

NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY
Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops Program

Table of Contents

1.	Basic Information.....	2
2.	Eligibility	3
3.	Program Description	5
4.	Application Contents and Format	5
5.	Submission Requirements and Deadlines	8
6.	Application Review Information	9
7.	Award Notices	12
8.	Post–Award Requirements and Administration.....	12
9.	Other Information	14

1. Basic Information

1.1 Executive Summary

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service, announces this funding opportunity to support the Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops (TASC) program by issuing new awards. This opportunity is available to U.S. entities to provide funding for projects that seek to remove, resolve, or mitigate existing or potential sanitary, phytosanitary, or technical barriers that prohibit or threaten the export of U.S. specialty crops.

1.2 Federal Agency Name

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

1.3 Funding Opportunity Title

2026 Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops

1.4 Announcement Type

New Announcement

1.5 Funding Opportunity Number

USDA–FAS–TASC–2026

1.6 Assistance Listing Number

10.604 Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops

1.7 Funding Details

Total Available Federal Funding: Anticipated to be \$9 million. The Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 provided \$9 million in funding for each of the fiscal years FY 2019 through FY 2025. Congress has not yet determined funding levels for FY 2026.

Anticipated Number of Awards: 20 awards.

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

Deadline for Question Submission: May 30, 2025

Application Submission Deadline: FAS will track the time and date of receipt of all applications. The initial application submission deadline is 5 p.m. Eastern Time, Friday, June 6, 2025. All applications received by the initial application submission deadline will be considered for funding in the initial allocation tranche. Applications will continue to be accepted after the initial application submission deadline and will be considered for funding in the order received on the following dates as long as funding remains available: Tranche II deadline – December 31, 2025;

Tranche III deadline – March 31, 2026; Tranche IV deadline – June 30, 2026. No applications will be accepted after June 30, 2026.

1.9 Agency Contact Information

For all inquiries, contact:

Name: Curt Alt

Email Address: curt.alt@usda.gov

Phone Number: (202) 690-4784

Hours of Operation: M–F, 7:30 am – 4:00 pm Eastern Daylight Time (EDT)

2. Eligibility

2.1 Eligible Applicants

Any United States private or government entity with a demonstrated role or interest in exporting U.S. agricultural specialty crops. Government organizations consist of Federal, State, and local agencies. Private organizations may include non-profit trade associations, universities, agricultural cooperatives, state regional trade groups, and private companies. Foreign organizations, whether government or private, may participate as third parties in activities carried out by eligible organizations, but are not eligible for direct funding assistance through the program.

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 Eligibility Threshold Criteria

Eligible Commodities: The TASC program is only open to U.S. specialty crops. For the purposes of the TASC program, specialty crops are defined as most cultivated plants, or the products thereof, produced in the U.S. except for wheat, feed grains, oilseeds, cotton, rice, peanuts, sugar, and tobacco. Applications may cover more than one U.S. specialty crop.

Eligible Markets: Applications may target any foreign market (unless off limits for funding due to U.S. sanctions or other restrictions), including single countries or reasonable regional groupings of countries.

Eligible Activities: To be eligible for consideration, TASC applications must meet the following criteria:

1. Applications must identify and address an existing or potential sanitary, phytosanitary, or technical barrier that prohibits or threatens the export of commercially available U.S. specialty crops; and
2. Applications must demonstrate how the proposed activities will remove, resolve, or mitigate the identified existing or potential sanitary, phytosanitary, or technical barrier and will benefit an entire industry rather than a specific company or brand.

Ineligible Activities: TASC funding can only be used for generic activities. For-profit entities cannot use program funds to conduct private business, promote private self-interests, supplement the costs of normal sales activities, or promote their own products or services beyond specific uses approved by FAS. TASC funds cannot be used to support normal operating costs of individual organizations, including government organizations, nor as a source to recover pre-award costs or prior expenses from previous or ongoing projects. Costs related to market research, advertising, or other promotional activities are not eligible for reimbursement. FAS will also not reimburse unreasonable expenditures or expenditures made prior to approval of an application.

