U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA)

Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement (OPPE)

Billing Code: 3412-89-P

Notice of Funding Opportunity No.: OPPE-019

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) No.: 10.443 – Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers

AGENCY: Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement, USDA

ACTION: Notice of Funding Opportunity for Fiscal Year 2024

SUMMARY: This notice announces the availability of funds for fiscal year (FY) 2024 and solicits applications from community-based and non-profit organizations, institutions of higher education, and Tribal entities to compete for financial assistance through the Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Program (hereinafter referred to as the "2501 Program"). The term veteran, as used in this program, refers to military veterans.

The overall goal of the 2501 Program is to encourage and assist underserved farmers and ranchers, military veteran farmers and ranchers, and beginning farmers and ranchers with owning and operating farms and ranches and in participating equitably in the full range of agricultural, forestry, and related programs offered by USDA. It also includes projects that develop underserved youths' interest in agriculture. In partnership with the OPPE, eligible entities may compete for funding on projects that provide education and training in agriculture, agribusiness, forestry, agricultural-related services, and USDA programs, and to conduct outreach initiatives designed to accomplish those goals. This partnership includes working closely with OPPE, attend OPPE-led events in your proposed service territory, and collaborate with USDA Service Centers located in your state (Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Rural Development).

DATES: Only one project proposal may be submitted per eligible entity. Proposals must be submitted through Grants.gov (www.grants.gov) and received by July 5, 2024, at 11:59 p.m. EDT. Proposals submitted after this deadline will not be considered for funding.

The OPPE will host two (2) webinars during the open period of this announcement as provided below. Sessions will be recorded. Additional sessions may be necessary to answer questions and clarify requirements. Registration is not required to participate.

Session 1: May 22, 2024, at 2:00pm EDT - To attend the webinar, click:
https://www.zoomgov.com/j/1616233057?pwd=MFRTRklXYnFQaThxeDZ3MmwwOWlPUT09

Session 2: June 26, 2024 at 2:00pm EDT - To attend the webinar, click:
https://www.zoomgov.com/j/1615399036?pwd=NkdUN2VIdUNwenFGZENrc1laTVo2UT09

Filing a Complaint of Discrimination

To file a program discrimination complaint, you may obtain a complaint form by sending an email to CR-Info@USDA.gov. You or your authorized representative must sign the complaint form. You are not required to use the complaint form. You may write a letter instead. If you write a letter, it must contain all the information requested in the form and be signed by you or your authorized representative. Incomplete information will delay the processing of your complaint. Employment civil rights complaints will not be accepted through this email address.

Send your completed complaint form or letter to USDA by mail, fax, or email:

Mail:
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Director, Center for Civil Rights Enforcement
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250-9410

Fax: (202) 690-7442

Email: program.intake@usda.gov

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, OR FOR PROGRAMMATIC COMPLAINTS, CONTACT:
U. S. Department of Agriculture
Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement
Attn: Director, Grant Programs
Jamie L. Whitten Building, Room 524-A
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250
Phone: (202) 720-6350
Fax: (202) 720-7704
E-mail: 2501Grants@usda.gov

Persons with Disabilities: Persons who require alternative means for communication (Braille large print, audiotape, etc.), should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). Additionally, alternative means for submissions due to disability status will be approved on a case-by-case basis.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Funding/Awards: The total funding provided for this competitive grant program is approximately $22.3 million as provided in the 2018 Farm Bill, which was extended by H.R. 6363 (*Further Continuing Appropriations and Other Extensions Act, 2024)*.

The OPPE will award grants from this announcement, subject to availability of funds and the quality of applications received. All applicants will compete based on their organization's entity type (e.g., nonprofit organization, tribal entity, or higher education institution), as described below. The project period must be three (3) years for all proposals. The maximum amount of requested federal funding for projects shall not exceed $750,000 over the 3-year period. Additionally, the maximum award per year is $250,000. Projects will be funded in accordance

with a properly submitted application, the approved statement of work, and the OPPE Guidelines to maximize outreach, education and technical assistance ensuring geographical distribution of funds as required in section 7 U.S.C. 2279(c)(4)(G).

Funds will be awarded to eligible entities that have at least three (3) years of documented experience, preceding the submission of an application, in working with underserved farmers and ranchers or military veteran farmers and ranchers to improve their ability to start and maintain successful forestry and/or agricultural-related operations. The Secretary shall give priority to eligible nongovernmental and community-based organizations with demonstrated history of serving underserved and military veteran farmers and ranchers (see Section V. Application Review Information). OPPE will check several sources, including the System of Award Management (SAM.gov), to help determine the minimum of 3 years of documented experience in working with either underserved or military veteran farmers and ranchers. Entries in SAM take precedence when determining experience.

****An applicant MUST be an entity or organization. Individuals and for-profit organizations do not meet the eligibility criteria.**

Unallowable use of 2501 Grant Program funds:

1. Funds may not be used for the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of a building or facility.
2. Funds may not be used to pay hourly wages such as in a jobs creation program for individual farmers or ranchers.
3. Funds may not be used as small agricultural loans for individual farmers or ranchers or used to incentivize individuals to attend events, workshops, or training.
4. Funds may not be used to purchase farming supplies for individual farmers or ranchers or to enhance individual farmers' or ranchers' farms or production capabilities.
5. Funds may not be used to reward individual farmers or ranchers for outstanding effort or achievement in training.
6. Funds may not be used to pay for scholarships for individual farmers or ranchers to attend college courses, certificate courses, or other "for fee" based courses.
7. Funds may not be used for start-up or financing costs for businesses or for an organization's capacity building, which is defined as the development of organizational competencies, strategies, or systems and structures in order to improve organizational efficiency and effectiveness.
8. Funds may not be used for large equipment purchases such as vehicles, semi-tractors, or refrigeration systems.

Eligible entities may receive subsequent years funding provided that:

a) Activities and associated costs do not overlap with projects awarded in previous years; and
b) Recipients are current and compliant with financial and performance reporting. The progress of existing projects, along with the percentage of funds used to date, may impact funding decisions.

Funding will be awarded based on ranked scores comprised of the three categories described below. The OPPE has full discretion to allocate funding among the three categories based upon the number and quality of applications received. There is **no commitment** by the OPPE to fund

any particular application nor is there a requirement to select a minimum number of recipients within each category.

Category #1: Eligible entities described in Sections III.A.2, III.A.3, and III.A.4 (1890 Land-Grant colleges and universities, 1994 Tribal Land-Grants, Alaska Native and American Indian Tribal colleges and universities, and Hispanic-Serving Institutions of higher education).

Category #2: Eligible entities described in Sections III.A.1 and III.A.6 (i.e., nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations as recognized by the Internal Revenue Service, Eligible Tribal Entities as defined in 25 U.S.C. §5304, and coalitions of such organizations or National Tribal organizations).

Category #3: Eligible entities described in Sections III.A.5 and III.A.7 (i.e., all other institutions of higher education including 1862 colleges, nonprofit organizations without a 501(c)(3) status certification from the IRS, and an organization or institution that received funding under this program before January 1, 1996). Nonprofit organizations that do not have an IRS 501(c)(3) Certificate must provide their Articles of Incorporation, filed in their state, that contains a statement of purpose indicating that the organization does not engage in activities prohibited under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.

