

Meat and Poultry Inspection Readiness Grant

Fiscal Year 2021 Request for Applications

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-AMS-TM-MPIRG-G-21-0001

Publication Date: June 21, 2021

Application Due Date: 11:59 PM Eastern Time on August 2, 2021

PROGRAM SOLICITATION INFORMATION

Funding Opportunity Title: Meat and Poultry Inspection Readiness Grant (MPIRG)

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-AMS-TM-MPIRG-G-21-0001

Announcement Type: Initial

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 10.180

Dates: Applications must be received on or before 11:59 pm Eastern Time August 2, 2021, through www.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 for the fiscal year (FY) 2021 Meat and Poultry Inspection Readiness Grant (MPIRG). The MPIRG assists meat and poultry slaughter and processing facilities with costs to make improvements and plan other activities necessary to obtain a Federal Grant of Inspection under the Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA) (21 U.S.C. 601 et seq.) or the Poultry Products Inspection Act (PPIA) (21 U.S.C. 451 et seq.); or to operate as a State-inspected facility that is compliant with the FMIA or PPIA under the respective Cooperative Interstate Shipment (CIS) program. Facilities operating under State inspection or facilities currently only conducting operations exempt from Federal inspection are eligible.

Approximately $55.2 million will be available to fund MPIRG projects under this solicitation. Enactment of additional appropriations and/or sequestration may affect the availability or level of funding for this program.

The maximum award amount is $200,000. The program statute waived the dollar-for-dollar match requirement for FY 2021.

This announcement provides information about the eligibility criteria for applicants and projects, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for an award.

AMS encourages applications that benefit smaller farms and ranches, new and beginning farmers and ranchers, socially disadvantaged producers, veteran producers, and/or underserved communities. For projects intending to support these entities, applicants should engage and involve those beneficiaries when developing projects and applications.

Stakeholder Input: AMS seeks your comments about this Request for Applications (RFA). We will consider the comments when we develop the next RFA for the program. Submit written stakeholder comments by the deadline set forth in the DATES portion of this Notice via e-mail to: AMSGrants@ams.usda.gov. (This e-mail address is intended only for receiving comments regarding this RFA and not requesting information or forms.) In your comments, please state that you are commenting on the **Meat and Poultry Inspection Readiness Grant RFA**.

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APPLICATION CHECKLIST

The application must include the following:

☐ Form (SF) 424 – Application for Federal Assistance (in Grants.gov)
☐ Project Narrative (PDF Attachment)

- ☐ Must use required template
- ☐ Provide Executive Summary detailing project goals and objectives in 250 words or less
- ☐ Do not exceed the page limit specified in Section ***4.2.2***
- ☐ Ensure the proposal excludes unallowable costs and activities per Section ***4.6.3***

When applicable, application packages are required to include the following documents:

☐ Form (SF) 424C, Budget Information – Construction Programs (Complete ONLY if project includes construction)
☐ Form (SF) 424D – Assurances – Construction Programs (Complete ONLY if project includes construction)
☐ Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (PDF Attachment)

AMS is responsible for ensuring that funded activities comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). AMS will determine whether NEPA applies and determine the appropriate level of environmental review. AMS may request additional information from applicants for purposes of completing an environmental review.

1.0 FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

1.1 LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The Meat and Poultry Inspection Readiness Grant (MPIRG) is authorized by section 764 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (Public Law 116-260), (21 U.S.C. § 473) in response to the ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The MPIRG is administered by the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) and the Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS). AMS implements all grants management aspects of the program, while FSIS evaluates how and to what extent the award conditions and goal(s) are met.

1.2 PURPOSE

The MPIRG supports a range of eligible meat and poultry slaughter and processing facilities, including facilities operating under State inspection or those exempt from Federal inspection, in making facility improvements and carrying out other planning activities necessary to obtain a Federal Grant of Inspection or to operate as a State-inspected facility that is compliant with the cooperative interstate shipment program under the Federal Meat Inspection Act or Poultry Products Inspection Act. Such entities may include, but are not limited to, commercial businesses, cooperatives, tribal enterprises, etc. The program focuses on:

- Improving meat and poultry slaughter and processing capacity and efficiency;
- Developing new markets and expanding existing markets;
- Increasing capacity and better meeting consumer and producer demand;
- Maintaining strong inspection and food safety standards;
- Obtaining a larger commercial presence;
- Increasing access to slaughter/processing facilities for smaller farms and ranches, new and beginning farmers and ranchers, socially disadvantaged producers, veteran producers, and underserved communities.

