OMB No. 0581-0240

Agricultural Marketing Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Dairy Business Innovation Initiatives

Fiscal Year 2026 Notice of Funding Opportunity

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-AMS-TM-DBI-G-26-0011

Publication Date: September 30, 2026

Application Due Date: 11:59 PM Eastern Time on January 4, 2027

This NOFO was amended to revise the cost-share requirement and extend the application deadline to January 4,2027. DBI initiatives are no longer required to provide cost share as part of their applications. Instead, cost-share is required at the subaward level, with percentages ranging from 10% to 25%.

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1.0 BASIC INFORMATION

Federal Agency: Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)

Funding Opportunity Title: Dairy Business Innovation Initiatives

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-AMS-TM-DBI-G-26-0011

Assistance Listing Number: 10.176

Type of Federal Assistance: AMS will use a Grant Agreement to provide a federal award to successful applicants.

Type of Application: *New applications* will be reviewed for conformity using the criteria described in ***section 6.0.***

Application Deadline: January 4, 2027, through Grants.gov at 11:59 pm Eastern Time.

1.1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), requests applications for fiscal year (FY) 2026 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 $12.65 million is available to fund these initiatives. In the FY 2025 application cycle, AMS funded four applications from the existing initiatives awarding a total of $11,040,000.

AMS strongly encourages DBI initiatives to prioritize subaward funding for projects that request equipment and infrastructure activities in their proposals for these FY2026 funds. See the DBI Specific Terms and Conditions for guidance on allowable equipment and construction costs. Equipment and infrastructure investments are critical to strengthening the dairy industry and overall dairy businesses capacity and DBI is currently uniquely positioned to offer such targeted funding opportunities.

1.2 2026 HIGHLIGHTS AND CHANGES

Below are highlights of major changes to the program since the last Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), (formerly known as a Request for Applications, or RFA) was issued.

- The AMS General Terms and Conditions (AMS GT&C) have been updated to reflect changes to the Uniform Guidance (2 CFR Part 200) and to align with the USDA General Terms and Conditions (USDA GT&C) for Federal Awards that were published on December 31, 2025. Both sets of General Terms and Conditions set out requirements for recipients.

- AMS' General Terms and Conditions include citations to 2 CFR Part 200 and USDA GT&C citations to ensure recipients are aware of all requirements.

- Specific AMS updates reflecting 2024 Uniform Guidance updates include those to section ***6.1 Risk Review*** of this document, ***3.6 Allowable and Unallowable Cost and Activities***, and ***8.1 Administrative and National Policy Requirements***, as included in the AMS and USDA T&Cs.

- There is no cost share requirement for the four DBI initiatives. A mandatory cost share is required for all subaward grants to dairy businesses, equal to 10-25 percent of the amount of Federal funds being requested, in the form of cash and/or in-kind contributions. See section ***2.3 Cost Sharing Requirements*** for additional guidance. **NOTE**: While this NOFO provides flexibility between 10 and 25 percent cost share on dairy business subawards, future years may require a 25% cost share on subaward grants to dairy businesses.

1.3 AVAILABLE FUNDING

Anticipated Available Funding: Approximately $12.65 million. Enactment of future legislation may affect the availability or levels of funding for this program. There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application, to guarantee minimum funding levels, or to make a specific number of awards.

Anticipated Number of Awards: Awards will be made to the four existing Dairy Business Initiatives.

Cost Share Requirement: This year's applications must include a mandatory cost share for each subaward grant made to dairy businesses, in the form of cash or in-kind contributions equal to 10 to 25 percent of the amount of Federal funds being requested. There is no cost share requirement for the primary applicant's work to manage the subaward program. See ***section 2.3*** for additional guidance.

1.4 FEDERAL AWARD PERIOD DURATION AND SIZE

AMS expects applicants to complete their projects within the required performance period. AMS encourages applicants to use the full performance period to allow for enough time to complete projects. However, a project may be completed before the scheduled performance period end date. The applicant must indicate the start date and end date on Block 17 of the SF-424 "Application for Federal Assistance."

Each initiative is eligible to apply for the eligible funding and for the period of performance indicated in the tables below. If an initiative applies for less than its available amount, AMS will redistribute the remaining portion of available funds among the other initiatives.

Duration (Months)	Start Date	End Date
36	March 1, 2027*	February 28, 2030*

*Dates are approximate. Start dates are set at the time of the award.