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I. Notice of Funding Opportunity Description

A. Background

The OPPE is committed to ensuring underserved communities can equitably participate in USDA programs. Differences in demographics, culture, economics, language, and other factors preclude a single approach to identifying solutions that can benefit underserved farmers and ranchers. Grants are provided to nonprofit community-based organizations, higher education institutions, and eligible Tribal entities with at least three (3) years of documented experience, preceding the submission date of an application. Eligible entities working with underserved farmers and ranchers or military veteran farmers and ranchers can improve their ability to start and maintain successful forestry and/or agricultural-related operations. With 2501 Program funding, eligible entities can provide education, training, and technical assistance and extend outreach and education efforts to connect with and assist underserved and military veteran farmers and ranchers to provide them with information on available USDA resources.

1. The 2501 Program was authorized by the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990. The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 expanded the authority of the Secretary of Agriculture (the Secretary) to provide awards under the program and transferred the administrative authority to the OPPE. The Agricultural Act of 2014 further expanded the program to include outreach and technical assistance to military veterans. The 2501 Program extends USDA's capacity to work with members of farming and ranching communities by funding projects that enhance the equitable participation of underserved and military veteran farmers and ranchers in USDA programs. It is the OPPE's intention to build lasting relationships among USDA, recipient organizations, and underserved communities to maximize the availability of outreach and technical assistance in targeted communities.

2. **Only one proposal will be accepted from each organization.** This does not apply to applicants in the State of Massachusetts. The state fiscal sponsor may submit multiple proposals ensuring that only one proposal is submitted on behalf of each of its individual fiscally sponsored organizations.

B. Scope of Work

The 2501 Program provides funding to eligible organizations with at least 3 years of documented experience, preceding the submission of an application, in working with underserved farmers and ranchers or military veteran farmers and ranchers to improve their ability to start and maintain successful forestry and/or agricultural-related operations. Proposals must be consistent with requirements stated in 7 U.S.C. 2279(c)(3). Under this statute, the outreach and technical assistance program funds shall be used exclusively:

1. To enhance coordination of the outreach, technical assistance, education, and training efforts authorized under USDA agriculture programs;

2. To assist the Secretary of Agriculture in:
   a. reaching current and prospective underserved farmers or ranchers, military veteran farmers or ranchers, or beginning farmers and ranchers in a linguistically appropriate manner; and

   b. improving the participation of those farmers and ranchers in USDA programs.

There are five programmatic mission areas that support the goals of the 2501 Program. Proposals from eligible entities must address **at least two** of the five following programmatic mission areas as they develop their goals:

i. Assist underserved, military veteran farmers and ranchers, including beginning farmers and ranchers in owning and operating successful farms and ranches;

ii. Improve participation among underserved or military veteran farmers and ranchers in USDA programs;

iii. Build relationships between current and prospective farmers and ranchers who are underserved or military veterans and USDA's local, state, regional, and National offices;

iv. Assist in reaching current and prospective underserved farmers, ranchers, or forest landowners in a linguistically appropriate manner; and

v. Assist with identifying problems and barriers underserved farmers experience and working towards minimizing or alleviating those issues to enable their equitable participation in USDA programs.

The OPPE shall seek input from eligible entities providing technical assistance under this subsection not less than once each year to ensure that the program is responsive to the eligible entities providing that technical assistance (7 U.S.C. 2279(c)(4)(J)). The OPPE may require Project Directors to attend an Annual Meeting that can be expensed with awarded grant funds not to exceed $1,800 per award year. The Annual Meeting will allow participants, USDA officials, and other agriculture-related industry participants to

network, encourage partnerships, share best practices, discuss programmatic requirements, share information on new and enhanced USDA programs and services, and obtain programmatic feedback. Stakeholder input will also be accepted by September 30th of each fiscal year by those unable to attend the Annual Meeting in person at: 2501Grants@usda.gov.

C. Evaluation Plans

Proposals must also include a plan for evaluating the success of the organization's programs in meeting the programmatic mission areas. As noted above, proposals must address at least two of the five programmatic mission areas. Evaluation plans should include:

1. **Proposed Outputs** (Activities). The term "output" describes the physical result of your work. Outputs indicate the volume of project activity and generally addresses the question of "how much?" An example of an output is "number of training sessions conducted," "number of individuals receiving training," or "number of educational materials developed." Other examples may include:

    a. Conduct 12 workshops annually, either virtually or in-person, on how to write a business plan;

    b. Assist 100 new farmers/ranchers annually on what is required to be able to process and accept SNAP payments;

    c. Within the 3-year period of award, create 10 step-by-step videos in 3 languages on implementing new irrigation techniques.

2. **Proposed Performance Measures**. Performance Measures evaluate an organization's progress in meeting their objective which should be based on at least two of the five programmatic mission areas mentioned above; compare actual results to expected results; and evaluate their project's effectiveness in delivering expected results. Organizations should develop outcome-based performance measures to ensure their project is progressing to meet their goals. Applicants must develop performance measure targets for each of their proposed activities. These targets will be used as a mechanism to track the progress and success of the project. Quantitative data is expressed in quantities, amounts, or a range and can be used to measure outputs and outcomes. Qualitative data is information that cannot be measured such as a change in perceptions. Baselines must be established in order to determine whether an organization is meeting their goals. An example of a Performance Measure is a comparison of how many farmers and ranchers know about available USDA programs before an organization conducts their workshops on USDA programs compared to the number of farmers and ranchers that know about available USDA programs after training is conducted.

3. **Outcomes** (Results). The term "outcome" means the final impact, difference or effect that has occurred as a result from carrying out an activity, workshop, meeting,

or from delivery of services related to a 2501 programmatic goal or objective. Results may be agricultural, behavioral, social, or economic in nature. Outcomes may reflect an increase in knowledge or skills, a greater awareness of available resources or programs, or actions taken by stakeholders as a result of learning from or participating in an outreach activity. Specifically, outcomes must be quantitative as it relates to the project goals and objectives. Proposals should include the anticipated outcomes expected to result from the project's activities.

4. **Reporting Requirements.** Project Managers will be required to document anticipated outcomes that are funded under this announcement. The OPPE is congressionally mandated to report progress toward the program's performance measures each year. To do so, grantees will be required to complete a mid-year and year-end report on their progress toward meeting the program's goals and objectives. Grantees are encouraged to include a description of how they will collect this information in their proposed evaluation plans. Not all questions will apply to all grantees, and applicants should address the performance measures that apply to their proposed programs. The 2501 Program reporting mandates are as follows:

    a. The activities undertaken by grantees and the services provided.
        i. How many activities provided technical assistance.
    b. The number of current and prospective socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers (SDVFRs) served and the outcomes of such service.
        i. Total number of SDVFRs reached during the outreach process.
        ii. Total number of SDVFRs that participated in technical assistance.
        iii. Total number of SDVFRs:
            1. Assisted in owning and operating successful farms or ranches
            2. That improved participation in USDA programs
            3. That built relationships with USDA local, state, regional, and national offices
            4. Assisted in alleviating barriers to participating in USDA programs
            5. Assisted with building resilience to climate change and increasing agricultural productivity
            6. Assisted with efficient and renewable energy practices
            7. That experienced increased access to land and credit
            8. Assisted in resolving heirs' property issues
            9. Assisted with farm/financial planning to increase farm operation sustainability
            10. Assisted in strengthening the food supply chain
    c. The problems and barriers identified by entities in trying to increase participation by current and prospective socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers.
        i. The total number of SDVFRs, at the time of assistance, reporting a desire for overcoming barriers to participating in USDA programs
        ii. The total number of SDVFRs who reported overcoming barriers to participating in USDA programs