1.3 AWARD CONDITIONS

As a condition of receiving an award, recipients have 36 months to:

A. Obtain a Federal Grant of Inspection under the Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA) or the Poultry Products Inspection Act (PPIA), as applicable; or;
B. Comply with the Cooperative Interstate Shipment (CIS) program under FMIA (501 of that Act (21 U.S.C. 683) or PPIA (31 of that Act (21 U.S.C. 472) ; or
C. Make a good faith effort towards the activities provided above.

FSIS and the applicable state will determine if recipients meet these criteria by the end of the period of performance. If a recipient fails to meet these criteria, the recipient MUST return the full award amount to the Federal government as described in *Section 14.2 Unused and Returned Funds* of the AMS General Terms and Conditions.

Applicants must affirm by indicating in the project narrative that they understand the regulatory requirements for receiving a Federal Grant of Inspection or operating under the CIS program.

1.3.1 GOOD FAITH EFFORT

FSIS, in consultation with AMS, will evaluate the efficacy of a "good faith effort" determined as instances in which the recipient follows the steps and guidelines provided by FSIS for obtaining a Federal Grant of Inspection or by the applicable state for becoming an approved establishment under the CIS program. AMS will coordinate with FSIS to monitor recipient progress, particularly through regular performance reporting mechanisms, as recipients seek to meet applicable requirements. As part of the process, AMS and FSIS and/or an assigned designee(s) will work with recipients to provide clarification or other assistance as needed. Good faith efforts will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and measured against the following:

- The recipient provided all required information without misrepresentation, concealment, or intention to evade any program requirements.
- Documentation demonstrates substantial efforts taken by the recipient to comply with the purpose of the program.
- The recipient rendered performance, shown through progress reports, towards compliance with the program requirements.
- Circumstances outside the control of the recipient resulted in the failure to obtain a Federal Grant of Inspection and/or become a CIS establishment.

1.4 PROJECT TYPES

Applicants must align their proposal to one of two project types, **Planning for a Federal Grant of Inspection (PFGI)** and **Cooperative Interstate Shipment Program (CIS Program) Compliance**. Refer to section ***3.1*** Eligible Applicants for more information.

1.4.1 PLANNING FOR A FEDERAL GRANT OF INSPECTION (PFGI) PROJECT

Applicants who apply for a PFGI Project must work toward obtaining Federal inspection or make a good faith effort toward doing so. To obtain a Federal Grant of Inspection, applicants must meet the regulatory requirements. General activities to meet these requirements are summarized below, and applicants should fully review the Federal Grant of Inspection Guide as well as requirements to Apply for a Grant of Inspection.

These activities include, but are not limited to:

1. Developing written Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures (Sanitation SOPs), as required by the 9 CFR § 416.12 regulations;
2. Conducting or having conducted a hazard analysis and a Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) plan as required by 9 CFR §§ 417.2 and 417.4 regulations;
3. Ensuring that the facility for which a Federal Grant of Inspection is sought is separate and distinct from nonofficial establishments (e.g., facilities where exempt operations (FMIA and

PPIA) are conducted, or where food subject solely to Food and Drug Administration (FDA) jurisdiction is manufactured);

4. Providing office space, rent free, for the exclusive use of inspectors and other FSIS program employees, per 9 CFR parts 307 and 381 requirements if requested inspection services will require one or more full-time inspectors;
5. Submitting a schedule of hours of operation to FSIS;
6. Submitting product labels for review and approval, to the Labeling Submission and Approval System, except for labels eligible for generic approval; and
7. Meeting other applicable requirements for receiving inspection (see FSIS guidance).

Additionally, applicants for PFGI projects must accomplish the following activities. It is important to note that these activities may take substantial time to complete, so applicants should plan accordingly:

1. Submit all written programs, including supporting documentation, to FSIS Office of Field Operations (OFO) to determine if the written programs meet regulatory requirements;
2. Request a physical walk-through of the facility by FSIS Office of Field Operations (OFO), who will determine if the facility meets regulatory requirements.

1.4.2 COOPERATIVE INTERSTATE SHIPMENT (CIS) COMPLIANCE PROJECT

Applicants who apply for a CIS Compliance Project must work toward CIS Program compliance requirements to operate a State-inspected facility or make a good faith effort toward doing so. These activities are summarized below, and applicants should fully review CIS Program requirements.