Limits on Applications: TASC funds awarded to Federal government agencies must be expended or otherwise obligated by close of business September 30, 2026. All other eligible entities may request funding for up to five years in a single application. Multi-year funding may, at FAS' discretion, be provided one year at a time with commitments beyond the first year subject to interim evaluations and funding availability.

Funding Limits: Funding per award under TASC is limited to a maximum of \$500,000. Applications that request more than \$500,000 in total funding will not be considered.

2.3 Substantial Compliance

All applications will be reviewed for eligibility and must meet the eligibility requirements described above. Applicants deemed ineligible for funding consideration as a result of the threshold eligibility review will be notified within 15 calendar days of the ineligibility determination.

To be deemed eligible, applications must substantially comply with the application submission instructions and requirements set forth in Section 4, Application Contents and Format, of this solicitation.

2.4 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 an applicant's organization.

2.5 Funding Restrictions

Generally, funds may not be used in any manner that is prohibited by applicable regulations, including [7 CFR Part 1487](#), 2 CFR Part 200, and 2 CFR Part 400. Awards issued pursuant to this notice of funding opportunity may only be used for the purpose set forth in the award, consistent with the statutory authority for the 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.

2.6 Multiple Applications

Applicants may submit more than one application, and applicants with previously approved TASC awards may apply for additional awards. However, the maximum number of active awards that a single TASC recipient can have underway at any given time is five.

2.7 Cost Share/Match Requirement

Cost share is required for all applicants except for Federal government entities. Apart from Federal government entities, all other applications must include a recipient cost share element equal to at least 10 percent of the requested funds. Cost share may be actual cash invested or in-kind contributions to the project. Applications that do not meet this requirement will not be considered.

3. Program Description

The TASC program is designed to assist U.S. organizations by providing funding for projects that seek to remove, resolve, or mitigate existing or potential sanitary, phytosanitary, or technical barriers that prohibit or threaten the export of U.S. specialty crops.

3.1 Authorizing Statutes and Regulations

Section 203(e) of the Agricultural Trade Act of 1978 (7 U.S.C. 5623(e)), as amended.

3.2 Type of Assistance Instrument

USDA/FAS anticipates that Grant Agreements will be funded pursuant to this funding opportunity.

In this type of agreement, the recipient is expected to implement the project autonomously with little programmatic involvement from USDA/FAS. However, USDA/FAS maintains an oversight role, and the recipient must ensure that USDA/FAS is kept apprised of progress under the project.

4. Application Contents and Format

4.1 Complete Application Package

TASC applications must be submitted through the Unified Export Strategy (UES) system and must contain the following information:

- (1) Organizational information, including:
 - (i) Organization's name, address, contact person, and Unique Entity Identifier (UEI);
 - (ii) A description of the organization and its membership;
 - (iii) A discussion of any collaborating organizations;
 - (iv) A description of the organization's experience in technical assistance projects, including activities involved and project results.
- (2) The project's targeted market and promoted commodity.
- (3) Constraints and Performance Measures:
 - (i) A clear description of the existing or potential sanitary, phytosanitary, or technical trade barrier that is being addressed in the proposal;

- (ii) The performance measures that will be used to measure the project's progress. Applications must include the following standard performance measures for quantifying progress and demonstrating results:
 - 1 **For Research and Development Intervention projects:**
 - a Number of viable technologies developed or modified to address the trade barrier;
 - b Number of individuals who will learn about the technology advances achieved by the project;
 - c Number of improved technologies anticipated to be adopted by industry; and
 - d Number of reported changes in trade barrier intervention strategies within one month after the end of project;
 - 2 **For Travel Intervention projects:**
 - a Number of government officials or industry representatives hosted; and
 - b Percent of government officials or industry representatives with a better understanding of U.S. or foreign market regulatory systems and export/import procedures and requirements as a result of the project;
 - 3 **For Information Exchange projects:**
 - a Number of technical trainings or meetings conducted;
 - b Number of trainees or attendees that participated; and
 - c Percent of trainees or attendees who have a better understanding of the sanitary/phytosanitary/technical barrier to trade intervention strategy;
 - (iii) Applications may also include custom performance measures for quantifying progress and demonstrating results. Any custom performance measures must be aligned, clear, quantifiable, and include an identified methodology.
- (4) Proposal details, including:
- (i) Project title;
 - (ii) Funding request by year;
 - (iii) Cost share information indicating all financial and in-kind support to the proposed project, and the resources to be contributed by each entity that will contribute to the project's implementation. This must include the minimum 10 percent pledge from the entity that submitted the application but may additionally include cost share from private industry entities, host governments, foreign third parties, or Federal agencies. Support may include cash, goods, and services.
 - (iv) Discussion of the project goals, including the beginning and ending dates for the proposed project, a description of the activities planned to address the export barrier, how those activities will remove, resolve, or mitigate the identified barrier, and the expected benefits to the represented industry;
 - (v) Market assessment and background for the targeted market(s), including a discussion of the competitiveness of the U.S. product in the market;
 - (vi) Discussion of how the proposal fits into your organization's short and long term strategy;