d. The number of farms or ranches started, maintained, or improved as a result of funds made available under the program.
e. Actions taken or activities performed in partnership with USDA agencies to enhance participation in agricultural programs by veteran or socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.
    i. Total amount of:
        1. Outreach for USDA programs and services
        2. Outreach for State-level programs and services
        3. Outreach for local and/or community programs
f. The effectiveness of the outreach in section (e).
    i. Short Term Impacts
        1. Total number of program participants reporting increases in:
            a. Awareness of USDA programs; applications for and approval for USDA programs
            b. Knowledge/skill development
            c. Ability to apply knowledge/skills
            d. Farmer/USDA connections or network development
            e. Agricultural yield improvement
    ii. Long Term Impacts
        1. The total number of program participants reporting:
            a. Reduction in problems and barriers faced by farmers/ranchers
            b. Increased, equitable participation in farming and ranching activities
            c. Increased representation of Socially Disadvantaged Groups in local farming and ranching activities
            d. Improved quality of life in rural and tribal communities

Additionally, grantees should be prepared to collect and provide demographic information about participants collected in line with OMB's Updated Statistical Policy Directive (SPD) 15. Technical assistance in designing data collections related to SPD-15 will be offered to grantees throughout the grant period. **Grantees are encouraged to allow at least 1% of their total project budget for evaluation services or tools.**

II. Award Information

A. Statutory Authority

The statutory authority for this action is 7 U.S.C. 2279(c), which authorizes award funding for projects designed to provide outreach and technical assistance to underserved or military veteran farmers or ranchers.

B. Expected Amount of Funding

The total estimated funding expected to be available for awards under this competitive opportunity is approximately $22.3 million. The maximum amount of requested federal funding shall not exceed $750,000.

C. Project Period

The performance period for projects selected from this solicitation will not begin prior to the effective award date listed in the grant agreement. The project period must be three (3) years.

D. Award Type

Funding for selected projects will be in the form of a grant agreement which must be fully executed no later than September 30 annually. The anticipated federal involvement will include, but not be limited to, the following activities:

1. Approval of recipients' final budget and Project Narrative or statement of work accompanying the grant agreement;

2. Monitoring of recipients' performance through semi-annual and final financial and performance reports; and

3. Conducting on-site and/or virtual monitoring visits to review compliance, use of federal funds and fidelity in implementing the project.

All award notifications will be "conditionally approved" pending final validation of all selected applicants' submission documentation and/or application package. OPPE reserves the right not to fund any "conditionally approved" application(s) found to be ineligible after final validation.

E. Conflict of Interest Policy

(a) Applicability.

(1) This section intends to ensure that non-federal entities and their employees take appropriate steps to avoid conflicts of interest in their responsibilities under or with respect to federal financial assistance agreements.

(2) In the procurement of supplies, equipment, and services by recipients and by subrecipients, the conflict-of-interest provisions in 2 CFR 200.318 apply. Use of funds for the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of a building or facility is prohibited under 2279(c)(4)(H).

(b) Notification.

(1) Non-federal entities, including applicants for financial assistance awards, must disclose in writing any conflict of interest to the USDA awarding agency or pass-through entity in accordance with 2 CFR 200.112.

(2) Recipients must establish internal controls that include, at a minimum, procedures to identify, disclose, and mitigate or eliminate identified conflicts of interest. The recipient is responsible for notifying the program staff in writing of any conflicts of interest that may arise during the life of the award, including those that have been reported by subrecipients.

(c) **Restrictions on lobbying.** Non-federal entities are strictly prohibited from using funds under a grant or cooperative agreement for lobbying activities and must provide the required certifications and disclosures pursuant to 7 C.F.R. § 2500.003, 2 C.F.R. part 418, and 31 U.S.C. 1352.

(d) **Review procedures.** The program staff will examine each conflict-of-interest disclosure on the basis of its particular facts and the nature of the proposed grant or cooperative agreement, and will determine whether a significant potential conflict exists and, if it does, develop an appropriate means for resolving it.

(e) **Enforcement.** Failure to resolve conflicts of interest in a manner that satisfies the government may be cause for termination of the award. Failure to make required disclosures may result in any of the remedies described in 2 CFR 200.339, Remedies for noncompliance, including suspension or debarment (see also 2 CFR Part 180 and 2 CFR part 417).

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Entities

1. Per 7 CFR 2500.104, proposals may be submitted by any of the following:

   (a) Any community-based organization, network, or coalition of community-based organizations that:

   (1) Has demonstrated experience in providing agricultural education or other agriculturally related services to underserved or military veteran farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners;

   (2) has provided to the Secretary documentary evidence of work with, and on behalf of underserved or military veteran farmers, ranchers, or forest landowners during the three-year period preceding the submission of a proposal for assistance under this program; and;

   (3) Does not engage in activities prohibited under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.

2. An 1890 institution or 1994 institution (as defined in 7 U.S.C. §7601 and in Section 533 of the Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C. §301 note).

3. An American Indian Tribal community college or an Alaska Native cooperative college.

4. A Hispanic-Serving Institution of higher education (as defined in 7 U.S.C. §3103).

5. Any other institution of higher education (as defined in 20 U.S.C. §1001) that has demonstrated experience in providing agriculture education or other agriculturally related services to underserved or military veteran farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners in a region.

6. Eligible tribal entities as defined in 25 U.S.C. § 5304 or a national tribal organization that has demonstrated experience in providing agriculture education or other agriculturally related service to underserved or military veteran farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners in a region. Note: entities under 25 U.S.C. § 5304 are defined as "Indian tribe" or "Indian Tribe" which means any Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, including any Alaska Native village or regional or village corporation as defined in or established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (85 Stat. 688), which is recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians. The term "Indian" means a person who is a member of an Indian tribe.

7. Other organizations or institutions that received funding under this program before January 1, 1996, but only with respect to projects that the Secretary considers similar to projects previously carried out by the entity under this program.

B. Cost-Sharing or Matching

There are no cost-sharing nor matching requirements associated with this program. Applicants may charge their negotiated indirect cost rate or 10 percent, whichever is lower. Indirect cost rates exceeding 10 percent will not be permitted.

C. Threshold Eligibility Criteria

Applications from eligible entities that meet all criteria will be evaluated as follows:

1. Proposals must comply with the submission instructions and requirements set forth in Section IV of this announcement. Pages greater than the page limitation will not be considered.

2. Proposals must be received through Grants.gov (www.grants.gov) as specified in Section IV of this announcement on or before the proposal submission deadline. Applicants will receive an electronic confirmation receipt of their proposal from Grants.gov.