Dairy Business Initiative	Available Funding
California State University Fresno Foundation	$2,300,000
University of Tennessee	$3,450,000
Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets	$3,450,000
University of Wisconsin	$3,450,000

1.5 TIPS FOR APPLICANTS

- **To submit your application electronically in Grants.gov, you must:**
  - Have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and a Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN);
  - Be registered in SAM.gov;
  - Provide your UEI number and TIN on your application; and
  - Maintain an active and current SAM registration.
- **Allow time for Registration Completion:**
  - The organization registration process can take as long as four weeks.
  - Complete registration as early as possible to meet all deadlines. See ***section 5.0*** for more information.
- **Review of General Terms and Conditions:**
  - Review the AMS GT&C and USDA GT&C to understand allowable and unallowable costs.
- **Ensure File Compatibility:**
  - Use the latest version of Adobe Reader that is compatible with Grants.gov.
- **File Naming and Size:**
  - Limit file names to 50 characters or fewer.
  - Do not use special characters in file names (e.g. $, %, &, *, Spanish "ñ", etc.).
- **Attachment Upload:**
  - Use the “Add Attachments” button in Grants.gov to upload.
  - Do not use the paperclip icon in Adobe Reader.
- **File Security and Formatting:**
  - Do not password protect files.
  - Accept all tracked changes in documents before submission.
- **Accurate Data Entry:**
  - Verify that your UEI number is correctly entered on the SF-424 form cover page.
- **Grants.gov Resources for Support:**
  - Applicant FAQs
  - Workspace Overview

By following these steps and recommendations, applicants can reduce errors, meet deadlines, and ensure compliance with submission requirements.

1.6 TIMING TO OBTAIN & SUBMIT GRANTS.GOV REQUIRED ELEMENTS

Required Action	Timing to Obtain/Submit
AMS Deadline to receive final application and all supporting materials through Grants.Gov	January 4, 2027 – 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)	Up to 4 weeks
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 4 weeks

1.7 AGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

1.7.1 AMS PROGRAM CONTACTS

After closely reviewing this NOFO in its entirety, applicants and other interested parties that have questions are encouraged to contact the DBI program staff by e-mail at IPPGrants@usda.gov.

AMS provides resources and information on the DBI website (https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/dbi) that may be helpful to applicants, including descriptions of funded projects, and required application forms. AMS staff are available to provide timely technical assistance related to the application process. Staff cannot provide feedback on the merits of the application.

Dairy Business Innovation Initiatives
USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 1510-S South Building
Stop 0264
Washington, DC 20250-0264
https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/dbi

1.7.2 GRANTS.GOV CONTACT INFORMATION

All questions regarding Grants.gov technical assistance must be directed to Applicant Support. Applicants may also call the 24/7 (except federal holidays) toll-free support number 1-800-518-4726 or email support@grants.gov.

1.8 STAKEHOLDER INPUT

AMS seeks comments about this NOFO and considers comments to the extent possible when developing future NOFOs. Written comments may be submitted to: AMSGrants@usda.gov. This e-mail address is intended only for receiving comments regarding this NOFO and not for requesting information or forms. In your email subject line, please state that you are commenting on the **Dairy Business Innovation Initiatives NOFO**.

2.0 ELIGIBILITY

2.1 ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants are current initiatives which were competitively selected to fulfill the purpose of the program (see ***section 3.2***). Initiatives will continue work already started under their previous awards. A list of the Initiatives with their selection fiscal year is listed below.

- The California State University Fresno Foundation (FY2021);
- The University of Tennessee (FY2019);
- The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (FY2019); and
- The University of Wisconsin (FY2019).

2.2 PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS

Applicants may engage partners or collaborators, including through subcontracts or subagreements, to support implementation activities. These activities may include, but are not limited to, conducting outreach to potential applicants, technical assistance, application support, or other program administration activities related to the competitive subaward process. Partners and collaborators may come from private or public, for-profit, or nonprofit organizations or entities with expertise or experience in dairy, including the marketing, research, education, or promotion of dairy.

- A *partner* is in a relationship involving close cooperation with the applicant and shares responsibilities in the management of the project.
- A *collaborator* is a person or an organization that cooperates with the applicant in the conduct of the project and is not immediately connected to the management of the project.

