U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Foreign Agricultural Service

NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

Coordinating Agricultural Development & Innovation (CADI): Ensuring America First Trade Wins in Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia

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1. <u>Basic Information</u>

1.1 Executive Summary

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service, Global Programs, Agricultural Economic Development (AED) announces this funding opportunity to support the Technical Agricultural Assistance Program by issuing a new award. This opportunity is available to State cooperative institutions or other colleges and universities in the United States, as defined at 7 U.S.C. § 3103. In support of FAS's Coordinating Agricultural Development & Innovation (CADI) portfolio of projects, the recipient will conduct research to provide actionable recommendations that help FAS achieve project targets detailed in Section 3. In addition, the recipient will track the portfolio's attributable accomplishments toward achieving desired trade outcomes and will provide U.S. county-level impact estimates to ensure a maximum return on investment for American agriculture.

1.2 Federal Agency Name

United States Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service (USDA/FAS)

1.3 Funding Opportunity Title

Coordinating Agricultural Development & Innovation (CADI) to enable America First Trade Wins in Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia

1.4 Announcement Type

New Announcement

1.5 Funding Opportunity Number

USDA-FAS-10960-0700-109-26-0003

1.6 Assistance Listing Number

10.960 Technical Agricultural Assistance

1.7 Funding Details

<u>Total Available Federal Funding:</u> The initial funding amount will be $332,500.00 Subject to availability of funding, a cumulative total of $997,500 may be available throughout the period of performance of the award.

<u>Anticipated Number of Awards:</u> 1

USDA/FAS reserves the right to make additional awards under this opportunity if additional funding becomes available after the original selections are made, consistent with agency policy and guidance. Any additional selections for awards will be made no later than 6 months after the original selection decisions.

1.8 Key Dates

<u>Deadline for Question Submission:</u> September 22, 2026

Application Submission Deadline: September 28, 2026 at 11:59pm Eastern Daylight Time

1.9 Agency Contact Information

For all inquiries, contact:

Name: Benjamin Kairn
Email Address: Benjamin.kairn@usda.gov
Phone Number: 202-720-0430
Hours of Operation: 8:00am – 4:30pm Eastern Daylight Time

2. Eligibility

2.1 Eligible Applicants

State cooperative institutions or other colleges and universities in the United States, as defined at 7 U.S.C. § 3103.

All applicants must have an active registration in the U.S. Government System for Award Management (www.sam.gov) before the application submission deadline of the announcement. Applicants with inactive, expired, pending, or excluded listings will be deemed ineligible. Exceptions, waivers, or extensions will not be considered. More information about SAM.gov registration can be found in Section 9, Other Information.

2.2 Substantial Compliance

All applications will be reviewed for eligibility and must meet the eligibility requirements described above to be considered eligible. Applicants deemed ineligible for funding consideration as a result of the threshold eligibility review will be notified within seven calendar days of the ineligibility determination.

Applications must substantially comply with the application submission instructions and requirements set forth in Section 4, Application Contents and Format, of this solicitation or they will be deemed ineligible for funding consideration.

2.3 Evidence of Eligibility

Applicants are responsible for including documentation, if necessary, establishing that they meet the stated eligibility requirements, when it is not immediately obvious. Applicants should not presume that USDA/FAS is sufficiently familiar with their organization, and USDA/FAS will not make assumptions as to the nature of the applicant's organization.

2.4 Funding Restrictions

Generally, funds may not be used in any manner that is prohibited by applicable regulations, including 2 C.F.R. Part 200 and 2 C.F.R. Part 400. Awards issued pursuant to this notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) may only be used for the purpose set forth in the award, consistent with the statutory authority for the award. Capital expenses, such as the purchase of equipment, not entirely attributable to this award, must be pro-rated. Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) and drones are not an allowable expense under this award.

For example, agreement funds and other support may not be used for matching contributions for other federal grants or cooperative agreements, lobbying, or intervention in federal regulatory or adjudicatory proceedings. Federal employees are prohibited from acting as an agent of the applicant in any capacity (paid or unpaid) on any proposal submitted under this program. Also, federal funds may not be used to sue the Federal Government or any other government entity.