3. Proposals received after the submission deadline will not be considered. **Note that in order to submit proposals, organizations must create an account in** Grants.gov **and in the System for Awards Management (www.SAM.gov); both of which could take several weeks**. Therefore, it is strongly suggested that organizations

begin this process immediately. Registering early could prevent unforeseen delays in submitting your proposal.

4. Proposals must address a minimum of two programmatic mission areas listed in Section I, Part B, (i-v) to provide outreach, education, and/or technical assistance to underserved or military veteran farmers or ranchers.

5. Recipients of a 2501 Grant with a Period of Performance that extends beyond 90 days of the current fiscal year are not eligible to apply (this does not apply to recipients with a no-cost extension). For example, current 2501 Grant recipients must complete their projects by the end of the current calendar year to be eligible to apply.

6. Incomplete or partial applications will not be eligible for consideration. Any required documents missing from an application will render that applicant ineligible and the application will not be forwarded to the Review Panel (the Panel) for review. Additionally, applications may not be accepted for review if they exceed the maximum allowable pages for the Project Narrative, exceed the maximum federal budget request, or propose objectives that do not adhere to the specific goals of the 2501 Program. See Section IV. Content of Proposal Package Submission, subparagraph C, for required documents.

IV. Proposal and Submission Information

A. System for Award Management (SAM)

SAM.gov streamlines the application process and reduces applicant burden by enabling applicants to complete the required Financial Assistance Representations and Certifications in SAM.gov when applying for any federal financial assistance.

Registration with SAM (www.sam.gov) is mandatory. **There is NO fee to register for this site.** This registration must be maintained and updated annually in order to keep active status. Applicants can register or update their profile, at no cost, by visiting the SAM website at www.sam.gov. This is a requirement to registering for Grants.gov where all organizations must submit their application.

The **Financial Assistance Representations and Certifications Report must be completed**. Grant applicants are essentially applying for federal financial assistance. Therefore, to complete the Financial Assistance Representations and Certifications Report, you must respond "yes" to the question in SAM.gov that asks, "Does XYZ Organization wish to apply for a federal financial assistance project or program?" Completing this report certifies that your organization is in compliance with all relevant provisions of federal laws, executive orders, regulations, and public policies governing financial assistance awards.

Per 2 CFR part 200, applicants are required to: 1) be registered in SAM and have active status **prior to** submitting an application; 2) provide a valid unique entity identifier (UEI) in the application; and 3) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current

information at all times during which the organization has an active federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a federal awarding agency. The OPPE may not make a federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable UEI and SAM requirements. If an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time the OPPE is ready to make a federal award, the OPPE 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. Additionally, organizations found to have unresolved key personnel exclusions will not be awarded.

SAM contains the publicly available data for all active exclusion records entered by the Federal Government identifying those parties excluded from receiving federal contracts, certain subcontracts, and certain types of federal financial and non-financial assistance and benefits. All applicant organizations and their key personnel will be vetted through SAM to ensure compliance with this federal requirement. Organizations identified as having delinquent federal debt may contact the Treasury Offset Program for instructions on resolution at (800) 304-3107. In the meantime, organizations will not be awarded a grant prior to resolution.

Should an applicant be awarded a grant, ezFedGrants (USDA's financial grants management system) is linked with SAM to ensure funding payments are directed properly; therefore, entities must enter their banking information through SAM. Federal agencies cannot award funding to any organization not possessing an active registration in SAM.

B. Obtain Proposal Package from Grants.gov (www.grants.gov)

Federal agencies post competitive funding opportunities on Grants.gov and applicants must submit their application or proposal to apply for federal financial assistance through Grants.gov. Applicants can learn about grants by visiting Grants.gov (www.grants.gov), clicking on the **Learn Grants** tab and search for funding opportunities by clicking on the **Search Grants** tab on this site.

All Applicants will be required to register with Grants.gov in order to begin the proposal submission process. We strongly suggest you initiate this process immediately to avoid processing delays due to registration requirements. There is no cost for registration. This website is managed by the Department of Health and Human Services, not the OPPE. Many federal agencies use this website to post Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) announcements to the public. Click on the "Support" tab to contact their customer support personnel if you need help with submitting your application.

Applicants may download individual grant proposal forms from Grants.gov. For assistance with Grants.gov, consult the Applicant User Guide at http://grants.gov/assets/ApplicantUserGuide.pdf.

Federal funding agencies post funding opportunities on Grants.gov. The OPPE is not responsible for submission issues associated with Grants.gov. If you experience submission issues, contact Grants.gov support staff for assistance.

Proposals must be submitted by July 5, 2024 at 11:59 p.m. EDT. Proposals submitted after this deadline will not be considered.

C. Content of Proposal Package Submission

All submissions must contain completed and electronically signed original application forms, as well as a Project Narrative and a Budget Narrative as described below:

1. Required forms, documents, and attachments. The forms listed below can be found in the proposal package at Grants.gov and must be submitted with all applications. Required forms are provided in the package as fillable forms. Applicants must download and complete these forms and submit them in the application submission portal at Grants.gov. PDF documents listed below are documents the applicant must create and submit in PDF format. Use the checklist of required documents below to submit your application through Grants.gov:

   - ✓ Standard Form (SF) 424, Application for Federal Assistance
   - ✓ Project/Performance Site Location(s)
   - ✓ Project Abstract Summary
   - ✓ Project Narrative (**in PDF format)**
   - ✓ Standard Form (SF) 424A, Budget Information–Non-Construction Programs
   - ✓ Budget Narrative (**in PDF format**)
   - ✓ Key Contacts (list names of all key personnel expected to work on the project)
   - ✓ Grants.gov Lobbying Form

   Attachments Form (**where you may place all your appendices,** i.e., 501(c)3 Certificate/letter from the IRS (for non-profit organizations holding this status), Articles of Incorporation for all non-profit and community-based organizations (CBOs), Resumes for Key Project Personnel, Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) for non-federal entities wanting to claim 10% on Total Direct Cost, Letters of Partnership from non-federal entities, Letters of Intent, Letters of Support from non-federal entities, and other supporting documents, etc.)

Do not include lengthy or unnecessary organizational documents such as your organization's business plans, Annual Reports, or full course or training curriculums in your application. Excessively large documents in applications are cumbersome and increase downloading errors from Grants.gov and in forwarding to the Review Panel.

Below is further guidance, where needed, for completing the required forms, documents, and attachment forms listed above.

SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance

Complete all highlighted areas on this form. Pay particular attention to blocks 8a, b, and c, Legal Name of the organization applying for Federal Assistance, Tax Identification Number, and UEI. This information should indicate the Prime or Lead

applicant information (i.e., fiscal sponsor, if appropriate) that OPPE will use to determine initial applicant eligibility via SAM.gov. Also, pay particular attention to block 18a of the SF-424. This is the total 3-year award amount of federal funding you are requesting under the 2501 Program. This form is the official requesting document and the amount that will be considered if you should have any discrepancies between this form and your Budget Information Form, SF-424A. Ensure this form is completed with accuracy, particularly contact information: email addresses and phone numbers. The OPPE may not be able to reach you if your information is incorrect.

Project/Performance Site Location(s)
Complete all highlighted areas on this form. Add additional locations if your project will be carried out at additional sites.

