



Local Meat Capacity Grants

Fiscal Year 2023 Request for Applications

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-AMS-TM-LMCG-G-23-0017

Publication Date: APRIL 19, 2023

Application Due Date: 11:59 PM Eastern Time on July 19, 2023

Program Solicitation Information

Funding Opportunity Title: Local Meat Capacity Grant Program

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-AMS-TM-LMCG-G-23-0017

Announcement Type: Initial

Assistance Listing (formerly CFDA) Number: 10.189

Dates: Applications must be received on or before 11:59 pm Eastern Time on July 19, 2023, through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). Applications received after this deadline will not be considered for funding.

Executive Summary: The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), requests applications for the fiscal year (FY) 2023 Local Meat Capacity Grants (Local MCap). This program supports independently owned meat and poultry processing businesses with funds to provide more and better processing options for local livestock producers by modernizing, increasing, diversifying and decentralizing meat and poultry processing capacity, including support for rendering.

Approximately \$75 million is available under this grant program, subject to appropriations and funds availability. Awards will range from \$100,000 to \$5 million for *Processing Expansion Projects* to support a wide range of activities to increase and diversify processing capacity, including equipment purchases (including equipment-only purchases over \$250,000) and building and facilities upgrades. A non-Federal match of 50% of the total proposed project cost (with a reduced match for underserved producers and business owners) is required for the Processing Expansion Projects (see [section 4.1](#)).

AMS is also offering a *Simplified Equipment-Only* application with no matching funds requirement for projects that solely request the cost of equipment and range from \$10,000 to \$250,000, and do not include renovation or staffing costs. This option is designed to reduce administrative burden for the recipient.

AMS will award competitive grants to eligible applicants that submit high quality proposals that meet the purpose and program requirements for this program. This announcement provides eligibility criteria for applicants and projects, details on match requirements, and the forms and instructions required to apply for an award. Eligible entities are those engaged in meat and poultry processing, including rendering animal carcasses or byproducts. Eligible entities may be Tribes and Tribal Entities, for-profit entities, non-profit entities, and State or local government entities (more detail in [section 3.1](#)). Up to 10% of available funds may be awarded to rendering projects.

AMS will prioritize applications from applicants that engage with underserved producers. AMS also encourages applications that support smaller farms and ranches in the region, new and beginning farmers and ranchers, veteran producers, and/or underserved communities. For grants intending to serve these entities, applicants should engage and involve those individuals and groups when developing project applications.

USDA promotes climate-resilient landscapes and rural economic systems, including tools to support agriculture, forests, grazing lands, and rural communities. AMS encourages applicants to consider including goals and activities related to mitigating or adapting to climate change in their project's design and implementation.

AMS offers no-cost technical assistance to meat and poultry processor applicants through its Meat and Poultry Processing Capacity Technical Assistance Program (MPPTA). Applicants are encouraged to

contact the MPPTA network of providers for broad-scope technical support from pre-application to post-award grant management, business planning and processing operational resources, supply chain development expertise, and resources specific to historically underserved USDA stakeholders. Visit www.ams.usda.gov/mppta to connect with these services.

Application Checklist

AMS expects applicants to read the entire RFA prior to submitting their application to ensure that they understand the program's requirements. This application checklist provides the required documents for an application package.

Local MCap requires that **all application packages** include the following:

- SF-424 – Application for Federal Assistance (Grants.gov)
- SF-424A - Budget Summary (in Grants.gov)
- Project Abstract Summary (in Grants.gov)
- Project Narrative Template
 - o Processing Expansion Projects – Project Narrative Template (see [section 5.2.4](#))
 - o Simplified Equipment-Only Projects – Project Narrative Template (see [section 5.2.6](#))
- Evidence of Critical Resources and Infrastructure (see [section 5.2.8](#))

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

- Simplified Equipment-Only Projects* - Documentation to substantiate the costs of each piece of proposed equipment (see [section 5.2.6](#))
- Processing Expansion Projects* - Signed Letter(s) Verifying Matching Funds for each match resource listed in the application (see [section 5.2.5](#))
- Signed Letter(s) of Support from Producers listed in the application (see [section 5.2.8](#))
- Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) (PDF Attachment)

Tips for Applicants

- To do business with the Federal Government and to submit your application electronically using Grants.gov, you must—
 - o Have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and a Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN);
 - o Be registered in SAM.gov, the Government's primary registrant database;
 - o Provide your UEI number and TIN on your application; and
 - o Maintain an active SAM.gov registration with current information throughout the application review period and, if you are awarded a grant, during the project period.
- Register in Grants.gov and submit applications early. **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE DAY OF THE APPLICATION DEADLINE.** AMS encourages you to submit your application at least two weeks before the application deadline to ensure all certifications are met.
- Thoroughly read this RFA and follow all instructions.
- Thoroughly review the [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#) to understand allowable and unallowable costs.
- Ensure the application excludes unallowable costs and activities per [section 4.4](#)
- Ensure the narrative does not exceed the page limit specified in [section 5.2.4](#)

- Apply to the correct grant program in Grants.gov using the correct Assistance listing (formerly Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number “**10.189**” and Funding Opportunity Number “**USDA-AMS-TM-LMCG-G-23-0017**.”
- Ensure you have the most recent copy of Adobe Reader installed on your computer and that it is compatible with [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) software. Grants.gov supports Adobe Reader version 9.0.0 and higher.
- Limit Application File Size/ File Name Characters (50 or less).
- Avoid Special Characters in File Names (\$, %, &, *, Spanish "ñ", etc.).
- When uploading attachments, click the “Add Attachments” button (do NOT use the “paperclip” icon in Adobe Reader).
- Do not password-protect your documents and make sure all tracked-changes are “accepted”.
- Input the correct UEI (formerly DUNS) number on the SF-424 form cover page.
- Review the Grants.gov Applicant User and Registration Guides:
<http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-faqs.html>
<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/workspace-overview.html>