Compensation for personal services: Employees, consultants, or other personnel, including those of subrecipients, and regardless of the method of engagement, may not exceed the pro-rata equivalent of ES-III on the Executive Schedule (for 2026, $209,600 per year, $806.15 per day, or $100.77 per hour). Non-monetizable fringe benefits, such as health insurance coverage, are not included in this ceiling.

In general, costs incurred for a common or joint purpose benefitting more than one cost objective but not readily assignable to specific awards, without effort disproportionate to the results achieved, are considered indirect costs. These may include facilities not specific to individual projects, enterprise-wide services such as IT, and enterprise management. For cost-reimbursable agreements, indirect costs may not exceed 10% of direct costs, as stipulated at 7 U.S.C. § 3319a.

If an application is submitted that includes any ineligible tasks, activities, or cost items, that portion of the application will be deemed ineligible for funding and may, depending on the extent to which it affects the application, render the entire application ineligible for funding.

2.5 Multiple Applications

An individual applicant may not submit more than one application in response to this NOFO and may not be offered more than one award.

2.6 Cost Share/Match Requirement

Cost sharing is not required, but encouraged.

3. Program Description

The CADI, funded through an interagency agreement between the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service (USDA/FAS) and the State Department's Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, supports a portfolio of projects in Eastern Europe (non-E.U.), the South Caucasus, and Central Asia. These projects are designed to make American agriculture safer, stronger, and more prosperous. Specifically, the portfolio seeks to prevent and remove trade barriers for U.S. agricultural exports and support U.S. exporters and trading partners. Collectively, the portfolio is working to:

- Add over $622 million to the U.S. economy by removing trade barriers.
- Contribute an additional $312 million to the U.S. economy through direct support to American exporters and trading partners.
- Avoid over $50 billion in potential economic harm to the U.S. economy by preventing lost market access due to the spread of livestock contagions to the United States and new trade barriers.

The awardee will conduct original basic and applied research that will focus on advancing a trade agenda that benefits America's ranchers, farmers, and producers.

Through this applied research, the awardee will:

- Provide throughout the period of performance actionable recommendations to help achieve the CADI portfolio's targets.
- Track the portfolio's attributable accomplishments toward these trade outcomes, including the development of U.S. county-level impact estimates.

DELIVERABLES

1. Final report on the recipient's research to quantify the CADI portfolio's direct economic impact on American farmers;
2. Annual economic impact report that quantifies the CADI portfolio's direct economic impact on American farmers. This report will specifically analyze the CADI's portfolio of projects' progress toward achieving the following targets:
    a. Armenia:
        i. Add $92,851,795 to the U.S. economy by increasing the sale of 200,000 MT U.S. wheat (40k MT sold once per year, for 5 years) through technical assistance to trading partners.
        ii. Add $2,197,937 to the U.S. economy by increasing U.S. exports to Armenia by 5% using short-term training and technical assistance to remove food safety-related technical barriers to trade.

    b. Georgia:
        i. Add $92,851,795 to the U.S. economy by facilitating the sale of 200,000 MT U.S. wheat (40k MT sold once per year, for 5 years) through technical assistance to trading partners.
        ii. Add $15,443,458 to the U.S. economy by increasing the U.S. market share of the Georgian poultry market by 1.1% over 5 years through short-term agricultural trade promotion and technical assistance.
        iii. Add $892,190 to the U.S. economy by facilitating $433,102 in the export of U.S. aquaculture inputs short-term agricultural trade promotion and technical assistance.

    c. Kazakhstan:
        i. Contribute $28,000,000 to the U.S. economy by supporting 1,000,000 bushels of expanded market opportunity for U.S. wheat, per year for 5 years, through improved agricultural production data.

    d. Ukraine:
        i. Maintain $439,441,866 in U.S. economic activity by ensuring $224,994,460 in U.S. agricultural exports to Ukraine continue over 5 years by preventing new barriers to U.S. agricultural exports.
        ii. Protect $50,000,000 in damage to the U.S. economy by maintaining U.S. pork's global market access by preventing the spread of African Swine Fever to the United States.