Special note concerning project/performance site location(s) in Tribal Areas: Organizations that plan to work or interact with Native American groups and Tribal communities (both state and federally recognized) are asked to reach out to those communities to first obtain agreement/permission and prior to conducting presentations, creating printed materials, and distributing handouts.

Project Abstract Summary
A Project Abstract Summary is a concise summary about your project. No points will be added or subtracted for the Project Summary Page as it will be used only for informational purposes. It may be used in its entirety or in part for media purposes to include in press releases, informational emails to potential stakeholders or partners, to provide upper echelons of government with a snapshot of an organization, and for demographic purposes. **Do not restate the objectives of the 2501 Program** (i.e., "to provide outreach and technical assistance for underserved farmers and ranchers and military veterans farmers and ranchers"); the Project Abstract Summary should reflect the goal of your specific project. Limit your Project Abstract Summary to 250 words and include the following:

- Your organization's name;
- Name of your project;
- Three or four sentences describing your project;
- The primary underserved or military veteran groups to be served;
- The project's geographic service area (counties, state(s), etc.); and
- Project Director's name, email address, and telephone number.

Project Narrative (not to exceed 20 double-spaced pages) The Project Narrative is a document that you create. It must include a timeline of proposed activities. Formatting requirements for Project Narratives are 1-inch margins and 12-point font, and double-spaced. Number each page of the Project Narrative to indicate the total number of pages (i.e., 1 of 20, 2 of 20, etc.). **To ensure fairness and uniformity for all applicants, Project Narratives not conforming to this stipulation may not be considered.**

To assist in organizing your project narrative please use the following guidelines below:

- Project proposals should include a well-conceived strategy for addressing the programmatic mission areas stated in Section I, Part B, Scope of Work. Organizations should state which programmatic mission areas will be addressed.
- Define which underserved group(s) or military veterans will be served and establish the existence of the needs of these groups.
- Identify the geographic area of service.
- Discuss the potential impact of the project and how the impact of the project will be lasting after the project period ends.
- Clearly state your organization's 3-years of experience in delivering agriculture-related services to underserved or military veteran farmers and ranchers and provide documented proof.
- Clearly document how you plan to fulfill the requirement to coordinate efforts in partnership with the OPPE and USDA Service Centers in your state to maximize outreach and training in your service territory.
- Address strategies to help underserved or veteran farmers/ranchers in resolving heirs' property issues, or farm business/financial planning, or in developing underserved youths' interest in agriculture.
- Address strategies to help producers expand the food supply chain and strengthen local and regional food systems to ensure fairness, resilience, and equity.
- Discuss plans for informing producers, forest landowners, and rural communities about making science-based decisions to support climate change mitigation, climate resilience, and managing the impacts of climate change.
- Present strategies for removing barriers to access USDA programs and services for underserved communities, producers, and military veterans.
- Present strategies for addressing food and nutrition security.
- Discuss initiatives in generating business opportunities and economic development in rural areas.

- Programmatic and Financial Management Capability: Project proposals must: 1) identify the experience of the organization's key personnel taking part in the project, and details of successfully completed past projects; 2) identify the names of organizations that will be your non-federal partners in the project (if any); (3) identify the qualifications, relevant experience, education, and publications of each Project Manager or partners; and (4) specifically address the work to be completed by key personnel and their roles and responsibilities within the scope of the proposed project. This includes partnering scenarios whereas each partners' roles and responsibilities must be defined. Include key personnel resumes on the Attachment Form of the application.

- Monitoring plan and Data Collection Process: Clearly document a detailed plan for tracking and measuring project progress including the results of the project in terms of achieving expected project outputs and outcomes as stated in Section I, Part C, Performance Measures. Address both quantitative and qualitative data. A mitigation or contingency plan should also be addressed.

- Timelines are an integral part of your project and must be included in your Project Narrative. In an organized format, create a timeline for each task to be accomplished during the entire 3-year proposed period of performance. Relate each task to one of the five programmatic mission areas in Section I, Part B. The timeline is part of the 20-page limit and should be detailed enough to show your activities, start and end dates, assigned personnel, milestones, and deliverables in a chronological order. The timeline may be in a table format and does not have to be double-spaced.

Attach your Project Narrative in PDF format to the Mandatory Project Narrative form in your Grants.gov package.

SF-424A, Budget Information–Non-Construction Programs

Provide as much information as possible on the SF-424A for each year of your project. For example, on page 1 of SF-424A, line 1 across may indicate year one of your project, line 2 across may indicate year two of your project, and line 3 across may indicate year three of your project. On page 1A of SF-424A, columns 1 through 3 may represent each year of your project. All cost categories on page 1A of this form are considered direct costs. **Indirect cost rates exceeding 10 percent will not be permitted.**

An applicant may apply its Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) up to the statutory limit of 10 percent. In this case, the amount charged as indirect cannot be more than 10 percent of the total funds received. Entities applying their NICRA up to the 10 percent limit would base their indirect costs on Total Direct Costs (TDC). Include your NICRA Agreement on the Attachment Form of the Application.

Applicants that do not have a NICRA may apply the de minimis indirect cost rate of 10 percent. In this case, the amount charged as indirect would be based on 10 percent of the Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC). Please see 2 CFR 200.1 for the definition of Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC).

Budget Narrative (not to exceed 5 pages)

The Budget Narrative is a document that you create. It must be no more than five pages. It does NOT have to be double spaced. You may use tables. While the OPPE understands that your proposed budget is an estimation of costs, your Budget Narrative should be based on financial forecasting assumptions. The Budget Narrative should identify and describe the costs associated with the proposed project, including total costs for subawards or contracts and indirect costs. Budget narratives for subawards should remain separate from the Prime or Lead applicant budget but award amount for subawards should be reflected in the Contractual Cost category of the Prime applicant's budget. All costs should be very detailed and descriptive as to their purpose. Review 2 CFR part 200 Subpart E—Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards to ensure your project is not planned with unallowable costs. Applicants may charge their negotiated indirect cost rate or 10 percent, whichever is lower. **Indirect cost rates exceeding 10 percent**

will not be permitted. Each cost indicated must be reasonable, allocable, necessary, and allowable under 2 CFR part 200, Subpart E in order to be funded.