Timing to Obtain and Submit Grants.gov Required Elements

| Required Action | Timing to Obtain/Submit |
|--|---|
| Submitting your application. The AMS Deadline to receive final application and all supporting materials through Grants.Gov | July 19, 2023 – 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time |
| Obtaining Your Organization’s UEI Number (if you do not already have one) | 7-10 business days |
| Establishing an Active SAM.gov Account (if you do not already have one) | 7-10 business days |
| Obtaining a TIN/EIN (if you do not already have one) | Up to 2 weeks |
| Creating your Grants.gov profile and registering your Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) authorization | Up to 2 weeks |

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | | |
|------------|---|-----------|
| 1.0 | Funding Opportunity Description | 6 |
| 1.1 | Legislative Authority | 6 |
| 1.2 | Purpose | 6 |
| 1.3 | Project Types | 7 |
| 1.4 | National Environmental Policy Act | 10 |
| 2.0 | Award Information | 11 |
| 2.1 | Type of Federal Assistance | 11 |
| 2.2 | Type of Applications | 11 |
| 2.3 | Available Funding | 11 |
| 2.4 | Federal Award Period, Duration, and Size | 11 |
| 3.0 | Eligibility Information | 12 |
| 3.1 | Eligible Applicants | 12 |
| 3.2 | Entities Not Eligible For Funding | 13 |
| 4.0 | Funding Considerations | 13 |
| 4.1 | Cost Sharing and Matching | 13 |
| 4.2 | Indirect Costs | 14 |
| 4.3 | Subawards | 15 |
| 4.4 | Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities | 15 |
| 5.0 | Application and Submission Information | 15 |
| 5.1 | Electronic Application Package | 15 |
| 5.2 | Content and Form of Application Submission | 16 |
| 5.3 | Grants.gov Application Submission and Receipt Procedures and Requirements | 20 |
| 5.4 | Application submission requirements | 21 |
| 5.5 | Submission Date and Time | 22 |
| 5.6 | Intergovernmental Review | 22 |
| 6.0 | Application Review Information | 22 |
| 6.1 | Project Evaluation Criteria | 22 |
| 6.2 | Review and Selection Process | 24 |
| 7.0 | Award Administration Information | 25 |
| 7.1 | Award Notices | 25 |
| 7.2 | Unsuccessful Applicants | 25 |
| 7.3 | Administrative and National Policy Requirements | 25 |
| 7.4 | Reporting Requirements | 25 |
| 7.5 | Acknowledgement of USDA Support | 26 |
| 8.0 | Agency Contacts | 26 |
| 8.1 | Programmatic Questions | 26 |
| 8.2 | Available Resources | 26 |
| 8.3 | Grants.gov Questions | 26 |
| 9.0 | Other Information | 26 |
| 9.1 | Definitions | 26 |
| 9.2 | Equal Opportunity Statement | 29 |
| 9.3 | Freedom Of Information Act Requests | 30 |
| 9.4 | Paperwork Reduction | 30 |

1.0 FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

1.1 LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Section 1001(b)(4) of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) ([Pub. L. No. 117—2](#)) funds the Local MCap program, consistent with the purpose of providing “loans and grants and other assistance to maintain and improve food and agricultural supply chain resiliency.” Local MCap is administered by the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS).

1.2 PURPOSE

The purpose of this program is to build resilience in the meat and poultry supply chain by increasing processing capacity and promoting more competition in the sector. This program is part of the broader [Biden-Harris Administration \\$1 billion investment](#) to expand processing capacity for small and mid-sized meat and poultry processors. Given that the meat and poultry processing sector is particularly vulnerable to disruption, increasing capacity and promoting competition is a high priority for USDA. Based on public input, USDA identified an urgent need to expand and diversify meat and poultry processing capacity; increase producer income; provide producers an opportunity to have ownership in processing facilities; create stable, well-paying jobs in rural regions; improve worker health, safety, training, and wages for meatpacking jobs; spur collaboration among producers and workers; prompt State, Tribal, and private co-investment; and provide consumers with more choices.

This Local MCap grant program is targeted to support meat and poultry processors with smaller-scale projects, with a goal to increase processing availability and variety for local livestock producers. Given that byproducts (e.g., meat and bone meal, poultry meal, blood meal, animal fats, etc.) are generated through the slaughter and processing of livestock and, therefore, an essential part of a holistic processing supply chain, rendering plants who can demonstrate how they meet the overarching goals of this program are also eligible to apply. Up to 10% of available funds may be awarded to rendering projects. Local MCap complements the [Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program](#) administered by Rural Development by providing a targeted program for smaller-scale projects using a streamlined application. Smaller-scale projects eligible for this program include equipment purchases and installation, facility and equipment upgrades, minor alterations and renovation, and capacity expansion.

Because the program aims to support more and better markets for local and regional livestock producers, AMS encourages processor applicants to engage with such producers, especially small and underserved farmers and ranchers. Project plans should be based on the needs of small, underserved, and/or local and regional producers, and thoughtful projections of markets for the processed products. Additional goals may include reductions in slaughter/processing wait times and pricing uncertainty, more consistent product quality, and more differentiated product options for producers.

This program is also aligned with efforts to:

- Ensure equitable access to USDA programs and benefits from USDA-funded projects and support the policies of [Executive Order 13985](#) (Executive Order on Further Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government).

- Contribute to the resilience of the food and agricultural supply chains through support for diversified, value-added agriculture and support the policies of [Executive Order 14017](#) (Executive Order on America’s Supply Chains).
- Promote competition in the food system and support the policies of [Executive Order 14036](#) (Executive Order on Promoting Competition in the American Economy).
- Implement the Build America, Buy America (BABA) Act. Guidance on BABA requirements for USDA award recipients is available [here](#).