Applicants must disclose any potential conflicts of interest to the USDA awarding agency or pass-through entity, including organizational conflicts of interest relating to relationships with a parent company, affiliate, or subsidiary organization, shared or overlapping governance structure, or other relationship between or among the applicant and its partners and collaborators. The relationships must follow ***section 1.7*** of the USDA GT&C and may be subject to AMS review and approval.

Applicants are required to show evidence of existing community or industry support and engagement.

2.3 COST SHARING REQUIREMENTS

2.3.1 COST SHARE FOR APPLICANTS

The current initiatives are not required to provide a cost share as part of their application associated with the management of the subaward program. A cost share is required at the subaward level for grants made to dairy businesses.

2.3.2 GRANTS TO DAIRY BUSINESSES

The current initiatives must ensure that each eligible dairy business receiving a subaward grant under ***section 3.3.2*** provides cost share in the form of cash or in-kind contributions equal to 10 to 25 percent of the total federal funds received under the subaward.

Cash contributions are generally defined as actual monetary funds (not the 'value' of someone's time/effort) from the applicant's general revenue/reserves/savings/line of credit, or 3rd-party partner(s), or other non-Federal grants. The applicant must be able to track and show the source of the cost share, and that the funding source will be dedicated entirely to the subaward grant project, and the subaward recipient may be required to produce records to that effect (for example, taking the cash cost share in the subawardee accounting system, or from its partner, and placing it into a special 'grant project' account).

In-kind contributions are generally defined as the value of goods or services provided by the contributor for the benefit of the grant project, where no funds transferred hands. For example, a partner, such as a Tribal community member, may volunteer their professional expertise as an in-kind contribution to the project as described in 2 CFR 200.306(e).

Cost sharing must be in the form of allowable direct or indirect costs. Only subaward applicants with a valid Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) can use indirect costs as a source of cost sharing.

All cost sharing contributions must be committed or secured at the time the applicant is selected for a subaward. A subaward will not be approved unless all cost-sharing funds over the life of the grant are secured. Additional anticipated cost sharing funds not in place by the time the subaward project starts cannot be counted toward the cost sharing requirement.

Cost share contributions (either cash or in-kind) cannot be used for this program if they are already being used toward satisfying a cost share requirement under any other Federal grant agreement.

Subaward applicants may not use Federal funds of any kind (as defined in 2CFR 200.306(b)(5)) as cost share.

Subaward applicants must indicate the total cost share amount and how it will specifically align with their requested funding when completing the fiscal plan and resources sections of the DBI Project Narrative (see ***section 4.4***).

Refer to 2 CFR 200.306 for additional Federal requirements and definitions, including the basis for determining the value of cash and in-kind contributions.

3.0 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

3.1 LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The Dairy Business Innovation (DBI) Initiatives are authorized by 7 U.S.C. 1632d.

3.2 PURPOSE

This program assists existing 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:

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

This NOFO is to announce funding to current initiatives for FY 2026. See ***section 2.1*** for more information.

AMS strongly encourages DBI initiatives to prioritize subaward funding for projects that request equipment and infrastructure activities in their proposals for these FY2026 funds. See the DBI Specific Terms and Conditions for guidance on allowable equipment and construction costs. Equipment and infrastructure investments are critical to strengthening the dairy industry and overall dairy businesses capacity and DBI is currently uniquely positioned to offer such targeted funding opportunities.

3.3 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Initiatives must provide some level of technical assistance and use at least 50% and up to 100% of the funding to make competitive subgrants to dairy businesses. This includes continuing their capacity to provide consultation and expertise necessary to advance the purpose and activities of the program and to distribute and track subawards to dairy businesses. Initiatives should 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 direct technical assistance and subgrants to dairy businesses mentioned below. AMS may suspend or terminate funds to an initiative if the Initiative is found to be in violation of conflict-of-interest or other standards in accordance with 2 CFR 400.2(b) 2 CFR 200.112 and the DBI Program-Specific Terms and Conditions. AMS will request that host initiatives submit subaward solicitation documents and proposed subaward packages to AMS prior to issuance for confirmation of compliance with 2 CFR 200.332 and to determine if any subaward in the application package is subject to National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review.

3.3.1 DIRECT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO DAIRY BUSINESSES

Initiatives should provide non-monetary direct technical assistance to dairy businesses through either private consultation or widely available distribution. Technical assistance may be provided directly through the host initiative, through contracting with industry experts, or through 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.