- Cost categories, also called Object Class Categories, include costs for Personnel, Fringe Benefits, Travel, Equipment, Supplies, Contractual, and Other costs.
  - **Personnel** costs: For each key staff person, provide the name (if known), title, time commitment to the project as a percentage of a full-time equivalent (FTE), annual salary, and grant funded salary. You may refer to the prevailing wage rates established by the Department of Labor by occupation and geographical area. Compensation for personnel services (whether classified as personnel, contractual services, or any other form) may not exceed the pro-rated equivalent of Step III of the Executive Schedule for Federal Employees.
  - Costs of consultants, subgrants, or contractors should be included in the "Contractual" cost category.
  - **Fringe Benefits**: Provide a break-down of amounts and percentages that comprise fringe benefit costs such as health insurance, FICA, retirement, etc.
  - **Travel costs**: Provide specifics on purpose of travel, number of travelers, destination, and estimates on costs for airfare, lodging, meals, car rentals, and incidentals. The Federal Travel Regulations should be used as a guide.
  - **Equipment**: Any article of nonexpendable, tangible personal property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost which equals or exceeds the lesser of (a) the capitalization level established by the organization for financial statement purposes, or (b) $5,000. For each type of equipment requested, provide a description of the equipment, the cost per unit, the number of units, the total cost, and a plan for use on the project, as well as use or disposal of the equipment after the project ends. The Recipient shall maintain an annual inventory, which will include a brief description of the item, serial number, and amount of purchase for equipment purchased with grant funds, or received under a grant, and having a $5,000 or more per unit cost. The inventory must also identify the sub-award under which the equipment was purchased. Maintenance and insurance will be the responsibility of the Recipient. Title of equipment will remain with the Recipient until closeout when disposition will be provided in writing by OPPE within 120 days of submission of final reports.
  - **Supplies**: Specify general categories of supplies and their costs (less than $5,000). Show computations and provide other information which supports the amount requested.
  - **Contractual costs**: Costs should entail all contracts for services and goods that further the work of the project only. Specifically identify parties receiving federal funds from you as a pass-through entity. These parties would be considered subrecipients (subawardees) or contractors (See 2 CFR 200.331 Subrecipient and contractor determinations).

- Include third party evaluation contracts (if applicable) and contracts with secondary recipient organizations. Demonstrate that all procurement transactions will be conducted in a manner to provide, to the maximum extent practical, free, fair, and open competition. Identify proposed sub-contractor work and the cost of each sub-contractor. Provide a detailed budget for each sub-contractor that is expected to perform work estimated to be $30,000 or more, or 50% of the total work effort, whichever is less.
- Identify each planned subcontractor and its total proposed budget. Each subcontractor's budget and supporting detail should be included as part of the applicant's budget narrative.
- Provide the following information for each planned subcontract: a brief description of the work to be subcontracted; the number of quotes solicited and received, if applicable; the cost or price analysis performed by the applicant; names and addresses of the subcontractors tentatively selected and the basis for their selection; e.g., unique capabilities (for sole source subcontracts), low bidder, delivery schedule, technical competence; type of contract and estimated cost and fee or profit; and, affiliation with the applicant, if any.
- Include all **Subawards** under Contractual Costs. Per 2 CFR part 200.1, Subaward refers to an award provided by a pass-through entity (your organization) to a subrecipient for the subrecipient to carry out part of a federal award received by the pass-through entity. It does not include payments to a contractor or payments to an individual that is a beneficiary of a federal program. A subaward may be provided through any form of legal agreement, including an agreement that the pass-through entity considers a contract.

  ***Subaward budgets*:** Roles and responsibilities must be defined to determine the level of involvement and efforts to increase training and outreach to underserved farmers and ranchers. If applicable, identify each planned subaward and its total proposed budget. Include a brief description of the work to be performed.

- **Other costs**: Identify and describe in detail any other costs not identified in the above cost categories. Examples of "Other" costs include items such as participant support costs, rent, utilities, leased equipment and costs associated with an organization's day-to-day operations such as custodial workers would be an example of "Other" costs. Provide an itemized list with costs and state the basis for each proposed item.

Special notes when creating your budget:

1. **Review "Unallowable Use of 2501 Grant Program Funds" under the SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION section of this announcement.**

2. Costs must be deemed reasonable. This includes salaries for key personnel which may not exceed the prevailing wage rates established by the Department of Labor by occupation and geographical area (see 2 CFR § 200.404).

3. Food for attendees of conferences may not exceed $20 per person per meal, not to exceed two meals per day. There is a high burden of proof to show that paying for food and beverages with federal funds is necessary to meet the goals and objectives of a federal grant. When hosting a meeting, organizations should structure the agenda so that there is time for participants to purchase their own food and beverages. In some circumstances where the cost would be permissible, for example, location or lack of an easy access to food and beverages, applicants would need to justify that these costs are reasonable and necessary.

4. Animals acquired and used for demonstration projects only, may not exceed $4000, which includes any transportation costs, feed/feeding lot, etc.

5. Grant funds may NOT be used to pay attendees as an incentive for participation in conferences nor be advertised as such.

6. For a list of unallowable costs, see 2 CFR Part 200 Subpart E.

7. Limitation on Indirect costs. A recipient of a 2501 grant may not use more than 10 percent of the funds received for the indirect costs of carrying out their grant project, per the Farm Bill. If an entity is using the 10% de minimis rate, they must apply it to the Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC). See 2 CFR 200.1 for definition of MTDC. An entity may apply its Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) up to the statutory limit of 10%. In this case, the amount charged as indirect can be applied to the Total Direct Cost (TDC) but the entity must include their NICRA Agreement as an attachment in their application. Applicants may charge their negotiated indirect cost rate or 10 percent, whichever is lower.

Attach your Budget Narrative in PDF format to the Mandatory Budget Narrative form in your Grants.gov package.

Key Contacts Form

All key personnel conducting pertinent activities on your project should be listed on your Key Contact Form. This does not include administrative personnel. At a minimum, the names of at least two key personnel should be provided to ensure that we are able to contact your organization. Provide first, middle, and last names of all key personnel that will be working on the proposed project. All organizations should submit at least a Project Director or Manager and a Financial Representative. Additional Key Contacts Forms may be used as necessary. **Ensure this form is completed with accuracy. Individuals not listed on an applicants' Key Contacts Form will not receive information about or access to data that concerns the applicant organization.**

Attachments Form for Appendices

Nonprofit organizations must submit abbreviated Articles of Incorporation (must have been established at least 3 years prior to application submission) and if a non-profit organization holds a 501(c)3 status determination from the IRS, they must also include their 501(c)3 Certificate/Letter from the IRS in their application. Nonprofit entities that do not submit a 501(c)3 Certificate/Letter from the IRS in their application will be placed in Category 3 for competition purposes. Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreements (NICRA) should also be included as an attachment for entities charging indirect costs to the Total Direct Cost of the award. All applicants should submit résumés for key personnel and subaward key personnel; non-federal Letters of Partnership, Commitment or Intent, Memoranda of Understanding with partner organizations; Letters of Support from non-federal entities; or other supporting documentation which is encouraged but not required. Using this Attachment Form in your Grants.gov application package, applicants can consolidate all supplemental materials into one attachment or attach appendices documents individually. Do not include documents from other sections on the Attachment Form. Note, several laws and ethics regulations restrict the authority of federal agencies and employees from providing letters of support for grant proposals and applications. Letters of Support must come from non-federal entities.

DO NOT PASSWORD PROTECT ANY OF YOUR SUBMITTED DOCUMENTS OR FORMS. Password protected documents cannot be viewed by the OPPE or the Review Panel.

D. Subawards and Partnerships

Funding may be used to provide subawards, which includes using subawards to fund partnerships; however, the lead recipient must utilize at least 50 percent of the total funds awarded, and no more than three sub-awards will be permitted. Subawardees and partners are generally responsible for carrying out grant activities as assigned. All subawardees and partners are subject to the requirements and responsibilities on the grant and must be a nonprofit or institution of higher education. This does not apply to contractors as they support the grant activities by providing goods and services. Specifically indicate subawardees in your application (if any). See 2 CFR 200.331 Subrecipient and contractor determinations. All applicants, including the lead or prime applicant if applying as a coalition of nonprofits, are responsible for ensuring that all subawardees comply with applicable requirements for subawards and are subject to the Terms and Conditions of the Agreement, if awarded. Applicants must provide documentation of a competitive bidding process for services, contracts, and products, including consultants and contractors, and conduct cost and price analyses to the extent required by applicable procurement regulations.