1.3 PROJECT TYPES

1.3.1 DEFINITION OF A PROJECT

A project is a set of interrelated tasks with a cohesive, distinct, specified, and defined goal. It follows a planned, organized approach over a fixed period of time and within specific limitations (cost, performance/quality, etc.). Additionally, it uses resources that are specifically allocated to the work of the project and usually involves a team of people.

Projects are different from other ongoing operations in an organization because, unlike operations, projects have a definitive beginning and end – they have a limited duration. A project has an overarching goal that the applicant wants to accomplish through a series of individual activities or tasks.

For this program, applicants can apply to one of the following project types:

- Processing Expansion Projects ([section 1.3.2](#))
- Simplified Equipment-Only Projects ([section 1.3.3](#))

Applicants may only apply for one project type.

1.3.2 PROCESSING EXPANSION PROJECTS

Processing Expansion Projects will fund grants from \$100,000 up to \$5 million to increase the processing and/or rendering capacity of privately, cooperatively, non-profit, or Tribally held processing facilities as described in this RFA. Applications in this project type may request funding for equipment-only projects over \$250,000 or projects that include equipment purchases and facilities upgrades that create new and/or expanded markets for local livestock producers. For funding requests that include building and facility upgrades, those can include improvements, re-arrangements, and/or alterations to a facility that are required to use a space more effectively and to accommodate new or upgraded equipment and processes.

Applications should demonstrate technical feasibility, financial viability, and should identify other non-Federal funds necessary to complete the proposed project. They should also describe engagement with local producers (and for rendering plants, engagement with local producers and/or processors) to identify priorities and demonstrate a clear relationship between proposed activities and enhanced or expanded market options for local producers. See also [section 6.1.1](#) of this RFA for the scoring criteria for this project type.

Examples of activities and initiatives that can be funded by this program include but are not limited to:

- Expanding processing capacities to increase production volumes, process additional meat and poultry species, or add new value-added product types;
- Upgrading processing and manufacturing equipment;
- Increasing packaging and labeling capacity;
- Increasing cold storage capacity;
- Improving slaughter and humane handling infrastructure;
- Installation of holding pens or wastewater management systems, or other improvements that do not require breaking new ground or constructing new facilities;
- Purchasing equipment or upgrading facilities for rendering carcasses and animal byproducts;
- Minor facility alterations and repairs and equipment purchases for new or improved on-premise retail space;
- Developing, customizing or installing equipment that reduces greenhouse gas emissions, increases efficiency in water use, improves air and/or water quality, and/or meets one or more of USDA's climate action goals (see <https://www.usda.gov/climate-solutions/climate-adaptation-usda>);
- Purchase or upgrade equipment to improve worker safety;
- Modernize equipment or facilities to ensure food safety;
- Hiring consultants to develop Hazard, Analysis, and Critical Control Points (HACCP) plans or to develop and provide employee training;
- Training on the use of all equipment purchased under the grant and associated new processes;
- Staffing or operational costs specifically tied to the proposed expansion project.

1.3.3 SIMPLIFIED EQUIPMENT-ONLY PROJECTS

Simplified Equipment-Only Projects offer a simplified application to fund smaller grants between \$10,000 and \$250,000 for equipment purchases for meat and poultry processors. The Simplified Equipment-Only option is a Fixed Price Grant, meaning it will fund only equipment purchases (and not associated facility upgrades, staffing, or other costs), and the amount awarded will be equal to the cost of the equipment up to \$250,000. Applicants must attach documentation to substantiate the costs of each piece of proposed equipment, which can include contracts, catalog pricing or binding quotes provided by license commercial entities. No match is required for this grant.

Applicants are required to provide a project narrative that describes the need for the equipment and the estimated increases in production that will result, as well as other program indicators and outcomes provided on the Project Narrative Template. The project narrative must demonstrate that they source or will source the majority of their animal inputs from local livestock producers (i.e., within 400 miles or within the same State or Tribal lands) and that the project will help offer expanded capacity and/or product options for those producers.

For rendering applications, applicants must provide a narrative, using the Project Narrative Template, that describes the need for the equipment and the estimated increases in rendering that will result, as well as other program indicators and outcomes provided in the Project Narrative Template. The project narrative must demonstrate that the increased rendering capacity will benefit local processors serving

local underserved producers and will improve the processing landscape and reduce costs for those producers.

See also [section 6.1.2](#) of this RFA for the scoring criteria for this program, which is a subset of the criteria used for the Processing Expansion Projects.

1.3.4 PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES NOT ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

Projects are not eligible for funding if the proposed activities include:

- New construction and/or structural changes to an existing building/facility resulting in a square foot expansion or changes to the building's floor, foundation, and exterior or load bearing walls.
- Routine maintenance and repair of an organization's buildings and operational facilities.
- Purchasing land, buildings, or facilities, or any interest therein.
- Paying ongoing staffing or operational costs not specifically tied to the proposed expansion project.
- Expenses that have been or will be reimbursed under any Federal, State, or local government funding.
- Activities already funded by another Federal award program.

1.3.5 FUNDING PRIORITIES

AMS will prioritize applications that demonstrate engagement with and benefit to local livestock producers, including underserved producers.

AMS may prioritize applications based on:

- Diversity in applicants funded in geographic regions and across a variety of species.
- For Processing Expansion Projects: Leverage of significant non-Federal financial and technical resources, as appropriate to the scope and scale of the project. Any match above and beyond the match requirement (see [section 4.1](#)) may lend support to the application.
- Size of the operation according to number of head processed annually or number of employees. Applicants should provide this information as part of their project narrative.
- Whether the projects:
 - Are located in communities that have distressed or at-risk scores on the [Distressed Communities Index \(DCI\)](#) developed by the Economic Innovation Group.
 - Enhance worker and/or farmer voice through cooperative ownership, payment of living wages, the provision of worker training, and/or promotion of safe working conditions.
 - Enhance local and regional environmental stewardship and climate benefits.