3.3.2 SUBAWARDS TO DAIRY BUSINESSES

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

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

Initiatives may provide a non-competitive subaward to an entity that receives direct technical assistance as described in ***section 3.3.1*** to advance the business activities recommended as a result of that assistance.

Initiatives must implement subawards as follows:

- Allocate at least 50 percent and up to 100% 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.
- Each subaward requires a cost share in the form of cash or in-kind contributions equal to 10 to 25 percent of the total federal funds received under the subaward, as described in ***section 2.3.2***.
- Initiatives must submit subaward solicitation documents and proposed subaward packages to AMS prior to issuance for confirmation of compliance with 2 CFR 200.332 and to determine if any subaward in the application package is subject to National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review.

3.4 PRIORITY AREAS

Initiatives must prioritize the provision of assistance referenced in **section 3.3.1** and the subawards described in ***section 3.3.2*** 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.

3.5 PERFORMANCE MEASURES

To evaluate and report on the outcomes of the DBI program on a national scale, AMS collects information on performance measures. Each project submitted must include target numbers for at least one outcome and at least one of the indicators listed in the Achievability section of the DBI Project Narrative (see ***section 4.4***). The progress of the one or more outcomes and indicators selected will need to be reported in the Annual Performance Report, and the results will be reported in the Final Performance Report. Please refer to the Grant Performance Measures webpage for more information.

3.6 ALLOWABLE AND UNALLOWABLE COST AND ACTIVITIES

All AMS awards are subject to the terms and conditions, cost principles, and other considerations described in the AMS GT&C and USDA GT&C.

As outlined in the DBI Specific-Program 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:

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

Purchases of over $10,000 must be approved and the purchased equipment monitored by AMS, as required by 2 CFR 200.313.

DBI funds may be used for alteration and repair of buildings and improvements. The cost of altering any one building during the fiscal year shall not exceed 10 percent of the current replacement value of the building. Improvements and repair of buildings may include improvements, rearrangements, and/or alterations of an existing building or facility to use a space more effectively and to accommodate new or upgraded equipment and processes, as well as to expand processing capacities. Any such activities must meet one of the purposes listed above in this section.

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

DBI funds may not be used to support the procurement of unmanned aircraft systems to process, store, or transmit Federal information (as defined in OMB Circular A-130) unless the grant is specifically available for procurement of such equipment and grantees describe in their application how they will comply with the information security requirements outlined in Appendix B of M-26-02 Ensuring Government Use of Secure Unmanned Aircraft Systems and Supporting United States Producers. This includes developing a risk-based approach to applying those requirements to procurement solicitations to potential vendors under the resulting Federal award. If such procurement is approved, specific information security requirements may be included in the terms and conditions of the grant to ensure that the grantees will incorporate those requirements in procurement solicitations of unmanned aircraft systems under the Federal award.

Applicants that have questions concerning the allowability of costs after reviewing this document should contact AMS staff using the contact information listed under ***section 1.7***.

3.7 INDIRECT COSTS

Indirect costs (also known as "facilities and administrative costs"—defined at 2 CFR 200.1) are 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." Applicants that do not have a current NICRA may elect to charge a *de minimis* rate up to 15 percent of the Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC). Applicants with a NICRA must apply their approved NICRA rate. For more information on indirect costs for recipients and subrecipients, refer to section 4.5 of the USDA GT&C and 2 CFR 200.413 and 2 CFR 200.414.

3.8 SUPPLANTING

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

3.9 SUBAWARD ALLOCATION

Each initiative must allocate at least 50 percent and up to 100% of its DBI federal grant funds to subawards.

3.10 SUPPORT FOR DOMESTIC DAIRY BUSINESSES

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

3.11 FUNDS NOT APPLIED FOR

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

3.12 COORDINATOR MEETING TRAVEL

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

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

4.0 APPLICATION CONTENTS AND FORMAT

Applicants MUST submit the required documentation in the appropriate format as listed in this section.

4.1 APPLICATION CHECKLIST

Before submitting an application, applicants must read the NOFO in its entirety to fully understand the program requirements. The application checklist below provides the mandatory and, if applicable, documents for an application package.