iii. Catalyze $1,030,000 in U.S. economic activity by unlocking the Ukrainian livestock genetics market and facilitating $500,000 in U.S. livestock genetics exports through short-term agricultural trade promotion and technical assistance.
iv. Add $31,135,852 to the U.S. economy by unlocking the Ukrainian purebred cattle market, and supporting U.S. exporters in achieving 50% market share for 5 years.
v. Contribute $14,255,778 to the U.S. economy by supporting 250,000 bushels of expanded market opportunity for U.S. wheat, per year for 5 years, through improved agricultural production data.
vi. Contribute $16,731,044 to the U.S. economy by supporting 250,000 bushels of expanded market opportunity for U.S. oilseeds, per year for 5 years, through improved agricultural production data.

e. Uzbekistan:
   i. Add $9,177,352 to the U.S. economy by increasing U.S. market share of soybean exports by 5%, and sustain this market share for 5 years through short-term agricultural trade promotion and technical assistance.
   ii. Add $4,735,105 to the U.S. economy by increasing U.S. market share of distilled spirits exports by 6.2%, and sustaining that market share for 5 years through short-term agricultural trade promotion and technical assistance.

3. A quarterly presentation to the USDA/FAS CADI management team on the CADI portfolio's progress toward achieving America First trade targets, providing strategic recommendations to maximize outcomes for the benefit of American agriculture; and,
4. Annually, provide at least one success story per country where CADI operates. Each story must include a detailed analysis of USDA/FAS accomplishments in one of the following areas:
   a. Preventing or removing trade barriers
   b. Assisting U.S. exporters and trading partners

All work under this research program is unclassified. The awardee shall ensure that all information is safeguarded against unauthorized access. Any personnel performing work under this agreement who will have access to non-public information will require Public Trust (Moderate Risk) background investigations (also known as T2 background investigation) that will be issued by USDA prior to beginning work.

The projected Period of Performance is from November 1, 2026 - September 31, 2028, with the possibility of an extension as described in Section 9.1.

The work will require Temporary Duty Travel (TDY) to foreign and domestic locations that remain to be determined. A total of 4 one-week international TDYs to Eastern Europe (non-E.U.), the South Caucasus and Central Asia should be included in the budget, as well as four one-week domestic trips to locations to be determined.

3.1 Authorizing Statutes and Regulations

National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, P.L. 95-113, as amended, 7 U.S.C. §§ 3291, 3319a.

3.2 Type of Assistance Instrument
USDA/FAS anticipates that a Cost-Reimbursable Agreement will be funded pursuant to this funding opportunity.

This type of agreement includes statutory limitations related to indirect costs.

4. Application Contents and Format

4.1 Complete Application Package
A complete application package must include:

- Standard Form SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance, showing the Unique Entity ID, and signed by the applicant.
- Standard Form SF-424A, Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs, showing the budget categorization. Applicants are advised to consult 2 C.F.R. Part 200 Subpart E for guidance on proper categorization of cost items. An improper categorization will not itself be grounds for a determination of ineligibility but may delay approval and/or adversely impact the application's scoring.
- A detailed budget narrative, in which cost items are clearly identified, correspond to the appropriate cost category, and are quantified and described in sufficient detail to enable USDA/FAS to independently determine that the proposed costs are reasonable and allowable for the project and consistent with applicable regulations.
    - Indirect costs are statutorily capped at 10% for cost reimbursable agreements.
- A detailed project narrative or plan of operation, including the following requirements:
    - The name of the institution applying to perform the research.
    - The applicant's proposed approach to achieve the research objectives. The description should include but not be limited to management plan for empowering a Project Lead. The Project Lead is responsible for the overall leadership, management, and technical direction of the research under this award. They will serve as the principal point of contact with USDA FAS and ensure all programmatic and financial requirements of the award are met. The Project Lead will serve as the primary representative in all meetings with FAS and implementing partners, and is responsible for delivering the outlined critical analyses and strategic recommendations to guide FAS decisions specific to the CADI portfolio of projects.
    - A brief description of the expertise and international experience of the Project Lead. This may include further information about the Project Lead's field and foreign experience, including with USDA/FAS project management.
    - The proposed Project Lead's experience managing or supporting USDA/FAS projects, or similar professional experience. If applicable, applicants should note the proposed Project Lead's experience implementing or supporting USDA/FAS projects funded by the Department of State. The proposed Project Lead's curriculum vitae can be included as an annex.