The OPPE awards funds to one eligible applicant as the lead or prime award recipient. The lead or prime applicant must be indicated as the responsible party if other organizations are named as partners or co-applicants or members of a coalition or consortium. The lead or prime award recipient will be held accountable to the OPPE for the proper administrative requirements and expenditure of all funds.

Per OMB guidance, federal awarding agencies are required to check the SAM Exclusions list of persons and entities ineligible for federal awards. This requirement flows down to federal award recipients who are required to check SAM Exclusions for all subawards and contracts. Lead or prime recipients must obtain prior written approval from the awarding agency for all proposed subawards, regardless of size, for all subawards not included in the original proposal (see 2 CFR 200.308(c)(6)). For all subawards, prime recipients must confirm that they have conducted a risk-assessment of each of the proposed subrecipient(s) by name; and verify that each subrecipient does not have active exclusions in SAM and does not appear on the Suspension and Debarment List.

E. Submission Dates and Times

The closing date and time for receipt of proposal submissions is July 5, 2024, at 11:59 p.m., EDT, via Grants.gov (www.grants.gov). Proposals received after the submission deadline will be considered late without further consideration. Proposals must be submitted through Grants.gov without exception. Additionally, organizations must also be registered in the System of Awards Management (SAM) at: www.sam.gov.

Creating an account for both websites can take several weeks to receive account verification and/or PIN numbers. Allow sufficient time to complete access requirements for these websites. Grants.gov supports many federal granting agencies and their applicants. Delaying the submission of your application until the last day could be result in your application not being received on time due to issues pertaining to a high volume of users, system maintenance, issues with registration, having a pending registration because of a backlogged system, and expired SAM.gov registrations. **The proposal submission deadline is firm.**

F. Confidential Information

In accordance with 2 CFR part 200, the names of entities submitting proposals, as well as proposal contents and evaluations, will be kept confidential to the extent permissible by law. Any information that the applicant wishes to have considered as confidential, privileged, or proprietary should be clearly marked as such in the proposal. If an applicant chooses to include confidential or proprietary information in the proposal, it will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law.

G. Pre-Submission Proposal Assistance

1. **The OPPE may not assist individual applicants by reviewing draft proposals or providing advice on how to respond to evaluation criteria**. However, the OPPE will respond to questions from individual applicants regarding eligibility criteria, administrative issues related to the submission of the proposal, and requests for clarification regarding the announcement. Any questions should be submitted to 2501Grants@usda.gov. Additionally, the OPPE will host public teleconferences to address questions and clarify requirements during the open period of this solicitation. Dates, time, and phone numbers are provided on Page 1 of this announcement.

2. The OPPE will post questions and answers relating to this funding opportunity during its open period on the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) section of our website: www.partnerships.usda.gov/socially-disadvantaged-farmers-and-ranchers. Reviewing this section of our website will likely save you valuable time. The OPPE will update the FAQs on a weekly basis and conduct teleconferences on an as-needed basis.

3. Terms and Conditions of the Award. Awarded entities will receive a copy of the Terms and Conditions of the Award prior to acceptance.

4. Applicants selected for funding must inform their participants that USDA, or any of its third-party representatives, may contact them for quality assurance.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

Only eligible entities whose proposals meet the threshold criteria in Section III of this announcement will be reviewed according to the evaluation criteria set forth below. Applicants should explicitly and fully address these criteria as part of their proposal package. Each proposal will be evaluated under the regulations established under 2 CFR §200.205.

The Panel will use a point system to rate each proposal, awarding a maximum of 100 points for nonprofit community-based organizations and 95 points for all institutions of higher education. Each proposal will be reviewed by at least two members of the Panel. Panel members will review and score all applications that meet the initial eligibility review. The Panel will numerically score and rank each application. Funding decisions will be based on the Panel's rank score. Final funding decisions will be made by the designated approving official and are not appealable.

Please be patient as processing all submitted applications, vetting organizations, proposal reviews, approval process, and agreement creation is a lengthy process. All applicants will be notified electronically of their application status when final selections have been made and will be provided an opportunity for application feedback as provided within the correspondence.

Evaluation Criteria for New Grants Proposals

CRITERIA	POINTS
Project Narrative (applicable to criteria 1 through 6)	
1. Does the Project Narrative address at least two of the 2501 Programmatic Mission areas and is it presented in the required formatting composition? (should not exceed 20 pages and should have 1-inch margins, 12-point font, and be double spaced)? Graphs do not need to be double-spaced.	Up to 5 points
2. Does the applicant clearly establish a need for the project that assists at least one group of underserved or veteran farmers or ranchers and conveys the impact their project will have on stakeholders? Groups include: African American, American Indian or Native American, Alaska Native, Hispanic or Latino, Asian American, Pacific Islander, Military Veterans, and Immigrant and Refugee farmers and ranchers in the previously named groups. **Note**: Applicants may assist either underserved farmers and ranchers or military veteran farmers and ranchers, or both groups. There are no additional points for addressing both of these groups. Conversely, there are no points deducted if your proposal addresses only one of these groups.	Up to 5 points
3. Does the applicant tie their project activities to the goals they are trying to accomplish in addressing at least two of the five 2501 Programmatic Mission areas? **Note:** See Section I, Part B, Scope of Work of this notice for the five 2501 Programmatic Mission areas.	Up to 5 points
4. Does the applicant provide a well-planned Timeline that is detailed and contains dates for each activity performed that relates to one of the 2501 Programmatic Mission areas?	Up to 5 points
5. Does the applicant describe a collaborative network of partners/collaborators with expertise and resources and clearly defines project roles for each key partner/collaborator?	Up to 5 points
6. Does the applicant convey sustainability of the project and their partnerships/collaborations beyond the life of the proposed project period or a compelling explanation of how the project impact will be lasting after the project period ends?	Up to 5 points
Secretary of Agriculture Priorities (applicable to criteria 7 to 13)	
7. The Secretary of Agriculture shall give priority to nonprofit and community-based organizations (CBOs) with expertise in working with underserved farmers and ranchers or military veteran farmers or ranchers. Only nonprofit organizations and CBOs will receive 5 points on this question.	5 points for non-profit organizations and CBOs