Mandatory Documents:

- ☐ SF-424 – Application for Federal Assistance (Grants.gov)
- ☐ SF-424A – Budget Information Non-Construction Programs (Grants.gov)
- ☐ Project Abstract Summary (Grants.gov)
- ☐ Project Narrative Form (***section 4.4)***
  - ☐ Must use required template
  - ☐ Executive Summary is no more than 250 words
  - ☐ Ensure it does not exceed the page limit
  - ☐ Ensure the application excludes unallowable costs and activities per ***section 3.6.***
- ☐ Signed Letter(s) of Commitment from Partners and Collaborators per ***section 4.5***

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

- ☐ Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA)

AMS recommends submitting applications at least **two weeks before the deadline** to account for any issues.

4.2 SF-424 APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

Required: Form SF-424 is available via the application package in Grants.gov. Applicants may use the following supplemental instructions to properly fill the SF-424.

Box	Instructions
1 - Type of Submission	Select Application
2 - Type of Application	Select New
8.c - Organizational Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)	Enter applicant UEI number for the organization submitting the application. The UEI must match the active registration in SAM.gov.
8.d – Address	Enter the organization street address as it appears in SAM.gov. P.O. Boxes will not be accepted. Enter a 9-digit zip code
10 - Name of Federal Agency	AMS, USDA
11 - Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number (Assistance Listing Number)	Enter 10.176
12 - Funding Opportunity Number	Enter USDA-AMS-TM-DBI-G-26-0011
13 - Competition Identification Number	Not applicable
14 - Areas Affected by Project	Enter cities, counties, States affected by project
15 - Descriptive Title of Applicant's Project	Provide a short descriptive title of the project
16a - Congressional Districts for Applicant	Enter the Congressional district where the applicant is located

Box	Instructions
16b - Congressional Districts for Program/Project	Enter the Congressional district where your project will be implemented, or "All" if the project will be implemented in more than one location
17 - Proposed Project Start Date and End Date	Enter Start Date: March 1, 2027* Enter End date: February 28, 2030* **Dates are approximate. Start dates are set at the time of the award.*
18.a - Estimated Funding - Federal	Enter the total Federal amount requested
18.b - Estimated Funding – Applicant	Enter "0" as the Total Cost share amount.
19 - Is Applicant Subject to Review by State Under Executive Order 12372 Process.	See **section 5.5.**

4.3 SF-424 BUDGET INFORMATION FOR NON-CONSTRUCTION PROGRAMS

Required. The SF-424A is available via the application package in Grants.gov. The blocks on the required form are either self-explanatory or easily explained in the instruction of the form. However, applicants must use the following supplemental instructions associated with specific boxes on form SF-424.

Please complete **only** Sections A, B, and C. Do **not** complete Sections D, E, and 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
1.f – Non-Federal	Enter "0". There is no cost share contribution amount provided for applicants.

Section B – Budget Categories

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

4.4 PROJECT NARRATIVE

Required. Applicants MUST prepare and submit a narrative using the DBI Project Narrative form. The Project 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 Project 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 to draw down on the funds associated with this line item.

The Project Narrative must be typed and single-spaced in an 11-point font, not to exceed twenty (20) 8.5 x 11 pages (excluding existing project narrative form content). For example, if the form is 15 pages before you begin entering your project information, your 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.

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. Handwritten applications or applications in MS Word will not be accepted.

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

The supporting documents listed below do not count towards the 20-page limit.

4.5 LETTERS OF COMMITMENT FROM PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS

Required: Applicants MUST provide letters of commitment, not just letters of support, from all project partners at the time of application. More information can be found on project partners in ***section 2.2.*** The letter must state that the partner or collaborator agrees to the project management plan presented in the Project Narrative.

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

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

Instructions for organizations submitting *Letters of Commitment:* Submit letters on letterhead and address them to the applicant (i.e., Project Director). Clearly say at the top that they are **LETTERS OF COMMITMENT**. Letters must be signed by the partner and attached to the Grants.gov application package using the "Add Attachments" button under SF-424 item #15. **AMS will not accept unsigned letters or letters emailed separately.**

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

4.6 NEGOTIATED INDIRECT COST RATE AGREEMENT (NICRA)

Required if the applicant has a NICRA. Applicants must submit a copy of the current, approved NICRA. Refer to ***section 3.7.*** 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.