1.3.6 PROJECT EXAMPLES

The following are examples of potential projects that might make use of this grant to expand capacity and provide more and better options for local livestock producers:

- A small meat processing facility proposes to purchase equipment to offer a greater variety of value-added products to its livestock producer customer. After gathering input from local producers, the facility plans to use grant funds to buy equipment to produce sausages, cured meats, and burger patties. Livestock producers will then have more specialized and premium

products they can sell to local restaurants and retailers. The project includes costs associated with moving an interior wall and upgrading the flooring to provide additional processing space within their facility, extending their water lines and adding floor drains.

- A poultry facility is looking to invest in a new conveyor belt line to increase the number of birds it can process. The project also includes costs for hand guards and better knives and related equipment to improve productivity while also protecting workers. The business is not requesting facilities improvement support or other activities not included in the bids or documented equipment costs, and the equipment requested totals less than \$250,000 so the owner is able to apply for the Simplified Equipment-Only Project grants.
- A meat processing plant aims to transition into higher-value markets and proposes to invest in cold storage to dry age beef, a premium product. The processing plant could expand into new markets, selling to its regional steakhouse chain and high-end national retail stores. These new markets will allow the plant to pay more to producers for high-quality cattle raised on local farms. The new markets will also allow farms that market their own meat products higher value options without additional cold storage fees necessary when space is limited.
- A farmer-owned cooperative operating a meat processing facility has recruited new members who are poultry producers, and the cooperative will use the grant to install poultry processing equipment and lines to serve those members, building financial capacity and resilience for the cooperative as a whole and ensuring sustainability of the enterprise for all members and their customers.
- Based on requests from local producers and on feedback from customers, an establishment that processes poultry exclusively seeks to expand to process red meat into various items. The establishment proposes to use grant funds to purchase equipment, including grinders and stuffers; modifying the establishment's existing floorplan and adding a processing line; and hiring a reputable consultant to develop a HACCP plan for production of the meat items and to train employees.
- A new owner of a recently closed meat processing plant requests funds to purchase and install equipment and do some facility upgrades to meet food and worker safety standards and restart processing activities to reinstate the market for livestock producers in the region.
- A rendering plant has spoken with small processors who are expanding in the area, and identified a need for additional equipment to support the additional animal byproducts that will result from that processing expansion. The rendering plant applies for funds to purchase equipment to meet those processor needs and to upgrade their facility in relation to the expansion.

1.4 NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT

All activities funded under this RFA must comply with the [National Environmental Policy Act \(NEPA\)](#), Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, other laws and regulations, and any applicable State, local, or Tribal laws. A review for NEPA compliance is required prior to the award of grant funds. AMS may request additional information for the purposes of completing the environmental review.

If selected for an award, grant recipients will need to provide all requested information to support compliance with NEPA, [Endangered Species Act \(ESA\)](#), [National Historic Preservation Act \(NHPA\)](#), and other Federal laws or regulations as part of the administrative review process. Costs associated with satisfying environmental review requirements and permits are eligible for reimbursement as pre-award expenses if the project is funded and AMS approves the request. See [Program Specific Terms and Conditions](#) for more information.

AMS reserves the right to deny an application that has the potential for significant environmental impacts, cannot obtain proper permitting, or does not meet NEPA or permitting policies or does not provide documentation by established time frame. More information on the NEPA Policy is in [Program Specific Terms and Conditions](#).

2.0 AWARD INFORMATION

2.1 TYPE OF FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

AMS will use a Grant Agreement to provide a Federal award to successful applicants.

2.2 TYPE OF APPLICATIONS

New application. All new applications will be reviewed competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in [section 6.0](#).

2.3 AVAILABLE FUNDING

The anticipated amount available for the Local MCap Program in FY 2023 is approximately \$75 million. All awards will be awarded in FY 2023. Funding will be issued as competitive awards. Enactment of additional continuing resolutions or a full appropriations act may affect the availability or level of funding for this program. USDA is not committed to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards.

2.4 FEDERAL AWARD PERIOD, DURATION, AND SIZE

Applicants must plan to complete their projects within the performance period of the grant.

Award size varies by project type. Applicants may not request less than or more than the respective minimum/maximum amounts for each project type.

| Project Type | Duration (Months) | Anticipated Start Date | Anticipated Completion Date | Minimum Award | Maximum Award |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Processing Expansion Projects | 36 | 11/30/2023 | 11/29/2026 | \$100,000 | \$5,000,000 |
| Simplified Equipment-Only Projects | 24 | 11/30/2023 | 11/29/2025 | \$10,000 | \$250,000 |

3.0 ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

3.1 ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants for Local MCap grants include business entities (regardless of legal structure) engaged in meat and poultry processing, including rendering animal carcasses or byproducts. Eligible entities include Tribes and Tribal Entities, for-profit entities, non-profit entities, and State or local government entities. Private entities must be independently owned and operated, and all applicants must be domestically owned. Additionally, applicants' facilities must be physically located within the 50 States of the United States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Republic of Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Eligible entities must be existing operations and must process or plan to process one or more species subject to the Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA) or the Poultry Product Inspection Act (PPIA) and possess or plan to obtain a Federal Grant of Inspection, a grant of inspection under the Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) Cooperative Interstate Shipment Program, or a State meat and poultry inspection program with standards at least equal to Federal inspection at the time of application. Plants processing non-amenable species under voluntary FSIS or State inspection are also eligible to apply for funding. For the purposes of this grant, an existing operation can include an entity who is restarting an existing facility (e.g., reopening a plant with a new owner or restarting a temporarily closed business).

Applicants that are nationally dominant in beef, pork, chicken, or turkey processing are ineligible; for the purpose of this RFA, nationally dominant is characterized as holding a market share greater than or equal to the entity that holds the fourth largest share of the market for any of the following species: beef, pork, chicken, or turkey processing.