Applicants must:

1. Be located in a state that has established and continues to maintain an "at least equal to" State meat and/or poultry inspection program (MPI) that maintains regulatory standards recognized by FSIS and is participating in the CIS Program by this RFA's deadline.
2. Meet the requirements for a Grant of Inspection as issued by the State inspection program as well as all Federal requirements as verified by both the State and Federal inspection programs.
    - The State requirements are specific to the State issuing the Grant of Inspection, so applicants must familiarize themselves with the applicable requirements.
    - The Federal requirements are the same as those provided in section ***1.4.1 Federal Grant of Inspection Project type***.
3. On average, employ no more than 25 employees (including supervisory and nonsupervisory employees on a full time, part-time, or temporary basis) as required by 9 CFR § 332.3(b).

1.5 ACTIVITIES ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

A facility selected for this grant may use funds to make improvements to the facility and to carry out other planning activities, necessary for obtaining a Federal Grant of Inspection or becoming eligible for inspection under the CIS Program. Such activities include, but are not limited to:

- Modernizing or expanding an existing facility (including expansion and modifications to existing buildings and/or construction of new buildings at existing facilities);
- Modernizing processing and manufacturing equipment (including cutting equipment, mixers, grinders, sausage stuffers, smokers, curing equipment, pipes, motors, pumps, and valves);
- Meeting packaging and labeling compliance requirements under applicable law (including sealing, bagging, boxing, labeling, conveying, and product moving equipment);
- Meeting occupational and other safety requirements under applicable law;
- Developing processes to ensure food safety;
- Accounting for costs associated with becoming an inspected facility (including HACCP consultation, employee training or technical assistance related to inspection, etc.)

AMS is responsible for ensuring that funded activities comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). AMS will determine whether NEPA applies and determine the appropriate level of environmental review. AMS may request additional information from applicants for purposes of completing an environmental review.

1.6 ACTIVITIES NOT ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

Projects are not eligible for funding if the applicant plans to:

- Purchase or lease land.
- Construct/build a new facility.
- Duplicate activities of a project that has received a Federal award from another Federal award program.
- Claim expenses that have been or will be reimbursed under any Federal, State, or local government funding.
- Apply for CIS if the facility employs more than 25 employees (including supervisory and nonsupervisory employees on a full -time, part-time, or temporary basis).

2.0 AWARD INFORMATION

2.1 TYPE OF FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

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

2.2 TYPE OF APPLICATIONS

New application. All new applications will be reviewed competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in section ***5.0 Application Review Information***.

2.3 AVAILABLE FUNDING

Approximately $55.2 million is available to fund projects in fiscal year 2021. Any funds not awarded under this RFA will be applied to the RFA for the next competitive award cycle. However, such funds may be subject to matching requirements per the legislation. Enactment of additional continuing resolutions or an appropriations act may affect the availability or level of funding for this program.

2.4 FEDERAL AWARD PERIOD DURATION AND SIZE

AMS expects applicants to complete their projects within the required timeframe. It is acceptable to complete a project before the scheduled period of performance end date. However, AMS encourages applicants to take the full duration to allow ample time to complete projects. The applicant must indicate the start and end dates on the SF-424, "Application for Federal Assistance" in block 17.

The maximum award amount and duration by project type is shown below. Applicants may request less than the maximum award amount and duration.

Project Type	Duration (Months)	Start Date	Completion Date	Maximum Award
Planning for a Federal Grant of Inspection	36	September 30, 2021	September 29, 2024	$200,000
CIS Compliance	36	September 30, 2021	September 29, 2024	$200,000

3.0 ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

3.1 ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Consistent with 21 U.S.C. § 473, meat or poultry slaughter or processing facilities must be operational at the time they submit the grant application to be eligible for the program. In addition, such facilities must be:

1. Seeking to obtain a Federal Grant of Inspection under the FMIA or PPIA in the 50 States, American Samoa, the District of Columbia, Guam, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, including those managed or owned by Tribal entities; **or**
2. Seeking to operate as a State-inspected facility compliant with either the FMIA under the CIS Program or the PPIA under the CIS Program by this RFA's deadline.

Facilities that are exempt from Federal inspection under the FMIA and PPIA are also eligible. Exemptions may include, but are not limited to Custom, Retail, etc.

3.2 FACILITIES NOT ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

Meat and poultry facilities that are NOT eligible for the Federal Grant of Inspection Project type include:

- Those that are currently Federally-inspected.
- Those that only process non-amenable species.

Facilities that are NOT eligible for the CIS Compliance Project type include:

- Those in a State that DOES NOT participate in the CIS program.
- Those that process only Siluriformes (Catfish).

3.3 COST SHARING AND MATCHING

This funding opportunity does not have a Federal cost-sharing or matching requirement for fiscal year 2021. Such information should not be included in the FY2021 submitted application. However, there is a $1:$1 matching requirement for subsequent MPIRG fiscal years (FY2022 and beyond). Therefore, applicants are strongly encouraged to consider applying in FY2021.

4.0 APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

4.1 ELECTRONIC APPLICATION PACKAGE

Only electronic applications may be submitted via Grants.gov in response to this RFA. We urge applicants to submit early to the Grants.gov system. For an overview of the Grants.gov application process 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 ***4.7 Grants.gov Application Submission and Receipt Procedures and Requirements***.

Applicants can find the opportunity under either the Assistance Listing number **10.180**, or the Funding Opportunity Number "**USDA-AMS-TM-MPIRG-G-21-0001**."

4.2 CONTENT AND FORM OF APPLICATION SUBMISSION

4.2.1 SF-424 APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

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

Block	Instructions
#1 Type of Submission	Application
#2 Type of Application	New
#4 through #7	Not required

Block	Instructions
#8c Organizational DUNS	Applicant DUNS# for the organization submitting the application. See D&B Request a DUNS Number
#8d Address	Enter the organization street address as it appears in SAM.gov. P.O. Boxes will not be accepted. Enter a 9-digit zip code.
#10 Name of Federal Agency	AMS, USDA
#11 Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number	10.180
#12 Funding Opportunity Number	USDA-AMS-TM-MPIRG-G-21-0001
#13 Competition Identification Number	Not applicable
#14 Areas Affected by Project	Enter cities, counties, States affected by project.
#15 Descriptive Title of Applicant's Project	Provide a short description of the project.
#16a Congressional Districts for Applicant	Enter the Congressional district where your main office is located.
#16b Congressional Districts for Program/Project	Enter the Congressional district where your project will be implemented. Write "All" if the project will be implemented in more than one location.
#17 Proposed Project Start Date and End Date	Start Date: September 30, 2021. End date: September 29, 2024.
#18a Estimated Funding - Federal	Total Federal amount requested.
#19 Is Applicant Subject to Review by State Under Executive Order 12372 Process?	See section ***4.5 Intergovernmental Review***.

4.2.2 PROJECT NARRATIVE

Required. Applicants are required to prepare and submit a narrative using the MPIRG Project Narrative form. The form and instructions are available on the MPIRG webpage. The Project Narrative must be submitted as a PDF and attached to the Grants.gov application package using the "Add Attachments" button under SF-424 item #15. Handwritten applications or applications in MS Word will not be accepted. The Project Narrative must be typed, single-spaced, in an 11-point font, not to exceed twenty (20) 8.5 x 11 pages.

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

For projects involving constructions, include any design and construction documents. These documents do not count against the 20-page limit.

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

4.2.3 NEGOTIATED INDIRECT COST RATE AGREEMENT (NICRA)

Required if the applicant has a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA). Refer to section ***4.6.1 Indirect Costs*** 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.

4.3 SUBMITTED APPLICATION QUALIFICATION

Your application may **not be reviewed or considered for funding** if it is:

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

See AMS' Late and/or Nonresponsive Applications Policy for more information.

4.4 SUBMISSION DATE AND TIME

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

Only applications submitted and validated by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on August 02, 2021, on Grants.gov will be accepted. See AMS' Late and/or Nonresponsive Applications Policy.

4.5 INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW

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

4.6 FUNDING RESTRICTIONS

4.6.1 INDIRECT COSTS

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

As stated in regulations (2 CFR §§ 200.413 and 414), 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. As described in 2 CFR § 200.403, costs

must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs, but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both. If chosen, this methodology once elected must be used consistently for all Federal awards until such time as a 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.

4.6.2 SUBAWARD RESTRICTION

The applicant is expected to perform a major portion of the project; however, subawards or subcontracts with partners, collaborators, or other parties that provide additional knowledge, expertise, or resources for the purposes of the proposed project that are not otherwise available within the applicant organization are allowable. Using grant funds to competitively "re-grant" funds in mini-grant programs or to activities that are not central to the purpose of the project or for unknown costs are unallowable.

4.6.3 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 MPIRG Specific Terms and Conditions.

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

4.7 GRANTS.GOV APPLICATION SUBMISSION AND RECEIPT PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS

4.7.1 HOW TO REGISTER TO APPLY THROUGH GRANTS.GOV

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

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 DUNS Number*: All entities applying for funding, including renewal funding, must have a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number from Dun & Bradstreet (D&B). Applicants must enter the DUNS number in the data entry field labeled "Organizational DUNS" on the SF-424 form.

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

3) *Create a Grants.gov Account*: The next step in the registration process is to create an account with Grants.gov. Applicants must know their organization's DUNS number 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.

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, which may include the Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) role, thereby giving you permission to complete and submit applications on behalf of the organization. You will be able to submit your application online any time after you have been approved as an AOR.

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

6) *Electronic Signature*: When applications are submitted through Grants.gov, the name of the organization's AOR that 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.**

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

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

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

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

a. *Adobe Reader*: If you decide not to apply by filling out the 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 storage device, network drive(s), or external drives, then accessed through Adobe Reader.

   NOTE: You may need to visit the Adobe Software Compatibility page on Grants.gov to download the appropriate version of the software. There is no cost for Adobe Reader Software.

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

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

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 your application package **at least 24-48 hours prior to the close date** to provide you with time to correct any potential technical issues that may disrupt the application submission.

   SPECIAL NOTE: Grants.gov **does not** check for AMS required attachments. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all required attachments listed in section ***4.2 Content and Form of Application Submission*** 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 to which you and Grants.gov can refer to if the issue is not resolved. For questions related to the specific grant opportunity, contact the individuals mentioned in section 7.0 Agency Contacts.

4.7.3 TIMELY RECEIPT REQUIREMENTS AND PROOF OF TIMELY SUBMISSION

All applications must be received by the due date established in section ***4.4 Submission Date and Time***. Proof of timely submission is automatically recorded by Grants.gov using an electronic date/time stamp generated when the application is successfully received by Grants.gov. The applicant AOR will then receive an acknowledgement of receipt and a tracking number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) from Grants.gov. Applicant AORs will also receive the official date/time stamp and Grants.gov tracking number in an email serving as proof of their timely submission.

When AMS successfully retrieves the application from Grants.gov, and acknowledges the download of submissions, Grants.gov will electronically acknowledge receipt of the application to the applicant AOR's email address. Again, proof of timely submission shall be the official date and time that Grants.gov receives your application.

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

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

4.7.4 TIPS FOR APPLICANTS

- Register and submit applications early. **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE DAY OF THE APPLICATION DEADLINE**.
- Thoroughly read this RFA and follow all instructions provided by AMS.
- Thoroughly review the AMS Terms and Conditions and MPIRG Specific Terms and Conditions to understand allowable and unallowable costs.
- Make sure you have the most recent copy of Adobe Reader installed on your computer and that it is compatible with Grants.gov software. Grants.gov supports Adobe Reader version 9.0.0 and higher.
- Limit Application File Size/ File Name Characters (50 or less).
- When uploading attachments, click the "Add Attachments" button (do NOT use the "paperclip" icon in Adobe Reader)
- Do not password-protect your documents and make sure all tracked-changes are "accepted".
- Avoid Special Characters in File Names ($, %, &, *, Spanish "ñ", etc.)**.**
- Input the correct DUNS number on the SF-424 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.

5.0 APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

5.1 PROJECT EVALUATION CRITERIA

Each application will be reviewed competitively using the following criteria and scoring:

Alignment and Intent ..... **25 Points**

1) The extent to which the application provides a clear and concise description of the specific objectives, including the proposed project impact and implementation strategy.

2) The extent to which the project addresses the steps taken to achieve a Federal "Grant of Inspection" or a CIS certification.

Technical Merit ..... **25 Points**

1) The extent to which the application presents a clear, well-conceived, complete, and suitable overall work plan to advance improvement/expansion, obtain a Federal Grant of Inspection, or comply with CIS requirements.

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

Achievability ..... **15 Points**

1) The extent to which the proposed activities are relevant for the scale and scope of the project including:

    a. How each activity contributes to achieving the outcome, with a clear means to collect feedback to evaluate and achieve each activity; and

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

2) The extent to which the applicant provides a comprehensive plan for collecting data and monitoring processes are clearly explained.

Expertise and Technical Management ..... **25 Points**

1) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates the applicant/organization's capability and experience to manage the project.

2) The key staff who will be responsible for managing the projects and the individuals (name and title) who comprise the Project Team.

3) Clear commitment from the applicant/organization to assume responsibility to support and continue project activities once the grant period ends.

Fiscal Plan and Resources ..... **10 Points**

1) The extent to which the application Budget Narrative/Justification provides a clear, detailed description for each budget line item, and:

    a. The budget is consistent and well justified with the size and scope of the project activities.

    b. All budget items are directly linked to activities included in the application.

    c. The budget relates logically to the Project Narrative describing the project.

5.2 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 as set forth in this RFA. If an application does not meet these requirements, it is removed from consideration. Please see section ***4.3*** and AMS's Late and/or Non-Responsive Applications Policy for more information.

Step 2: Technical Review

Each application that passes initial screening (Step 1) is evaluated by a panel of independent 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 proposals. The review panels evaluate their assigned proposals using instructions prepared by AMS officials. Individual reviewers confer with other team members to derive a consensus score. The consensus review serves as the 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 rankings and recommendations. In addition to the rank and scores, AMS reviews each application to ensure that potential recommended projects align with the scope, allowability of budget items, available funding, geographic diversity, and USDA 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.

6.0 AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

6.1 AWARD NOTICES

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

The Notice of Award and AMS-33 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* and MPIRG Specific Terms and Conditions.

6.2 UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS

Unsuccessful applicants will be contacted by AMS via email as soon as possible after the MPIRG awards are announced. AMS will email unsuccessful applicants anonymous review panel consensus comments regarding their proposals as feedback.

6.3 ADMINISTRATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS

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

6.4 REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Reporting and award closeout requirements are included in the AMS General Terms and Conditions. Program Specific awards terms and conditions are included in the MPIRG Specific Terms and Conditions.

7.0 AGENCY CONTACTS

7.1 PROGRAMMATIC QUESTIONS

After closely reviewing this RFA in its entirety, applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact the MPIRG staff listed below or at mpirg@usda.gov.

For additional information, please visit the MPIRG Website: https://www.ams.usda.gov/MPIRG

7.2 TEAM LEAD AND GRANTS MANAGEMENT SPECIALISTS

Phone: Eric Bozoian
E-Mail: Eric.Bozoian@usda.gov

7.3 AVAILABLE RESOURCES

AMS provides resources and information on its website that may be helpful to applicants, including Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's), required application forms. AMS staff is available to provide timely technical assistance by contacting mpirg@usda.gov.

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

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

7.4 ADDRESS

Meat and Poultry Inspection Readiness Program (MPIRG)
USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Stop 0267
Room 4534 South Building
Washington, DC 20250-0269

7.5 GRANTS.GOV QUESTIONS

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

8.0 OTHER INFORMATION

8.1 DEFINITIONS

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

Meat Food Product means any product capable of use as human food which is made wholly or in part from any meat or other portion of any amenable species, excepting products which contain meat or other portions of such carcasses only in a relatively small proportion or historically have not been considered by consumers as products of the meat food industry, and which are exempted from definition as a meat food product by the Secretary under such conditions as he may prescribe to assure that the meat or other portions of such carcasses contained in such product are not adulterated and that such products are not represented as meat food products.

Poultry Product means any poultry carcass, or part thereof; or any product which is made wholly or in part from any poultry carcass or part thereof, excepting products which contain poultry ingredients only in a relatively small proportion or historically have not been considered by consumers as products of the poultry food industry, and which are exempted by the Secretary from definition as a poultry product under such conditions as the Secretary may prescribe to assure that the poultry ingredients in such products are not adulterated and that such products are not represented as poultry products.

Amenable Species:

a) Livestock products amenable to the FMIA are prepared from cattle, sheep, swine, goats, horses, mules and other equines, and fish of the order Siluriformes. However, the slaughter of horses and other equines is effectively prohibited by the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 Pub. L. 116-260.
b) Poultry products amendable to the PPIA are prepared from any domesticated bird, including chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese, guineas, ratites, or squabs, whether live or dead.

8.2 EQUAL OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

8.3 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUESTS

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) of 1966 (5 U.S.C. § 552) 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 1671-S, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-0273, Telephone: (202) 302-0650; or email: AMS.FOIA@usda.gov.

8.4 PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. § 3501 et seq), an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0581-NEW. 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.