5.0 SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND DEADLINES

5.1 ELECTRONIC APPLICATION PACKAGE

Applicants MUST apply for this program electronically via Grants.gov. No other submission method is accepted. AMS urges applicants to submit early to the Grants.gov system. The How to Apply for Grants Grants.gov webpage gives an overview of the application process. This NOFO has all the information needed to complete the required application forms and AMS-specific attachments. More information about applying through Grants.gov can be found in ***section 5.2.***

Applicants can find the opportunity under either the Assistance Listing number "**10.176**," or the DBI Funding Opportunity Number "**USDA-AMS-TM-DBI-G-26-0011**".

5.2 SUBMISSION AND RECEIPT PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS

5.2.1 HOW TO REGISTER TO APPLY

Applicants MUST have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), an active SAM.gov account, and a Grants.gov account to submit an application. AMS recommends that applicants start the registration process in these systems immediately to allow enough time to meet application submission deadlines. Registration in these systems collectively may take **more than four weeks** to complete. The steps below provide details on how to complete each registration.

Individual applicants eligible to apply for this grant can find complete instructions here: https://www.grants.gov/applicants/applicant-registration

Organization applicants can find complete instructions here: https://www.grants.gov/help/register/organizations

1. Obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI): Entities applying for funding, including renewal funding, must have a UEI from SAM.gov. Applicants must enter the UEI number in the data entry field labeled "Organizational UEI" on the SF-424. Getting a UEI requires validation steps in SAM.gov. Applicants are encouraged to start this process as early as possible, and, if applicable, this includes providing guidance to subapplicants on getting their own UEI.
2. Register with the System for Award Management (SAM): In addition to having a UEI number, organizations applying online through Grants.gov must register with SAM. Current SAM.gov registrants have already been assigned their Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and can view it within SAM.gov. All organizations must register with SAM to apply online. Failure to register with SAM will prevent your organization from applying through Grants.gov. **SAM.gov accounts must be updated annually, and your organization must have an active SAM.gov account to submit your application to Grants.gov.**

Organizations must maintain an active SAM registration with current information throughout the application review period and, if you are awarded a grant, during the project period.

3. Create a Grants.gov Account: The next step in the registration process is to create an account with Grants.gov. Applicants must know their organization's UEI number to complete this process. Completing this process automatically triggers an email request for applicant roles to the organization's E-Business Point of Contact (EBiz POC) for review. The EBiz POC is a representative from your organization who is the contact listed for SAM. To apply for grants on behalf of your organization, you will need the Authorized Organization Role (AOR).
    a. Watch the video on how to Register in Grants.gov and create an institutional profile. Applicants are required to use Login.gov to sign into Grants.gov. See the Grants.gov help article for more information on logging in with Login.gov credentials. The Grants.gov validation process also includes a check for an active SAM.gov registration. Applicants without a current SAM.gov registration will be rejected.
4. Authorize Grants.gov Roles: After creating an account on Grants.gov, the EBiz POC receives an email notifying him or her of your registration and request for roles. The EBiz POC will then log in to Grants.gov and authorize the appropriate roles, including the AOR role, thereby giving you permission to complete and submit applications on behalf of the organization. You will be able to submit your application online any time after you have been approved as an AOR.
5. Track Role Status: After registering with Grants.gov and authorizing the applicant AOR, Grants.gov allows you to track your status.
6. Electronic Signature: When applications are submitted through Grants.gov, the name of the organization's AOR who submitted the application is inserted into the signature line of the application, serving as the electronic signature. The EBiz POC must authorize individuals who are able to make legally binding commitments on behalf of the organization to act as an AOR; **this step is often missed, and it is required for valid and timely submissions.**

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

Applicants can apply using Grants.gov Workspace. Workspace is a shared, online environment where members of a grant team may simultaneously access and edit different web forms within an application. For each funding opportunity announcement (FOA), an applicant creates individual instances of a workspace.

1. *Create a Workspace*: This allows you to complete your Workspace online and route it through your organization for review before submitting.
2. *Complete a Workspace*: Add participants to the workspace, complete all the required forms, and check for errors before submission.
    a. *Adobe Reader*: If you decide not to apply by filling out the webforms, you can download individual PDF forms in Workspace so that they will appear similar to other Standard or AMS forms. The individual PDF forms can be downloaded and saved to your local storage device, network drive(s), or external drives, and then accessed through Adobe Reader.
    b. NOTE: You may need to visit the Adobe Software Compatibility page on Grants.gov to download the appropriate version of the software. There is no cost for Adobe Reader Software.

c. *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.

d. *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 number. To trigger this feature, an applicant must complete the SF-424 information first. Once it is completed, the information will transfer to the other forms.