Entities that received grants under the AMS Meat and Poultry Inspection Readiness Grant (MPIRG) program may apply for this program, but they must successfully complete and close out their MPIRG grant before being awarded a Local MCap grant award. MPIRG grant recipients may not request funds for expenses already included in their MPIRG grant project.

For the purposes of this program, processors who do further processing activities must be primarily conducting further processing of the products of slaughter and primary processing from their own facility or further processing that contributes to value-added product opportunities for small, local livestock producers.

The following definitions are provided here for convenience, and also appear in the Definitions in [section 9.1](#).

Processor: For the purposes of this program, a processor is a business engaged in the slaughter, primary processing, or further processing of meat or poultry for human consumption. See also *Processing, Primary Processing, and Further Processing*.

Processing: Includes slaughter, primary processing and further processing of meat or poultry for human consumption. See also *Primary Processing and Further Processing*.

Primary Processing: Includes slaughtering, cutting, and boning of raw meat and poultry for human consumption.

Further Processing: Conversion of raw meat and poultry products, through smoking, curing, salting, fermenting, cooking, canning, curing, refining, or rendering into cooked, cured and preserved products for human consumption.

Rendering: Rendering is an off-site process that uses heat to convert animal carcasses into safe, pathogen-free feed protein and other valuable end products while reducing the negative effects of the carcasses on people and the environment.

3.2 ENTITIES NOT ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

1. Meat and poultry processing entities that are custom-exempt or otherwise uninspected with no plans to operate under Federal inspection or State equivalent inspection.
2. Meat and poultry processing entities that are exclusively for non-commercial use.
3. Applicants that hold a market share greater than or equal to the entity that holds the fourth largest share of that market for any of the following species: beef, pork, chicken, or turkey processing.
4. Multiple applications from separate applicant entities with identical or greater than 75 percent common ownership, or from a parent, subsidiary or affiliated organization (with “affiliation” defined by Small Business Administration regulation [13 CFR 121.103](#), or successor regulation) are not permitted.

4.0 FUNDING CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 COST SHARING AND MATCHING

For the Processing Expansion Projects:

- **Match Requirements.** Grant recipients are required to contribute 50% of the total proposed project cost as a match to Federal funding. This applies to all applicants except those who qualify for the reduced match described in the next bullet.
- **Reduced Match for Small and Underserved Business Owners.** For grant recipients that are [Historically Underserved Farmers or Ranchers](#) or for other businesses that qualify under the Small Business Administration (SBA) categories of [Small Disadvantaged Business](#), [Women-Owned Small Business](#), and [Veteran-Owned Small Business](#), the match requirement is reduced to 25% of the total proposed project cost as a match to the Federal funding. Applicants will be required to self-certify in their Project Narrative Template to being eligible for this reduced match.

For the Simplified Equipment-Only Projects:

- No match is required for the **Simplified Equipment-Only Projects**, and voluntary match will not be considered in selecting projects.

Match funding may be cash or in-kind. In-kind contributions are defined, when used as a cost share or match for a grant, as the value of goods or services provided for the benefit of the grant program, where no funds transferred hands. For example, a partner, such as a Tribal community member, may volunteer their professional expertise as a match contribution to the project as described in [2 CFR § 200.306\(e\)](#). These contributions cannot satisfy a cost sharing or matching requirement for this grant program if they are used toward satisfying a match requirement under any other Federal grant agreement.

All matching contributions **must be committed or secured** at the time an applicant is recommended for an award. Applicants must indicate the total amount of match and how it will specifically align with their requested funding when completing the budget information section of the project narrative. Additionally, applicants must submit signed letters or other documentation verifying the match for EACH cash and/or in-kind resource. Refer to [section 5.2.5](#) for more information.

Indirect costs may count toward your match. Refer to [section 4.2.1](#) for more information.

Program income (as defined in [2 CFR § 200.1](#)) or any other Federal funds is an ineligible source of match or cost share.

Project activities ineligible for program funding may NOT be counted as a match.

4.2 INDIRECT COSTS

Indirect costs (also known as “facilities and administrative costs”—defined at [2 CFR § 200.1](#)) are those costs incurred for a common or joint purpose benefitting more than one cost objective, and not readily assignable to the cost objectives specifically benefitted, without effort disproportionate to the results achieved.

As stated in the regulations ([2 CFR §§ 200.414](#)), any non-Federal entity that has never received a negotiated indirect cost rate, except State and Local Government and Indian Tribe Indirect Cost Proposals, may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10 percent of modified total direct costs (MTDC) which may be used indefinitely. No documentation is required to justify the 10% de minimis indirect cost rate. As described in [2 CFR § 200.403](#), costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs, but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both. If chosen, this methodology once elected must be used consistently for all Federal awards until such time as a recipient chooses to negotiate for a rate, which the recipient may apply to do at any time.

All applicants who elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10 percent must use the MTDC to determine the amount of indirect costs that can be included in the budget. MTDC are defined in [2 CFR § 200.1](#) as all direct salaries and wages, applicable fringe benefits, materials and supplies, services, travel, and up to the first \$25,000 of each subaward (regardless of the period of performance of the subawards under the award). MTDCs exclude equipment, capital expenditures, charges for patient care, rental costs, tuition remission, scholarships and fellowships, participant support costs, and the portion of each subaward in excess of \$25,000. Other items may be excluded only when necessary to avoid a serious inequity in the distribution of indirect costs, and with the approval of the cognizant agency for indirect costs.

If an applicant has an active negotiated indirect cost rate approved by its cognizant agency, the applicant must submit a copy of its approved NICRA with its application. Entities that would like to

negotiate an indirect cost rate must contact their cognizant agency. For assignments of cognizant agencies see [2 CFR § 200.1](#).