- A description of how the logistical elements necessary for supporting the research (e.g. international and domestic travel arrangements) will be administered, and the proposed role of the university support staff.
- A summary of relevant institutional capabilities for supporting personnel and consultants implementing work on behalf of USDA/FAS, or other U.S. government agencies.
- Other appropriate and relevant institutional subject matter experts who may provide technical feedback to the proposed Project Lead specific to any of the domain areas (e.g. mitigating African Swine Fever, promoting U.S. wheat exports, etc.).
- Means of flexibility to account for potential program changes and the ability to respond to unforeseen circumstances; this should include information on how potential unforeseen problems will be addressed.
- Application following designated format:
    - Clearly outline all aspects of the research program– what is planned, how this will be conducted, and the anticipated results;
    - Be written in English and free of excessive grammatical and spelling errors; and
    - Cite source information and/or provide an explanation of the analysis undertaken.

4.2 Specific Application Formats
Applicants should ensure they are using active, i.e. non-expired, versions of standard forms. The use of an expired standard form will not itself be grounds for a determination of ineligibility but may delay processing of an applicant selected for award.

There are no page limitations and formatting requirements (including, but not limited to, font and font size, margins, paper size, and color limitations) for applications.

4.3 Electronic Signatures
Consistent with the Electronic Signatures in Global and National Commerce Act (ESIGN Act), USDA/FAS uses and accepts electronic signatures for application and award documents. USDA/FAS will neither solicit nor send physical copies of documents.

4.4 Proprietary Information
Applicants should generally refrain from including the details of proprietary information in applications. In cases where, in the applicant's judgement, the inclusion of proprietary information is essential to application review and scoring, the applicant should clearly indicate information it wishes to designate as proprietary.

4.5 Other Application Information
Successful applicants must submit the following information after USDA/FAS notification of our intent to make a Federal award, but prior to a Federal award, if the applicant request for funding or the intended award amount is over $100,000:

- Grants.gov Lobbying Form
- Standard Form SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities, if applicable to the applicant

5. <u>Submission Requirements and Deadlines</u>

5.1 Address to Request Application Package
This NOFO contains all information required to submit a complete application package.

5.2 Unique Entity ID and System for Award Management (SAM)
Each applicant must:

- (i) Be registered in SAM before submitting its application;
- (ii) Provide a valid unique entity ID in its application; and
- (iii) Continue to maintain an active registration in SAM with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal agency.

5.3 Submission Instructions
Applications must be submitted through the ezFedGrants system at https://grants.fms.usda.gov/ USDA-managed computer systems require applicants to have an identity-proofed account through the login.gov platform, and in some cases may require at least two persons. Identity-proofing and subsequent registration with any USDA-managed computer system may take several days, and applicants who do not already have system access should begin the registration process immediately, even if they are unsure if they will apply for this funding opportunity.

Applicants who require assistance with any USDA-managed computer system must reach out to the agency contact listed in Section 1, Agency Contact Information, prior to the application submission deadline date in Section 5.4, Submission Dates and Times. USDA/FAS strongly encourages applicants reach out at least 5 business days in advance of the application submission deadline to ensure resolution prior to the application submission deadline date. Applicants should provide as much detail as possible to facilitate resolution of the issue. USDA/FAS will make a reasonable effort to resolve the issue and in rare cases may offer alternative avenues for application submission. If applicants do not contact USDA/FAS prior to the application submission deadline date and submit an application package through an alternative method, their application will be deemed ineligible.

5.4 Submission Dates and Times
Application Submission Deadline: September 28, 2026 at 11:59pm EDT (UTC -04:00)
Applications received after this time will NOT be accepted. Applicants are advised to make their submissions 1-2 days before this deadline in case of computer problems.

5.5 Intergovernmental Review
Not applicable.

6. <u>Application Review Information</u>

6.1 Eligibility Threshold Review
USDA/FAS will conduct an eligibility threshold review of all applications submitted to determine that:

- The applicant is eligible, as defined in Section 2, Eligibility;
- The application was submitted by the application submission deadline date and time as specified in Section 5, Submission Requirements; and
- The applicant submitted a complete application, including all required forms and documents as defined in Section 4, Submission Requirements.

An application that does not include all documentation required by this NOFO at the time of application, including documentation required in SAM.gov, will be deemed ineligible.

If an applicant is determined to be ineligible, USDA/FAS will notify the applicant prior to commencing with evaluation of applications, usually within 5 business days of the Application Submission Deadline. An applicant that feels such a determination was made in error may request reconsideration, highlighting evidence supporting their claim, by email to the program officer(s) listed in Section 1, Agency Contact Information, within 3 business days of notification. If USDA/FAS determines an error occurred during the application submission and/or eligibility review process, the application will rejoin the group of eligible participants and continue to the merit review process.

Applicants are advised that readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in application format, including selecting a legible font type and size for use in the application.

6.2 Review Criteria

Applicants will be evaluated by the extent and quality to which they demonstrate that they have the capabilities, staff, resources, and equipment to successfully perform the project as described in the following factors. Scoring will also be based on the level of detail and how clearly the applicant's abilities to address these factors are outlined in the proposal.

Technical Expertise (30 points) Applications will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which they demonstrate the proposed Project Lead and supporting subject matter experts (SMEs) possess the requisite technical knowledge, specialized skills, and qualifications pertinent to USDA/FAS project management, and the specific technical areas pertinent to the portfolio of trade enabling projects outlined above. This includes their understanding of relevant methodologies, tools, and best practices. This also includes how well the collective expertise of the Project Lead and SMEs cover all necessary technical and management areas for the project portfolio.

Experience (30 points) Applications will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which the proposed Project Lead and support staff demonstrate proven experience and a successful track record in implementing and managing trade capacity strengthening projects, particularly those similar in nature and scope to projects managed by USDA/FAS. This includes their practical experience with USDA/FAS-relevant project management approaches and successful project outcomes. Experience supporting State Department-funded agricultural projects is preferred.

Research Plan (25 points) Applications will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which the proposed research plan demonstrates a sound, relevant, and feasible approach to achieving the specific research objectives outlined in the NOFO.

Budget (10 points) Applications will be evaluated on the reasonableness, cost-effectiveness, and adequacy of the proposed budget to accomplish the project. The budget will be evaluated on cost savings, where available, and the inclusion of a budget narrative for each line item.

Overall Quality (5 points) Applications will be evaluated on comprehensiveness, completeness, and correct spelling and grammar.

6.3 Review and Selection Process

The agency will convene a review panel to review the eligible applications against the evaluation criteria described above. USDA/FAS documents that reviewers, whatever their affiliation, are free from a conflict of interest that would affect their assessment of an applicant, whether positively or negatively.

The reviewers will ensure that the applicant can deliver the programs/activities as described in the announcement based on the applicant's project narrative and assign a score and provide summary comments based on the evaluation criteria identified above. The review panel will make a recommendation list to the selecting official, who is not a member of the panel.

The selecting official may select applications out of rank order in consideration of strategic program priorities. Selection determinations are final and cannot be appealed.

Prior to selection, the agency may contact the highest-ranking applicants to seek clarification and to discuss technical and programmatic aspects of the application. If an application includes a subaward, USDA/FAS may request to speak with all parties included in the application to ensure sufficient planning and coordination has taken place prior to making an award.

6.4 Risk Review

Prior to making a Federal award, the Federal awarding agency is required by 2 CFR 200.206, 31 U.S.C. § 3321 and 41 U.S.C. § 2313 to review information available through any OMB-designated repositories of government-wide eligibility qualification or financial integrity information. Therefore, application evaluation criteria may include the following risk-based considerations of the applicant: (1) financial stability; (2) quality of management systems and ability to meet management standards; (3) history of performance in managing Federal awards; (4) reports and findings from audits; and (5) ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements.

Prior to making a Federal award with a total amount of Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold, currently $350,000, the Federal agency must review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the responsibility/qualification records available in SAM.gov (41 U.S.C. § 2313).

- An applicant can review and comment on any information in the responsibility/qualification records available in SAM.gov.
- Before making decisions in the risk review required by 2 C.F.R. § 200.206, the Federal awarding agency will consider any comments by the applicant along with information available in the responsibility/qualification records in SAM.gov.

7. Award Notices

Applicants will be notified of the status of their application/award by email. Notification to successful applicants is not authorization to proceed, and such notification should be construed as provisional until an award document has been signed by authorized officials of USDA/FAS and the recipient.

Award documents will be transmitted by email to the individuals or offices who submitted them, or to those persons or offices that USDA/FAS believes, to the best of its information, are proper. The applicant is recommended to ensure that the agency is provided with the correct point(s) of contact.

8. Post-Award Requirements and Administration

8.1 Administrative and National Policy Requirements

All successful applicants for all grant and cooperative agreements are required to comply with the applicable General Terms and Conditions, which can be found at https://fas.usda.gov/grants/general_terms_and_conditions. The applicant is presumed to have read, understood, and accepted these terms when accepting a USDA/FAS award. USDA/FAS will specify in the terms and conditions of all final awards all termination provisions that apply, including terminations for all reasons specified in 2 C.F.R. § 200.340(a). Applicants with questions about the applicable terms should contact the program officer(s) listed in Section 1, Agency Contact Information.

Before accepting an award, the applicant should carefully read all award documents for instructions on administering the award and the terms and conditions associated with responsibilities of Federal Awards. Recipients must accept all conditions in this NOFO as well as any Special Terms and Conditions in the Notice of Award to receive an award under this program.

8.2 Reporting

Financial Reporting

Financial reports, using form SF-425, Federal Financial Report (FFR), must be submitted annually within 90 calendar days after the reporting period. A final financial report must be submitted within 120 days after the end date of the period of performance pursuant to 2 C.F.R. § 200.328(d).

Performance Reporting

A performance progress report must be submitted annually, within 90 days of the end of the reporting period. A final performance progress report must be submitted no later than 120 calendar days after the end date of the period of performance. The recipient may use any appropriate format for performance progress reports, provided the report includes:

a) A comparison of actual accomplishments to the established goals for the period;
b) The reasons why established goals were not met, if appropriate; and
c) Additional pertinent information including, when appropriate, analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high unit costs.

Recipients are encouraged to include photographs and other supplemental material in performance progress reports.

Financial and Performance reports must be submitted through the ezFedGrants system at https://grants.fms.usda.gov/. USDA/FAS may authorize alternative means of submission for recipients who demonstrate a bona fide need.

Subaward and Executive Compensation Reporting

Applicants must ensure that they have the necessary processes and systems in place to comply with the subaward and executive total compensation reporting requirements established at 2 C.F.R. Part 170, should they be selected for funding.

Closeout

No later than 120 calendar days after the end date of the period of performance or after an amendment has been issued to close out a USDA/FAS financial assistance agreement, whichever comes first, recipients must submit a final financial report and final progress report detailing all accomplishments and a qualitative summary of the impact of those accomplishments throughout the period of performance. After final reports have been reviewed and approved by the agency, and any residual amount due to the recipient or due to be returned to the agency is disbursed, the award is subject to closeout. Acceptance of final reports by USDA/FAS constitutes a closeout of the award with no further notice or obligation to either party. This acceptance will indicate the period of performance has expired, and any remaining funds will be deobligated. Records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the final reports are submitted.

8.3 Monitoring

USDA/FAS, through its authorized representatives, has the right, at all reasonable times, to make site visits to review project accomplishments and management control systems and to provide such technical assistance as may be required. During site visits, USDA/FAS will review recipients' files related to the program.

As part of any monitoring and program evaluation activities, recipients must permit USDA/FAS, upon reasonable notice, to review assistance agreement-related records and to interview the organization's staff and other knowledgeable persons regarding the program, and to respond in a timely and accurate manner to agency requests for information relating to the program.

8.4 Conflict of Interest

The applicant's Conflict of Interest (COI) Point of Contact as defined in USDA/FAS Conflict of Interest Policy must notify the USDA/FAS contact identified in Section 1, Agency Contact Information, of this solicitation of any actual or potential conflict of interest that they are aware of that may provide the applicant with an unfair competitive advantage in competing for USDA/FAS financial assistance awards within 10 calendar days of becoming aware of the conflict of interest. Examples of an unfair competitive advantage include but are not limited to situations in which an USDA/FAS employee reviewed and commented on or drafted all or part of an applicant's application. Note that USDA/FAS does not generally consider receiving information from an USDA/FAS employee limited to whether the applicant or the applicant's proposed project is eligible to compete for funding to confer an unfair competitive advantage. In addition, assistance agreements made under this solicitation will include a term and condition notifying recipients of their COI disclosure obligations and responsibilities under the award including the need to have systems in place to address, resolve and disclose COIs to USDA/FAS.

8.5 Mandatory Disclosures
As required by 2 C.F.R. § 200.113, non-federal entities or applicants for a Federal award must disclose, in a timely manner, in writing to the Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity all violations of Federal criminal law involving fraud, bribery, or gratuity violations potentially affecting the Federal award. Failure to make required disclosures can result in any of the remedies described in 2 C.F.R. § 200.339 including suspension and debarment.

8.6 Performance Expectations
The awardee will develop a final research plan in close consultation with USDA/FAS. This process will involve reviewing existing workplans and holding virtual meetings with FAS Global Programs, USDA/FAS staff at relevant U.S. Embassies, and with USDA/FAS implementing partners. The purpose of these meetings will be to familiarize the Project Lead with the objectives, status and workplans for each project within the portfolio.

Following this series of meetings, the Project Lead will lead a meeting with USDA/FAS to outline their understanding of the portfolio objectives, the respective plans and challenges, and present a proposed research plan with actionable steps for how USDA/FAS can achieve the respective America First trade targets to benefit America's farmers, ranchers and exporters. This process is expected to be completed within approximately one fiscal quarter from the finalization of the agreement with USDA/FAS.

Following the kickoff process, the applicant shall propose a recommended meeting frequency with USDA/FAS and relevant partners to accomplish the research objectives. USDA/FAS anticipates that the awardee will provide implementation recommendations at least quarterly.

USDA/FAS also anticipates that the Project Lead will accompany USDA/FAS on ad hoc TDYs over the course of the award. Therefore, applicants should budget for up to four total international TDY trips to countries such as Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan.

USDA/FAS will be responsible for the following:
1. Coordinating meetings with USDA/FAS staff and implementing partners;
2. Providing feedback to the Project Lead on the progress of the applied research; and
3. Performing Public Trust (Moderate Risk) background investigations (also known as T2 background investigation) that will be issued by USDA prior to beginning work.

9. Other Information

9.1 Extensions
Extensions to this program are permitted, subject to approval.

9.2 No Awards
USDA/FAS reserves the right to make no awards under this competition.

9.3 Incremental Funding

These awards will be incrementally funded, with a potential cumulative total of $997,500 over the 3-year period of performance. The first year of funding will be $332,500. The detailed budget and narrative should reflect a total budget of $997,500 for 3 years with a break down for every year, including $332,500 for the first year.

All incremental funding will be based on funding availability, satisfactory performance, and other applicable considerations.

9.4 SAM.gov Registration Instructions

Organizations applying for this funding opportunity must have an active SAM.gov registration. If applicants have never done business with the Federal Government, applicants will need to register their organization in SAM.gov. If applicants do not have a SAM.gov account, then applicants will create an account using login.gov[1] to complete their SAM.gov registration. SAM.gov registration is FREE. The process for entity registrations includes several steps and validations and is not complete until the registration is shown as Active. Please review the Entity Registration Checklist for details on this process.

If applicants have done business with the Federal Government previously, applicants can check their entity status using their government issued UEI to determine if their registration is active. SAM.gov requires applicants renew their registration every 365 days to keep it active.

Please note that SAM.gov registration is different than obtaining a UEI only. Obtaining an UEI only validates an organization's legal business name and address. Please review the Frequently Asked Question on the difference for additional details.

Organizations should ensure that their SAM.gov registration includes a current e-Business (EBiz) point of contact name and email address. The EBiz point of contact is critical for Grants.gov Registration and system functionality.

Contact the Federal Service Desk for help with a SAM.gov account, to resolve technical issues or chat with a help desk agent: (866) 606-8220. The Federal Service desk hours of operation are Monday – Friday 8am – 8pm ET.

[1] Login.gov is a secure sign in service used by the public to sign into Federal Agency systems including SAM.gov and Grants.gov. For help with login.gov accounts, visit http://login.gov/help.