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

   SPECIAL NOTE: Grants.gov **does not** check for AMS required attachments. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all required attachments listed in ***section 4.0*** are included correctly in the application package when submitting via Grants.gov.

4. *Track via 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 a Quick Start Guide for Applicants and additional training resources, including video tutorials. Applicants may also call the 24/7 (except Federal holidays) 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, use the contact information described in ***section 1.7***.

5.3 ADDITIONAL SUBMISSION DETAILS

AMS will not consider any applications received after the deadline. In addition, AMS will not consider any applications submitted by fax, email, or postal mail, or any applications that don't meet the requirements of the NOFO, such as not being eligible, having an incomplete application, or missing required documents, etc. See the Late, Nonresponsive, and Incomplete Applications Policy on the AMS Policies and Procedures page for more information.

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.**

Grants.gov will automatically record the date and times when the application is successfully received by Grants.gov. The applicant AOR will then receive an email acknowledging receipt and a tracking number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) from Grants.gov. Applicant AORs will also receive the official date/time stamp and in an email as proof that the application was submitted on time.

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.

5.4 SUBMISSION DATE AND TIME

Applicants must submit applications electronically via Grants.gov by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on January 4, 2027. AMS cannot consider applications received after this deadline for funding. See AMS' Late Applications, Denials and/or Appeal Procedures Policy.

5.5 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 NOFO restricted to eligible applicants listed in ***section 2.1***. 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 also assess an organization's risk to account for the use of Federal funds and monitor the performance associated with these awards using the guidance provided in ***section 6.1***.

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.

6.1 RISK REVIEW

Prior to making a Federal award, AMS will review the risk of applicants in managing federal funds. AMS will review the applicant's financial stability, the quality of their management systems and standards, current and prior performance managing federal grants, audit reports and findings, the ability to effectively implement Federal award requirements, and make sure that the applicant has policies and procedures in place to manage a federal award. AMS will review the applicant's responsibility and qualification records in SAM.gov, USA Spending, Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS) along with any comments entered by the applicant. For additional information refer to 2 CFR 200.206.

If the applicant is found to present significant risk, AMS may choose not to fund the application or may place specific conditions (2 CFR 200.208) on the award.

AMS will follow government-wide rules that prevent making awards to applicants that have been suspended or debarred from receiving federal awards.

7.0 AWARD NOTICES

7.1 AWARD NOTICES

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

The NOA will provide pertinent instructions and information including, at a minimum, the information described in 2 CFR 200.211 and a reference to the AMS GT&C and USDA GT&C.

7.2 INELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

This NOFO is open only to current DBI initiatives (see ***section 2.1***). AMS will contact ineligible applicants via email as soon as possible after the close of the application period.

8.0 POST-AWARD REQUIREMENTS AND ADMINISTRATION

8.1 ADMINISTRATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS

As part of the NOA, all AMS recipients must abide by the AMS GT&C and USDA GT&C, which reference applicable Administrative and National legal and Policy Requirements.

8.2 REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Recipients must report progress of their project on an annual basis through the electronic submission of performance reports and federal financial reports (SF-425). Final performance and financial reports, and applicable closeout documentation, must be submitted after the end of the performance period. Additional detail on reporting and award closeout requirements are included in the AMS GT&C and USDA GT&C. If there are any program or award-specific terms or conditions, those will be identified in the Notice of Award.

8.3 ACKNOWLEDGMENT 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 the agency's programs. Grantees must meet the acknowledgment requirements outlined in the AMS GT&C and USDA GT&C.

9.0 OTHER INFORMATION

9.1 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 2.1***.

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.

9.2 CIVIL RIGHTS OBLIGATIONS/NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

All recipients must comply, and certify that they will comply, with all applicable Federal discrimination laws, regulations, and policies throughout the duration of their award, as specified in Section 12.2 of the USDA GT&C.

9.3 ACCESSIBILITY ACCOMMODATION

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

9.3.1 ACCOMMODATIONS AND COMPLAINTS

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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

9.4 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUESTS

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. For additional information about the applicability of FOIA to documents, correspondence, and any products related to a Federal award, see Section 1.13 of the USDA GT&C.

9.5 PAPERWORK REDUCTION

Agencies are bound by the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. 3501). For more information, see AMS GT&C Section 22.