4.2.1 USING INDIRECT FUNDS FOR COST SHARING OR MATCHING

The allowed indirect costs may be included under the Federal portion of the budget or as a non-Federal matching contribution. The applicant may split the indirect cost allocation between the Federal and non-Federal portions of the budget only if the total amount of indirect costs does not exceed the maximum indirect costs allowed. Refer to [2 CFR §§ 200.413](#) and [200.414](#) for additional information on determining if costs charged to the award are direct or indirect.

4.3 SUBAWARDS

Subawards or contracts with partners, collaborators, or other parties that provide additional knowledge, expertise, or resources for the purposes of the proposed project are permitted.

4.4 ALLOWABLE AND UNALLOWABLE COSTS AND ACTIVITIES

All AMS awards are subject to the terms and conditions, cost principles, and other considerations described in the [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#) and [Program Specific Terms and Conditions](#). Applicants that have questions concerning the allowability of costs after reviewing this section should contact AMS staff using the contact information listed under [section 8.0](#) Agency Contacts.

In general, grant funds may not be used for the following:

- Pay costs that have been or will be reimbursed by a third party.
- Pay costs incurred prior to the date the grant is executed without prior authorization from AMS and subject to grant award terms and conditions.
- Pay costs that support or oppose union organizing.
- Pay costs associated with conducting research and development.

5.0 APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

5.1 ELECTRONIC APPLICATION PACKAGE

Only electronic applications for this RFA will be accepted and must be submitted via Grants.gov. We urge applicants to submit early to the Grants.gov system. For an overview of the Grants.gov application process, see Grants.gov's [Apply for Grants webpage](#). This RFA contains the information needed to obtain and complete required application forms and AMS-specific attachments. More information about applying through Grants.gov can be found in [section 5.3.1](#).

Applications must be submitted via Grants.gov. Applicants should submit applications to the Grants.gov well before the deadline to avoid last minute technical issues. See [section 5.3](#) Grants.gov Application Submission and Receipt Procedures and Requirements for additional application instructions.

Applicants can find the opportunity under either the Assistance Listing number “**10.189**,” or the Funding Opportunity Number “**USDA-AMS-TM-LMCG-G-23-0017**”.

5.2 CONTENT AND FORM OF APPLICATION SUBMISSION

5.2.1 SF-424 APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

Required: Form SF-424 is available via the opportunity at Grants.gov. Applicants may use the following supplemental instructions associated with specific blocks on 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 for the organization submitting the application. |
| 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 10.189 |
| 12 - Funding Opportunity Number | Enter USDA-AMS-TM-LMCG-G-23-0017 |
| 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 |
| 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 and End Date |
| 18.a - Estimated Funding - Federal | Enter the total Federal amount requested |
| 18.b – 18.f Estimated Funding – Applicant | Enter the total match amount from the applicant organization and/or other partners |
| 19 - Is Applicant Subject to Review by State Under Executive Order 12372 Process? | See section 5.6 |

5.2.2 SF-424A BUDGET INFORMATION

Required. The SF-424A is available via the application package in Grants.gov. Most information blocks on the required form are either self-explanatory or adequately explained in the form instructions. However, for Local MCap applications the following supplemental instructions must be used for specific boxes on the form.

On the SF-424A, please complete **only** Sections A, B, and C. Do **not** complete Sections D-F.

Section A – Budget Summary

| Box | Instructions |
|---|---|
| 1.a – Grant Program Function or Activity | Enter “Local MCap – Federal” |
| 1.b – Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number | Enter “10.189” |
| 1.e – Federal | Enter the amount of Federal funding requested for the project |
| 1.f – Non-Federal | Enter the total match contribution amount provided for the project |

Section B – Budget Categories

| Box | Instructions |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| 6.a – 6.j – Object Class Categories | <p>In Column 1, enter the amount of Federal funds requested for each Object Class Category. Do not include match funding.</p> <p>For example, if you are requesting \$2,000 in Federal funds for “Travel”, enter 2000 in Column 1, box 6.c</p> |

Section C – Non-Federal Resources

| Box | Instructions |
|---------------------|---|
| 8.a – Grant Program | Should auto-populate from Section A, Box 1.a |
| 8.b – 8.d | Enter the match amount being provided from each source (Applicant, State, or Other) for the project |

5.2.3 PROJECT ABSTRACT SUMMARY

Required for both Processing Expansion and Simplified Equipment-Only applications. The [Project Abstract Summary](#) form will be used as the award description for the overarching Federal award. This is separate from the Project Narrative Template. The Project Abstract Summary must include:

- Project purpose
- Activities to be performed
- Deliverables and expected outcomes
- Intended beneficiary(ies): Who will benefit from this beyond the applicant organization?
- Subrecipient, key partner, and collaborator activities. Identify the key partners, collaborators and subrecipients you know will be part of the work and how their engagement will support the program goals.

5.2.4 PROJECT NARRATIVE – PROCESSING EXPANSION PROJECT TYPE

Required for Processing Expansion Projects: Applicants are required to use the [Processing Expansion Projects – Project Narrative Template](#) form to apply to this project type. Your narrative statements should be explicitly responsive to the evaluation criteria ([section 6.1](#)) and the RFA guidance in general. Your proposal should identify needs and/or problems specific to your community and business,

including details such as estimates of unmet processing needs, new market opportunities, barriers to business growth, and how your proposal will address those needs.

Your narrative should also describe current facility capacity and business activities, including how long you have been in business, your current gross annual revenue, the number of head you process annually, the number of employees you employ (full-time and part-time), and projected expansion of processing capacity (by head and/or by numbers of employees) and revenue growth for your business. You must include a realistic implementation timeline and milestones. Consider key factors which will impact activities, capability to manage the proposed project, and commitment to continue enhanced or expanded processing activities after the grant period. Additionally, the narrative should explain plans to procure animals and provide producer opportunities relative to the existing processing establishments in your area, articulate price transparency, producer profitability, and value-added production as well as relevant commitments from producers, or consumers, end users, and potential buyers. For rendering applications, capacity should be in pounds or other relevant measure, and project narrative should describe the benefits to local processors and livestock producers. Make sure that your project narrative also describes community impact and support, and you document this through the inclusion of at least one letter of support from State, local, or Tribal leadership.

Your project narrative should be detailed and specific to your business and community.

The project narrative must be typed and single-spaced in an 11-point font and must not exceed fifteen (15) 8.5 x 11 pages (excluding pre-existing template content). For example, if the template is 15 pages before you begin entering your project narrative information, your template may be up to 30 pages in length when completed (15 original pages + 15 pages of applicant content).

DO NOT modify the margins of the Project Narrative Template. Applicants must submit the Project Narrative Template as a PDF and attached to the Grants.gov application package using the “Project Narrative Attachment Form”.

5.2.5 MATCHING FUNDS AND LETTERS OF VERIFICATION – PROCESSING EXPANSION PROJECTS

Required for Processing Expansion Projects ONLY. Each application must include written verification of match commitments from any party, including the applicant, who will contribute cash or in-kind matching from non-Federal resources to the project.

Submit one match verification letter for EACH cash or in-kind resource signed by the matching organization.

AMS highly encourages you to use the [Suggested Match Verification Template Letter](#) on the grant program’s website. If you do not use this template or if you are an applicant submitting a match, your match verification document must minimally include the following:

- Project Applicant
- Project Title
- Cash Commitment per year (if applicable) and Total Cash Match

- In-kind Contribution per year (if applicable) and Total In-kind Match. Break down items into categories as applicable:
 - Salaries (employee name, title, duties, pay rate/hr., amount matched per year)
 - Items/Activities (fair market value per unit, how value determined, and amount matched per year)
 - Explanation of how each type of match will correspond to the budget or be used by the applicant.
- Signature of Matching Organization Representative with typed name and title

Submit Matching Funds and Letters of Verification on letterhead and address them to the applicant (i.e., Project Director). Clearly indicate at the top of the documents that they are “MATCH VERIFICATION LETTERS”. Letters must accompany the proposal at the time of application. **Unsigned letters will not be accepted.**

Letter(s) must be attached to the Grants.gov application package using the “Add Attachments” button under Form SF-424 item #15.

5.2.6 PROJECT NARRATIVE AND APPLICATION DOCUMENTS – SIMPLIFIED EQUIPMENT-ONLY PROJECT TYPE

Required for Simplified Equipment-Only Projects: Applicants are required to use the [Project Narrative Template – Simplified Equipment-Only Project Type](#) to create the application project narrative. This simplified project narrative will require a clear needs statement, identification of the equipment being purchased, a description of the planned increase in capacity or product types the equipment will allow you to provide, and an overview of the benefits to livestock producers in your region.

Applicants must provide documentation to substantiate the costs of each piece of proposed equipment, which can include contracts, catalog pricing or binding quotes provided by license commercial entities.

The documentation must be attached to the Grants.gov application package using the “Add Attachments” button under SF-424 item #15.

5.2.7 LETTERS OF SUPPORT FROM PRODUCERS

All applicants, regardless of which project type, are encouraged to provide letters of support from producers at the time of application, in order to demonstrate engagement with and benefit to local and/or underserved producers and their support for the proposed project, or other community engagement and support. For rendering projects, letters of support should be from local producers and local processors demonstrating the need and support for the project.

Letter(s), if used, must be attached to the Grants.gov application package using the “Add Attachments” button under SF-424 item #15.

5.2.8 EVIDENCE OF CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Required for all applicants, regardless of which project type.

Both Simplified and Processing Expansion applications must demonstrate that they have the resources and infrastructure necessary for the completion of the proposed project, including the land, structures, and other necessary resources in place and in working condition at the time of application submission.

Applicants should include an attachment with their grants.gov submission that describes the critical and necessary resources needed for completion of your proposed project. AMS encourages you to use the optional [Evidence of Critical Resources and Infrastructure worksheet](#) to help you complete this part of the application. If you do not use this template, you must include the following:

- Project Applicant
- Project Title
- A statement describing and confirming that the necessary resources and infrastructure have appropriate commitments, approvals, permissions, licenses, etc. to be used as described in the project. (For example, is the building into which you intend to install equipment approved for the processing activities that will then occur there?)

Please title your attachment “EVIDENCE OF CRITICAL RESOURCES AND INFRASTRUCTURE” and add it to the Grants.gov application package using the “Add Attachments” button under Form SF-424 item #15.

5.3 GRANTS.GOV APPLICATION SUBMISSION AND RECEIPT PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS

5.3.1 HOW TO REGISTER TO APPLY THROUGH GRANTS.GOV

See below for the key registration steps and visit the [Grants.gov registration page](#) for complete instructions.

- 1) *Register in the System for Award Management (SAM.gov)*: All entities must have an **Active Registration** in SAM.gov. This process includes getting a Unique Entity ID (UEI) and requires certifications and other information about your business.
- 2) *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 to complete this process.

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

Applicants may use the Grants.gov Workspace, a shared, online environment where members of a grant team may simultaneously access and edit different webforms within an application. For each funding opportunity announcement, 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.

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.

b. *Mandatory Fields in Forms*: Fields marked with an asterisk and a different background color are mandatory fields you must complete to successfully submit your application.

c. *Complete SF-424 Fields First*: The forms are designed to fill in common required fields across other forms, such as the applicant's name, address, and UEI 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 5.2](#).

4) *Track via a Workspace*: After successfully submitting a workspace package, Grants.gov automatically assigns a Tracking Number (GRANTXXXXXXX) to the package, which will be listed on the Confirmation page generated after submission.

Applicant Support: Grants.gov provides additional [training resources, including video tutorials](#).

