eligibility requirements; [7 CFR § 4284.1022](#) for project eligibility requirements; and [7 CFR § 4284.1025](#) for use of funds requirements.

4.0 APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

4.1 ADDRESS TO REQUEST APPLICATION PACKAGE

Application forms SF-424 and RD 4284-1 are available at www.grants.gov and <https://forms.sc.egov.usda.gov/eForms/searchAction.do?pageAction=BrowseForms& MenuAction=Yes>. See [7 CFR § 4284.1031](#) for more information.

4.2 CONTENT AND FORM OF APPLICATION SUBMISSION

See [7 CFR § 4284.1033](#).

4.3 UNIQUE ENTITY IDENTIFIER AND SYSTEM FOR AWARD MANAGEMENT

(a) At the time of application, each applicant must have an active registration in the System for Award Management (SAM) before submitting its 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) Each applicant must maintain an active SAM registration, with current, accurate and complete information, at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application under consideration by a Federal awarding agency.

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

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

(e) The Agency will not make an award until the applicant 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 the 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 DATES AND TIMES

Applications are due by January 31, 2027 at 11:59 pm Eastern time. The Agency will not solicit or consider new scoring or eligibility information that is submitted after the application deadline. See [7 CFR § 4284.1033](#) for additional information.

4.5 INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW

Not applicable.

4.6 FUNDING RESTRICTIONS

Applications must be for eligible purposes as defined above and must comply with the grant fund limitations found within [7 CFR § 4284.1025](#).

4.7 OTHER SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

See [7 CFR § 4284.1033](#) for submission requirements.

5.0 APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

5.1 CRITERIA

See [7 CFR § 4284.1040](#) for the criteria used to evaluation applications. 7 CFR § 4284.1040(d) will be used to evaluate key RBCS Priorities. The two selected RBCS Key Priorities are the following:

(a) Domestic manufacturing and industrial capacity; and

(b) New and expanded markets for American farmers and rural producers.

5.2 REVIEW SELECTION PROCESSES

See [7 CFR §§ 4284.1040](#) and [4284.1050](#) for the review and selection process.

6.0 FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

6.1 FEDERAL AWARD NOTICES

See 7 CFR §§ [4284.1051](#), [4284.1052](#), and [4284.1053](#) for the award notice process.

6.2 ADMINISTRATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS

(a) *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.

(b) *Build America, Buy America (BABAA)*. Awardees that are Non-Federal Entities, defined pursuant to [2 CFR 200.1](#) as any State, local government, Indian tribe, Institution of Higher Education, or nonprofit organization, shall be governed by the requirements of Section 70914 of the Build America, Buy America Act (BABAA) within the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Public Law 117-58), and its implementing regulations at [2 CFR part 184](#). Any requests for waiver of these requirements must be submitted pursuant to USDA's guidance available online at usda.gov/ocfo/federal-financial-assistance-policy/USDABuyAmericaWaiver.

(c) *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 Departmental Regulation DR 3465-001 and the Geospatial Metadata Standards set forth in Departmental Manual DM 3465-001, which can be obtained online at usda.gov/directives/dr-3465-001 and usda.gov/directives/dm-3465-001.

6.3 REPORTING

(a) See [7 CFR § 4284.1060](#) for information on reporting requirements.

(b) *Annual Audit Requirements*: Recipients subject to the audit requirements of 2 CFR 200.501, shall provide a full and complete reporting package in accordance with [2 CFR 200.512\(c\)](#), submitted to the Federal Audit Clearinghouse *the earlier of* 30 calendar days after the auditee receives the auditor's report(s) or nine months after the end of the audit period. Recipients not subject to the audit requirements of [2 CFR 200.501](#), shall provide an independent audit report in accordance with Agency guidelines and the award agreement.

7.0 FEDERAL AWARD AGENCY CONTACTS

For general questions about this notice and for program technical assistance, please contact Shamika Johnson, Administrative Management Specialist, Intermediary Programs, RBCS, RD, USDA, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-1560; Telephone: 202-720-1495; Email: SM.RBCS.AIC@usda.gov.

8.0 OTHER INFORMATION

8.1 PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT

In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 ([44 U.S.C. chapter 35](#)), the information collection requirements associated with the programs, as covered in this notice, have been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under OMB Control Number 0570-0045.

8.2 NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT

All recipients under this notice are subject to the requirements of [7 CFR part 1b](#). Applicants may be required to submit additional information for review in order to comply with [7 CFR part 1b](#).

8.3 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](#).

8.4 EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

(a) 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.

(b) 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 accommodations may also be sought under many of these religious freedom and conscience protection laws.

(c) 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 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.

8.5 NONDISCRIMINATION 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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