8. The Secretary of Agriculture places a priority for funding on projects that present problem-solving strategies that help underserved or military veteran farmers and ranchers in resolving heirs' property or land title issues, or farm business/financial planning, or strategies in developing underserved youths' interest in agriculture. **Note:** Applicants will receive up to 5 points for addressing any single issue within this criterion.	Up to 5 points
9. The Secretary of Agriculture places a priority for funding on projects that align with assistance in providing avenues that help producers expand the middle of the food supply chain and strengthen local and regional food systems to ensure a food supply chain that is fair, resilient, and equitable.	Up to 5 points
10. The Secretary of Agriculture places a priority for funding on projects that address informing underserved and veteran farmers/ranchers, forest landowners, and rural communities about USDA's resources to assist in making informed, science-based decisions to support climate change mitigation and build climate resilience such as emissions reductions, carbon sequestration, and supporting them in managing the impacts of climate change.	Up to 5 points
11. The Secretary of Agriculture places a priority for funding on projects that present problem-solving strategies for removing barriers to access USDA programs and services including ensuring USDA resources reach underserved communities.	Up to 5 points
12. The Secretary of Agriculture places a priority for funding on projects that present strategies for addressing food and nutrition security and partnering with USDA to ensure all Americans have consistent and equitable access to healthy, safe, and affordable foods?	Up to 5 points
13. The Secretary of Agriculture places a priority for funding on projects that propose relief assistance and economic development initiatives to generate business opportunities and economic development in rural areas for underserved, veteran, and beginning farmers or ranchers and youth.	Up to 5 points
Programmatic and Financial Management	
14. Does the applicant clearly explain their programmatic and financial management capability based on organizational resources, staff experience/qualifications, and in successfully managing and completing their proposed project based on previous successes?	Up to 5 points
Monitoring Plan and Data Collection (applicable to criteria 15 and 16)	
15. Does the applicant provide a monitoring plan and data collection process for evaluating whether they are reaching their goals, to measure their project's impact, or to make any needed adjustments to their project to ensure their goals are met?	Up to 5 points

16. Does the applicant establish baselines and outcome-based performance measures expressed in both quantitative and qualitative data by comparing expected results to actual results and are they realistic and specific?	Up to 5 points
Budget (applicable to criteria 17 to 20)	
17. Does the amount of federal funds requested on the SF424 Application for Federal Assistance form (block 18a), the total amount requested on the SF424A Budget Information form, and the Budget Narrative all match?	Up to 5 points
18. Is the budget detailed, well organized, and all expenses, including subawardees' budgets (if any), support the work outlines and is it correctly calculated? Applicants with subawardees should include the subawardees' budget narrative(s) in addition to their own.	Up to 5 points
19. Has sufficient time been allocated by Project Directors, Co-Project Directors to adequately address the project activities and overall objectives of the proposed project?	Up to 5 points
20. Are all associated costs allowable, reasonable, necessary, and allocable and listed in the appropriate cost categories? The size of the budget must be commensurate with project scope.	Up to 5 points

C. Selection of Independent Panel Members

All eligible applications will be reviewed by an independent panel. Panel members are selected based upon training and experience in assisting underserved and military veteran farmers and ranchers. This assistance includes, but is not limited to, bringing increased awareness of USDA's programs and services in underserved communities, outreach, technical assistance, cooperative extension services, civil rights, education, statistical and ethnographic data collection and analysis, and agricultural programs, and are drawn from a diverse group of experts, including USDA Program Managers and/or Grants Specialists and applicant peers, to create a balanced, independent panel.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Proposal Notifications and Feedback

1. Successful applicants will be notified by the OPPE via telephone, email, and/or postal mail that its proposed project has been recommended for award. **The notification**

will be sent to the Project Manager listed as such on the Key Contact Sheet. Project Managers may also be the Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) and authorized to sign on behalf of the organization. If not, indicate on the Key Contact Sheet who serves as your organization's AOR. It is imperative that these individuals are responsive to notifications by the OPPE. If the individual is no longer in the position, notify the OPPE immediately to that you will be updating your organization's Key Contacts form and forwarding a résumé of the new key personnel. The grant agreement will be forwarded to the recipient for execution and must be returned to the OPPE Director, who is the authorizing official. Once grant documents are executed by all parties, authorization to begin work will be given. At a minimum, this process can take up to 30 days from the date of notification.

2. All applicants and award recipients shall be subject to the U.S. Government's conflict of interest policy as outlined in 2 CFR Part 200, § 200.112 and 2 CFR Part 400, §400.2. Failure to resolve conflicts of interest in a manner that satisfies the government may be cause for immediate termination of the award or further action resulting in suspension and debarment. See Section II Award Information of this announcement.

3. **Within 10 days of award status notification, unsuccessful applicants may request feedback on their application.** Feedback will be provided as expeditiously as possible. Feedback sessions will be in written format but may also be provided verbally; however, verbal feedback will only convey Panel comments and will be scheduled contingent upon the number of requests and in accordance with 7 CFR § 2500.026.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

All awards resulting from this solicitation will be administered in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards codified at 2 CFR part 200, as supplemented by USDA implementing regulations at 2 CFR parts 400 and 415, and the OPPE Federal Financial Assistance Programs–General Award Administrative Procedures, 7 CFR part 2500. In compliance with its obligations under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Executive Order 13166, it is the policy of the OPPE to provide timely and meaningful access for persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) to projects, programs, and activities administered by federal grant recipients. Recipient organizations must comply with these obligations upon acceptance of grant agreements as written in the OPPE's Terms and Conditions. Following these guidelines is essential to the success of our mission to improve access to USDA programs for underserved and military veteran farmers and ranchers.

C. Reporting Requirement

Your approved statement of work (Project Narrative), timeline, and budget are your guiding documents in carrying out the activities of your project and for your reporting requirements. Familiarize yourself with USDA's grants management system called

ezFedGrants: https://www.usda.gov/ocfo/ezfedgrants. In accordance with 2 CFR part 200, the following reporting requirements will apply to awards provided under this NOFO. The OPPE reserves the right to revise the schedule and format of reporting requirements as necessary in the award agreement.

1. Semi-annual Progress Reports and Financial Reports will be required as follows:

   - *Semi-annual Progress Reports*. The recipient is required to provide a detailed narrative of project performance and activities as described in the award agreement. Semi-annual progress reports must be submitted to the designated OPPE official via ezFedGrants within 30 days after the end of each reporting period. This includes, but is not limited to, activities completed, events held, and the release of sign-in sheets with participants' contact information.

   - *Semi-annual Financial Reports*. The recipient must submit SF 425, Federal Financial Report to the designated OPPE official via ezFedGrants within 30 days after the end of each reporting period.

     NOTE: OPPE has the discretion to require quarterly reports based upon non-federal entities' performance progress and administration of grant funds.

2. Final Progress and Financial Reports will be required upon project completion. The Final Progress Report must include a summary of the project or activity throughout the funding period, achievements of the project or activity, and a discussion of overall successes and issues experienced in conducting the project or project activities. It should convey the impact your project had on the communities you served and discuss the project's accomplishments in achieving expected outcomes. This requirement includes, but is not limited to, the number of new USDA applicants as a result of your award, the number of approved applicants for USDA programs and services, increased awareness of USDA programs and services, etc.

3. The final Financial Report should consist of a complete SF-425 indicating the total costs of the project. Final Progress and Financial Reports must be submitted to the designated OPPE official via ezFedGrants within 120 days after the completion of the award period as follows:

Report	Performance Period	Due Date	Grace Period
Form SF-425, Federal Financial Report & Performance Progress Report (*Due semi-annually*)	1 October thru 31 March 1 April thru 30 September	March 31 September 30	30 days until 30 April 30 days until 30 October
Final Financial and Progress Reports	120 days after project completion		

***Dates subject to change at the discretion of OPPE.**

Signed this ____ day of _____.

_____
Lisa R. Ramirez, Ed.D.
Director
Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement