OMB No. 0581-0240

Agricultural Marketing Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Dairy Business Innovation Initiatives

Fiscal Year 2023 Request for Applications

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-AMS-TM-DBII-G-23-0013

Publication Date: June 8, 2023

Application Due Date: 11:59 PM Eastern Time on August 10, 2023

Program Solicitation Information

Funding Opportunity Title: Dairy Business Innovation Initiatives

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-AMS-TM-DBII-G-23-0013

Announcement Type: Initial

Assistance Listing Number: 10.176

Dates: Applications must be received by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on August 10, 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 for the fiscal year (FY) 2023 from existing initiatives of the Dairy Business Innovation (DBI) Initiatives program: the California State University Fresno Foundation, the University of Tennessee, the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets, and the University of Wisconsin. These initiatives serve to:

- Diversify dairy product markets to reduce risk and develop higher value uses for dairy products,
- Promote business development that diversifies farmer income through processing and marketing innovation, and
- Encourage the use of regional milk production.

Approximately $23 million is available in FY 2023 to fund applications under this solicitation. Initiatives are expected to perform projects from FY 2023 through FY 2026. Initiatives are also expected to submit a noncompeting application for each fiscal year in which the DBI Initiatives are appropriated funds.

This announcement identifies the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply.

AMS encourages Initiatives to benefit small dairy farm businesses, underserved dairy producers, veteran dairy producers, underserved communities, and partner and/or collaboratives with Minority Serving Institutions that have the expertise and can provide direct or indirect technical assistance to dairy businesses. For example, Initiatives may prioritize subawards to entities that are currently partnering with or receiving technical assistance from the above-mentioned groups.

The 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.

Stakeholder Input: AMS seeks comments about this Request for Applications (RFA). We will consider the comments in developing the next RFA for the program. E-mail written comments within one year of the publication date of this RFA to: AMSGrants@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 responding to the **Dairy Business Innovation Initiatives RFA**.

2023 Highlights and Changes

The AMS General Terms and Conditions and DBI Specific Terms and Conditions have been updated to reflect changes regarding the requirements to acknowledge USDA support and clarification of building construction and renovations, respectively.

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.

The DBI requires that **all application packages** include the following:

- ☐ SF-424 – Application for Federal Assistance (in Grants.gov)
- ☐ SF-424A – Budget Summary (in Grants.gov)
- ☐ Project Abstract Summary (in Grants.gov)
- ☐ Project Narrative Form (including Fiscal Plan and Resources and Personnel Qualifications)
    - Must use required template.
    - Executive summary support project goals and objectives, and is no more than 250 words
    - Ensure the Project Narrative does not exceed the page limit specified in ***section 5.2.4***
    - Ensure application excludes unallowable costs and activities per ***section 4.5***
- ☐ Signed Letter(s) of Commitment from each partner or collaborating organization at the time of application per ***section 5.2.5***

If applicable, packages may also be required to include the following documents:

- ☐ Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) (PDF Attachment)

Tips 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 you 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 applicable AMS General Terms and Conditions and DBI specific Terms and Conditions to understand allowable and unallowable costs.
- Apply to the correct grant program in Grants.gov using the correct Assistance listing (formerly Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number "**10.176**" and Funding Opportunity Number "**USDA-AMS-TM-DBI-G-23-0013**."
- Ensure you have the most recent copy of Adobe Reader installed on your computer and that it is compatible with Grants.gov software. Verify whether you have a compatible version of Adobe at https://www.grants.gov/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility.html.
- 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 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	August 10, 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 Dairy Business Innovation (DBI) Initiatives is authorized by 7 U.S.C. § 1632d.

1.2 PURPOSE

This program assists current DBI initiatives in managing regional efforts to support dairy businesses in the development, production, marketing, and distribution of dairy products. These initiatives specifically focus on:

a. Diversifying dairy product markets to reduce risk and develop higher value uses for dairy products;
b. Promoting business development that diversifies farmer income through processing and marketing innovation; and
c. Encouraging the use of regional milk production.

This RFA is to award funding to current initiatives for FY 2023 through 2026. See ***section 2.4*** for more information.

1.2.1 DEFINITIONS

Dairy Businesses are businesses that develop, produce, market, or distribute dairy products.

Initiatives are selected eligible entities that host this program with the purposes indicated under ***section 1.2***.

Dairy Products are products manufactured for use by humans which are derived from the processing of milk and include fluid milk products. Products may include but are not limited to butter, cheese (whether natural or processed), skim milk, cream, whey, or buttermilk (whether dry, evaporated, stabilized, or condensed), and frozen desserts.

1.3 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Initiatives provide direct technical assistance and make sub-grants to dairy businesses. They must also build on previous efforts to engage existing dairy industry resources, including dairy farm density and suitability, as well as activities conducted by dairy promotion and research programs (authorized by the Dairy Production Stabilization Act of 1983 and the Fluid Milk Promotion Act of 1990), research organizations, dairy businesses, or academic or industry stakeholders. Initiatives may serve a certain product niche, such as specialty cheese, or serve dairy businesses with dairy products derived from the milk of a specific type of dairy animal, including dairy products made from cow milk, sheep milk, and goat milk.

These initiatives also consult with any authorized dairy promotion program and AMS in carrying out the program and report on outcomes of the program as well as any related activities and opportunities to further increase dairy innovation. Host initiatives must maintain guidelines and procedures to prevent any conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest as required by 2 CFR § 400.2(b) while providing the direct technical assistance and sub-grants to dairy businesses mentioned below.

1.3.1 DIRECT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO DAIRY BUSINESSES

Initiatives should provide direct technical assistance to dairy businesses. Direct technical assistance includes nonmonetary assistance to dairy businesses through either private consultation or widely

available distribution. Technical assistance may be provided directly through the host initiative or through industry experts or research institutions, including cooperative extension services. Specific forms of assistance may include:

- Business consulting, including business plan development for processed dairy products, strategic planning assistance, and distribution and supply chain innovation;
- Marketing and branding assistance, including market messaging, packaging innovation, consumer assessments, innovation in emerging market opportunities, and evaluation of regional, national, and international markets;
- Assistance in product innovation, including the development of value-added products, innovation in byproduct reprocessing and use maximization, and dairy product production training, including in new, rare, or innovative techniques; and
- Development or facilitation of general informational websites, webinars, conferences, trainings, plant tours, and field days.

1.3.2 SUBAWARDS TO DAIRY BUSINESSES

An initiative should make competitive subawards to new and existing dairy businesses for the purposes of:

a. Modernization, specialization, and grazing transition on dairy farms;
b. Value chain and commodity innovation and facility and process updates for dairy processors; and
c. Product development, packaging, and marketing of dairy products.

Initiatives may provide a noncompetitive subaward to an entity that receives direct technical assistance as described in ***section 1.3.1*** to advance the business activities recommended as a result of that assistance.

Initiatives must allocate at least 50 percent of the allotted funds to make subawards to new or existing dairy businesses. There is no minimum subaward amount. The maximum subaward amount to a single dairy business will not be more than $500,000.

1.3.3 PRIORITY AREAS

Initiatives must prioritize the provision of direct technical assistance referenced in ***section 1.3.1*** and the subawards described in ***section 1.3.2*** to entities that are:

- Dairy farms and dairy businesses with limited access to other forms of assistance;
- Employee-owned dairy businesses;
- Cooperatives; and
- Dairy businesses that seek to create dairy products that add substantial value in processing or marketing, such as specialty cheeses.

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 6.0*** and may require the applicant to provide additional information or clarification by a specified date.

2.3 AVAILABLE FUNDING

Through the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 (Pub. L. No. 117 – 328) authorized by section 12513 of Public Law 115—334, approximately $23 million are available. The distribution among initiatives is shown in Section 2.4.

Funding may be contingent on Federal appropriations actions. USDA does not guarantee minimum funding levels.

2.4 FEDERAL AWARD PERIOD DURATION AND SIZE

The period of performance for these awards is 3 years. AMS expects applicants to complete their projects within the required timeframe. 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 project period must begin no later than September 30, 2023 and end no later than September 29, 2026. The applicant must indicate the start and end dates on the SF-424, "Application for Federal Assistance" in block 17.

Each initiative is eligible to apply for the eligible funding indicated in the table below.

If an initiative applies for less than its available amount, AMS will redistribute the remaining portion equally to the other initiatives.

Initiative	Eligible funding
California State University Fresno Foundation	$1,840,000
University of Tennessee	$7,053,333
Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets	$7,053,333
University of Wisconsin	$7,053,333

3.0 ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

3.1 ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants are current initiatives at:

- The California State University Fresno Foundation
- The University of Tennessee
- The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets, and
- The University of Wisconsin.

These initiatives were competitively selected in FY2019 (TN, VT, and WI) and FY2021 (CA) to fulfill the purpose of the program (see ***section 1.2***). This funding will continue work already started under their previous awards.

3.2 PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS

An applicant may subcontract or subaward with partners and collaborators. Only the applicant must meet the eligibility requirements listed in this RFA.

- A *partnership* is a relationship involving close cooperation between parties having specified and joint rights and responsibilities in the management of the project.
- A *collaborator* is a person or an organization unaffiliated with the applicant that cooperates with the applicant in the conduct of the project and is not immediately connected to the management of the project.

Partners and collaborators may come from private or public, for-profit, or nonprofit entities. Applicants must show evidence of existing community or industry support and engagement.

4.0 FUNDING CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 COST SHARING AND MATCHING

DBI does not have a cost sharing or matching requirement. Applicants should not include this topic in the submitted application nor subsequent performance or financial reports.

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 entity that has never received a 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) which may be used indefinitely. No documentation is required to justify the 10% 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 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. MTDC 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 of the 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. Entities that would like to negotiate an indirect cost rate must contact their cognizant agency. For assignments of cognizant agencies see 2 CFR § 200.1.

4.3 SUPPLANTING

The funds awarded through this RFA must increase, expand, or replace, and not duplicate, existing activities of the host initiatives.

4.4 SUBAWARD ALLOCATION

Each initiative must allocate at least 50 percent of its DBI grant to subawards.

4.5 ALLOWABLE AND UNALLOWABLE COSTS AND ACTIVITIES

As outlined in the DBI specific terms and conditions, equipment purchases to be used for onsite dairy production and processing are generally allowable as special purpose equipment, both for the applicants (DBI Initiatives) and subrecipients (dairy producers and processors). Special purpose equipment purchases in subawards must meet one or more of the following purposes:

a. Modernization, specialization, and grazing transition on dairy farms;
b. Value chain and commodity innovation and facility and process updates for dairy processors; and
c. Product development, packaging, and marketing of dairy products.

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

DBI funds may not be used for new construction and/or structural changes to an existing building/facility resulting in an expansion of square footage, expansion or changes to the to the building's floor, foundation, and exterior or load bearing walls.

DBI funds may be used to upgrade or modernize facilities, as well as to expand processing capacities. Funding requests that include building and facility upgrades can include improvements, re-arrangements, and/or alterations to a facility that are required to use a space more effectively and to accommodate new or upgraded equipment and processes. Any such activities must meet one of the purposes listed above in this section.

All AMS awards are subject to the terms and conditions, cost principles, and other considerations described in the applicable 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 listed under section ***8.0 Agency Contacts***.

4.6 COORDINATOR MEETING TRAVEL

Recipients are expected to attend an AMS-sponsored grants management meeting during the project's period of performance. The proposed budget should include travel funds for the Project Coordinator and any additional key personnel as reasonably determined by the recipient and AMS.

To estimate these costs in the budget section, please account for flight, hotel, per diem, and ground transportation expenses for a 3-day, 2-night stay. Location and dates are to be determined with a possibility of a virtual conference. If the conference is virtual, recipients will be able to reallocate those funds to another allowable item.

4.7 SUPPORT FOR DOMESTIC DAIRY BUSINESSES

Technical assistance and subawards will not be made available to a foreign person or entity making direct investment in the United States, as defined in 15 CFR § 801.2, where the assistance is provided to a specific dairy business and is not publicly available.

4.8 FUNDS NOT APPLIED FOR

Initiatives that do not apply and request for all available eligible funding during the specified grant application period will forfeit that portion of available funding not requested. AMS will allocate funds not applied for, by a date determined by AMS, according to the program formula, to the remaining Initiatives that submitted applications.

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 the required application forms and AMS-specific attachments. More information about applying through Grants.gov can be found in section ***5.3 Grants.gov Application Submission and Receipt Procedures and Requirements***.

Applicants can find the opportunity under either the Assistance Listing number "**10.176**," or the DBI Funding Opportunity Number "**USDA-AMS-TM-DBII-G-23-0013**."

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	Application.
2 - Type of Application	New.
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 (Assisted Listing Number)	10.176

Box	Instruction
12 - Funding Opportunity Number	USDA-AMS-TM-DBII-G-23-0013.
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.
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: September 30, 2023 End date: No later than September 30, 2026.
18 - Estimated Funding	Total Federal funds requested.
19 - Is Applicant Subject to Review by State Under Executive Order 12372 Process?	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. 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.**

Please complete **only** Sections A and B. Do **not** complete Sections C, D, E, F).

Section A – Budget Summary

Box	Instructions
1.a – Grant Program Function or Activity	Enter "DBI – Federal"
1.b – Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number	Enter "10.176"
1.e – Federal	Enter the amount of Federal funding requested 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. For example, if you are requesting $2,000 in Federal funds for "Travel", enter 2000 in Column 1, box 6.c

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 separate from the DBI Project Narrative form. 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?; and
- 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 goal.

5.2.4 PROJECT NARRATIVE

Required. Applicants are required to prepare and submit a narrative using the DBI Project Narrative form. The narrative must clearly describe how this funding will build upon the work performed under previous DBI grants, including any new objectives and goals, types and sequence of project activities, monitoring and evaluation strategies associated with the proposed activities, and how the initiative will manage the project (including the subaward process).

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, initiatives 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 narrative must be typed, single-spaced, in an 11-point font, not to exceed twenty (20) pages, excluding existing form content. For example, if the form is 15 pages before you begin entering your project information, your narrative form may be up to 35 pages (15 original pages + 20 pages of applicant content). DO NOT modify the margins of the Project Narrative form. Handwritten applications or applications 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 DBI 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 20-page limit for the Project Narrative.

5.2.5 LETTERS OF COMMITMENT FROM PARTNER AND COLLABORATOR ORGANIZATIONS

Required. Applicants must provide letters of commitment from all project partners and collaborators. More information can be found on partners and collaborators in ***section 3.2***. The letter must state the partner or collaborator agrees to the project management plan presented in the Project Narrative. The Letter of Commitment must include the following:

- Project Applicant;
- Project Title;
- A short introduction describing the partnering organization's mission and its interest in this program's development;
- What the organization commits to participating in and supporting;
- The time period of the partnership;
- Roles of the participating individuals, as applicable, and any individual time commitment; and
- A statement that these individuals and the organization agree to abide by the management plan contained in the application.

Letters of commitment must be written on partner letterhead and addressed to the applicant (i.e., Project Director). Clearly indicate at the top of the documents that they are **LETTERS OF COMMITMENT**. Letters must accompany the proposal at the time of application. Unsigned letters will not be accepted. Emails 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.

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

5.2.6 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. Therefore, complete your registration allowing enough time to ensure it does not impact your ability to meet required application submission deadlines.

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 the (SAM). Current SAM.gov registrants have already been assigned a UEI and can view it within SAM.gov. All organizations must register with SAM to apply online in Grants.gov. 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, the EBiz POC will need to identify and assign an individual to the AOR 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, 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 as AORs. **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.

    a. *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.

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's name, address, and UEI.

d. 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 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 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 acknowledgment 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 August 10, 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

This is a non-competitive RFA restricted to eligible applicants listed in ***section 3.1***. AMS will review each project narrative to ensure that it meets the statutory purpose of the program, all application submission criteria are fulfilled in accordance with ***section 5.0***, and all costs are allowable.

AMS will notify the individual listed on the SF-424 "Application for Federal Assistance" in block 8.f if additional information is required after the initial review of the application. AMS will work with applicants to negotiate any revisions if necessary and possible. Failure to provide requested information in a timely manner may result in a project not receiving funding.

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 reference to the applicable AMS General Terms and Conditions and DBI Specific Terms and Conditions.

7.2 INELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

This RFA is open only to current DBI initiatives (see sections ***2.4*** and ***3.1***). Ineligible applicants will be contacted by AMS via email as soon as possible after the close of the application period.

7.3 ADMINISTRATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS

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

7.4 REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Reporting and award closeout requirements are included in the applicable AMS General Terms and Conditions. If there are any program or award-specific award terms, they will be identified in the award.

7.5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF USDA SUPPORT

Proper acknowledgment 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 acknowledgment 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 DBI staff by e-mail with questions about the grant program at IPPGrants@usda.gov.

For additional information, please visit the DBI Website: www.ams.usda.gov/dbi.

8.2 AVAILABLE RESOURCES

AMS provides resources and information on the DBI website (www.ams.usda.gov/dbi) that may be helpful to applicants, including descriptions of funded projects and required application forms.

8.3 ADDRESS

Dairy Business Innovation Initiatives
USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 1510-S South Building, Stop 0264
Washington, DC 20250-0264

8.4 GRANTS.GOV QUESTIONS

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

9.0 OTHER INFORMATION

9.1 EQUAL OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

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

9.2 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 part 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.

9.3 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 0581-0240. 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.