- (vii) Trade impact from the activity (including the impact on market retention, market access, and market expansion) and the viability of long-term commercial sales to the targeted market;
 - (viii) Explanation as to what specifically could not be accomplished without federal funding assistance and why participating organization(s) are unlikely to undertake activities without such assistance; and
 - (ix) Information on similar projects that are/or have been conducted in the market.
- (5) Proposed activity list and budget for each activity. Detailed cost calculations and justifications for each budget line item must be provided, and all line items should be described in sufficient detail to enable FAS to determine that the costs are reasonable and allowable for the project.

4.2 Programmatic Capability and Past Performance

If your organization has not previously participated in a USDA/FAS market development program, you may submit a list of federally funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include Federal grants and cooperative agreements but not Federal contracts) that your organization performed within the last three years (no more than 5 agreements, and preferably USDA or USDA/FAS agreements) and describe:

- (i) whether, and how, you were able to successfully complete and manage those agreements; and
- (ii) your history of meeting the reporting requirements under those agreements including whether you adequately and timely reported on your progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes of those agreements (and if not, explain why not) and whether you submitted acceptable final technical reports under the agreements; and
- (iii) your organizational experience and plan for timely and successfully achieving the objectives of the proposed project, and your staff expertise/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed project.

In evaluating applicants under these factors in Section 6, USDA/FAS will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources, including information from USDA/FAS files and from current/prior grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information provided by the applicant). If you do not have any relevant or available past performance or past reporting information, please indicate this in the application and you will receive a neutral score for these factors (a neutral score is half of the total points available in a subset of possible points). If you do not provide any response for these items, you may receive a score of 0 for these factors.

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. Submission Requirements and Deadlines

5.1 Address to Request Application Package

This Notice of Funding Opportunity 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

TASC applications must be submitted to USDA/FAS through the web-based UES system. The UES system is accessible at <https://apps.fas.usda.gov/ues/webapp/>. All required information and any supplemental documents must be included in the UES application. FAS will not review documents, attachments, exhibits, etc. provided outside of the UES, and applications submitted outside of the UES will not be considered. Applicants needing help or access to the UES should email the UES team at uesadmin@usda.gov for assistance.

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 they will apply to 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 to reach out at least 5 business days in advance of the application submission deadline. USDA/FAS will make a reasonable effort to resolve the issue, and in rare cases may offer alternative avenues for application submission.

5.4 Submission Dates and Times

Application Submission Deadline: FAS will track the time and date of receipt of all applications. The initial application submission deadline is 5 p.m. Eastern Time, Friday, June 6, 2025. All applications received by the initial application submission deadline will be considered for funding in the initial allocation tranche. Applications will continue to be accepted after the initial application submission deadline and will be considered for funding in the order received on the following dates as long as funding remains available: Tranche II deadline – December 31, 2025; Tranche III deadline – March 31, 2026; Tranche IV deadline – June 30, 2026. No applications will be accepted after June 30, 2026.

5.5 Intergovernmental Review

Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs, may be applicable to awards resulting from this announcement. USDA implemented the Executive Order in 2 CFR 415.5. USDA/FAS may require applicants selected for funding to provide a copy of their application to their State Point of Contact (SPOC) for review. These reviews are not required before submitting an application. Only applicants that USDA/FAS selects for funding under this announcement are subject to the Intergovernmental Review requirement. For more information about USDA's implementation for Intergovernmental Review, please visit [https://www.usda.gov/ocfo/federal-financial-assistance-policy/intergovernmental-review#:~:text=Executive%20Order%20\(EO\)%2012372%2C,of%20proposed%20Federal%20financial%20assistance](https://www.usda.gov/ocfo/federal-financial-assistance-policy/intergovernmental-review#:~:text=Executive%20Order%20(EO)%2012372%2C,of%20proposed%20Federal%20financial%20assistance).

6. Application Review Information

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; and
- 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 5, Submission Requirements.

An application that does not include all documentation required by this notice of funding opportunity at the time of application 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.

6.2 Review Criteria

USDA/FAS will review all applications for eligibility and completeness. USDA/FAS will, subject to the availability of funds, approve those applications that it considers to best meet the objectives outlined in this announcement.

FAS conducts the following process in reviewing applications and allocating available TASC program funds:

Eligibility Threshold Review (Phase 1): In Phase 1, USDA/FAS conducts the Eligibility Threshold Review outlined in Section 6.1 of this notice. Applications determined to be ineligible will receive no further consideration and will not be considered for funding. Applications that are deemed eligible and complete will move on to the Phase 2 Agency review.

Agency Review (Phase 2): A TASC review committee comprised of representatives from FAS Program Areas will review each eligible application and will score and recommend approval for each application using the following criteria, with the numbers in parenthesis indicating the weights attached to each criterion:

- The nature of the specific export barrier or potential export barrier and the extent to which the project is likely to successfully remove, resolve, or mitigate that barrier (20 points);
- The potential trade impact of the proposed project on market retention, market access, and market expansion, including the potential for expanding commercial sales in the targeted market (15 points);
- The completeness and viability of the application. Among other things, this will include the cost of the project and the amount of other resources dedicated to the project, including cash, goods, and services of the U.S. industry and foreign third parties (20 points);
- The ability of the organization to provide an experienced staff with the requisite technical and trade experience to execute the project (10 points);
- The extent to which the project is targeted to a market in which the United States is generally competitive (10 points);
- The degree to which time is essential to addressing specific export barriers (5 points);
- The nature of the applicant organization, with a greater weight given to those organizations with the broadest base of producer representation (10 points); and
- The effectiveness of the performance measures and potential of the performance measures to measure project results (10 points).

The TASC review committee may also solicit and consider feedback on the applications from appropriate overseas Posts in their review and in determining approval recommendations for each applicant. FAS may, when appropriate, request the assistance of other U.S. government subject area experts in evaluating applications.

Development of Funding Recommendations (Phase 3): In this phase of the review, a combined average score for each of the applications will be calculated from the individual scores provided by the TASC review committee members. The applications will be ranked highest to lowest by combined score, and the available funding will be allocated to the applications in order until all applications are funded or until the available funding is exhausted. Applications that receive an average score of less than 70 points will not be considered for funding. In addition to the scores, comments received from the reviewers will be considered when developing the funding recommendations.

Final Review and Allocation Decision Making (Phase 4): A summary of all applications and the recommended funding levels for each will be provided to the Office of the Deputy Administrator, Global Programs for the purpose of finalizing the funding recommendations. Once finalized, the recommendations will be presented to the FAS Administrator for final deliberation, determination, and approval. FAS leadership (including the Deputy Administrator, Associate Administrator, and Administrator) may elect to review and adjust the funding recommendations based on factors including, but not limited to: agency priorities, priority markets, program impact, the record of performance of the organization in managing past market development funds, and the organization's likelihood of success.

6.3 Programmatic Capability and Past Performance

Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project considering their:

- (i) past performance in successfully completing and managing the assistance agreements identified in response to Section 4 of the solicitation,
- (ii) history of meeting the reporting requirements under the assistance agreements identified in response to Section 4 of the solicitation including whether the applicant submitted acceptable final technical reports under those agreements and the extent to which the applicant adequately and timely reported on their progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes under those agreements and if such progress was not being made whether the applicant adequately reported why not,
- (iii) organizational experience and plan for timely and successfully achieving the objectives of the proposed project, and
- (iv) staff expertise/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed project.

Note: In evaluating applicants under items i and ii of this criterion, USDA/FAS will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources including agency files and prior/current grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information supplied by the applicant). If you do not have any relevant or available past performance or past reporting information, please indicate this in the application and you will receive a neutral score for these subfactors (items i and ii above—a neutral score is half of the total points available in a subset of possible points). If you do not provide any response for these items, you may receive a score of 0 for these factors.

6.4 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, such as geographical distribution or congressional directive. Selection determinations are final and cannot be appealed.

Prior to selection, the agency may contact the highest-ranking applicants to seek clarification and to negotiate 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.

6.5 Risk Review

Prior to making a Federal award, the Federal awarding agency is required by 2 CFR 200.206, [31 USC 3321](#) and [41 USC 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 award; (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 \$250,000, the federal agency must review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the responsibility/qualification records available in SAM.gov (41 USC 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 CFR 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 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. 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 under 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

TASC recipients must provide interim and final performance and financial reports as specified by the terms and conditions of their award. Each report, whether interim or final, must evaluate the progress of the TASC project using the performance measures approved in the written agreement and provide an accounting of all project expenditures by cost category and actual contributions made to the project by the recipient and all other participating entities. Unusual deviations from activity budget amounts or lagging progress on performance measures should be noted and explained. All reports must be submitted in the UES.

For awards in which the total lifetime value exceeds \$500,000, additional reporting may be required as described in [Appendix XII to 2 CFR 200](#).

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 CFR 170](#), should they be selected for funding.

Closeout

Within 120 days after the agreement completion date, or after an amendment has been issued to close out a grant, whichever comes first, FAS will confirm that the recipient has provided all of the required reports and will review the reports for completeness and content. Once the required reports are approved, FAS will prepare a closeout letter that advises the recipient of the award closeout procedures. The notice will indicate that the period of performance has closed, note that any remaining funds will be de-obligated, and address any additional closeout requirements. 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 a 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 CFR 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 CFR 200.339](#) including suspension and debarment.

9. Other Information

9.1 Extensions

Extensions to this program are allowed. Recipients may request a no-cost extension to complete all project activities. The request must be submitted at least 60 days prior to the expiration of the performance period and must include a justification for why the extension is necessary and how the extension would effectively support the program's purpose. Requests for extensions are subject to review and approval by FAS.

9.2 No Awards

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

9.3 SAM.gov Registration Instructions

Organizations applying to this funding opportunity must have an active SAM.gov registration. If you have never done business with the Federal Government, you will need to register your organization in SAM.gov. If you do not have a SAM.gov account, then you will create an account using [login.gov](#)¹ to complete your 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.

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 you should visit <http://login.gov/help>.

If you have done business with the Federal Government previously, you can check your entity status using your government issued UEI to determine if your registration is active. SAM.gov requires you renew your 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 your 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 your 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.

9.4 Faith-Based Organizations

(i) Faith-based organizations may apply for an award on the same basis as any other organization, as set forth at, and subject to the protections and requirements of, 7 CFR part 16 and any applicable constitutional and statutory requirements, including 42 U.S.C. 2000bb et seq. USDA/FAS will not, in the selection of recipients, discriminate for or against an organization on the basis of the organization's religious character, motives, or affiliation, or lack thereof, or on the basis of conduct that would not be considered grounds to favor or disfavor a similarly situated secular organization.

(ii) A faith-based organization that participates in this program will retain its independence from the Government and may continue to carry out its mission consistent with religious freedom and conscience protections in Federal law. Religious accommodations may also be sought under many of these religious freedom and conscience protection laws.

(iii) A faith-based organization may not use direct Federal financial assistance from USDA/FAS to support or engage in any explicitly religious activities except when consistent with the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment and any other applicable requirements. An organization receiving Federal financial assistance also may not, in providing services funded by USDA/FAS, or in their outreach activities related to such services, discriminate against a program beneficiary or prospective program beneficiary on the basis of religion, a religious belief, a refusal to hold a religious belief, or a refusal to attend or participate in a religious practice.