Applicants may call the 24/7 toll-free support number 1-800-518-4726, or email support@grants.gov.

Grants.gov will issue a ticket number to which you and Grants.gov can refer if the issue is not resolved.

5.4 APPLICATION SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

AMS will not consider any applications received after the deadline, any applications submitted by fax, email, or postal mail and any applications not responsive to the requirements of this RFA (eligibility, incomplete application, missing required attachments documents, etc.). See [AMS' Late Applications, Denials and/or Appeal Procedures Policy](#).

Ensure that all components are complete before submission. Allow enough time for the application process, as it may take more than one attempt before your application is successfully submitted. AMS encourages you to submit your application at least two weeks before the application deadline to ensure all certifications and registrations are met.

Proof of timely submission is automatically recorded by Grants.gov using an electronic date/time stamp generated when the application is successfully received by Grants.gov. The applicant Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) will then receive an acknowledgement of receipt and a tracking number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) from Grants.gov. Applicant AORs will also receive the official date/time stamp and Grants.gov tracking number in an email serving as proof of their timely submission.

Special Note for Applicants with Slow Internet Connections: Applicants using slow internet, such as dialup connections, may experience significantly longer transmission times when submitting their application to Grants.gov, especially if there are large attachments contained in the upload. Again, Grants.gov will provide either an error message or a successfully received transmission notification via email to the applicant AOR.

5.5 SUBMISSION DATE AND TIME

Applicants must submit applications electronically via [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on July 19, 2023. AMS cannot consider applications received after this deadline for funding. See [AMS' Late Applications, Denials and/or Appeal Procedures Policy](#).

5.6 INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW

This program is not subject to [Executive Order 12372](#), which requires intergovernmental consultation with State and local officials.

6.0 APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

6.1 PROJECT EVALUATION CRITERIA

6.1.1 CRITERIA FOR PROCESSING EXPANSION PROJECTS

Each application in the Processing Expansion project type will be reviewed competitively using the following criteria and scoring.

Your project proposal narrative should be detailed and specific to your business and community. Applicants who insert language from this RFA or use generic language to describe their project may be scored lower or as unresponsive to the relevant scoring criteria.

Alignment and Intent **25 Points**

- 1) The application identifies specific meat or poultry processing and/or rendering capacity constraints and describes the project's objectives, including how they will address those issues.
- 2) The application describes the steps the applicant will take to enhance the infrastructure and increase meat or poultry processing or rendering capacity at the identified facility through higher volumes, types of processing, value added activities, etc.
- 3) The application describes the project's proposed geographic focus area and the regional market demands versus processing constraints.
- 4) The application identifies types and estimated numbers of producers that will benefit from increased processing capacity, in particular underserved producers.

- 5) The application complies with all written instructions and requirements described within the RFA and Project Narrative Template.

Technical Merit..... **15 Points**

- 1) The application describes technical resources already in place to contribute to the project’s development, implementation, and/or management.
- 2) The application presents a clear, well-conceived, complete, and suitable overall work plan.
- 3) The extent to which the application presents a realistic schedule with project milestones and timelines for implementing the proposed project objectives during the award project period.
- 4) If the applicant proposes to build upon previously funded activities, the previous lessons learned are clearly incorporated into the proposed project.

Achievability..... **15 Points**

- 1) The proposed activities are relevant for the scale and scope of the project including:
 - a. How each activity contributes to achieving the outcome; and
 - b. Description of key factors that will contribute or restrict progress toward the applicable activities, including action steps for addressing identified restricting factors.

Expertise and Technical Management **15 Points**

- 1) The applicant demonstrates the capability and experience to implement the project.
- 2) The relevant experience of key staff responsible for managing the project implementation and on-going use of the newly installed equipment.

Fiscal Plan, Financial Viability, and Resources **10 Points**

- 1) The application Budget Narrative/Justification provides a clear, detailed description for each budget line item, and:
 - a. The budget is well justified for the size and scope of the project activities.
 - b. All budget items are directly linked to activities included in the application.
 - c. The budget relates logically to the project narrative describing the project.
- 2) The applicant describes the financial viability of the project.
- 3) Narrative and/or data to demonstrate product demand and reliability of supply for financial feasibility (including consideration of competing facilities)

Market Impact & Opportunities..... **10 Points**

- 1) The applicant plans to procure animals and provide producer opportunities relative to the existing processing establishments in their area and describes how the expanded processing capacity will meet producer, buyer, and consumer needs.
- 2) For rendering applications, the applicant plans to process animal byproducts through a rendering facility which benefits local processors and describes how the expanded rendering will meet supply chain needs.
- 3) Whether the operation is a cooperative business model or otherwise shares profits or ownership with consumers, producers, or workers, if applicable.

Community Impact & Support.....**10 Points**

- 1) The applicant describes the community engagement and support of their proposed project and the proposed increase in processing availability, as well as any strategies to generate additional community support.
- 2) The applicant provides a description or analysis of local and regional market and economic impact.
- 3) The project enhances worker experience and safety through payment of living wages, provision of worker training, and/or promotion of safe working conditions.
- 4) The project enhances and supports local and regional environmental stewardship and climate benefits.

6.1.2 CRITERIA FOR SIMPLIFIED EQUIPMENT-ONLY GRANTS

For Simplified Equipment-Only Grants, the following criteria apply.

Alignment & Intent.....**80 Points**

- 1) The application identifies specific meat or poultry processing capacity constraints and describes the project’s objectives, including how they will address those issues.
- 2) The application describes the steps the applicant will take to enhance the infrastructure and increase meat or poultry processing capacity at the identified facility through higher volumes, types of processing, value added activities, etc.
- 3) The application describes the project’s proposed geographic focus area and the regional market demands versus processing constraints.
- 4) The application identifies types and estimated numbers of producers (see section X) that will benefit from increased processing capacity, in particular historically underserved, beginning, or limited resource producers.
- 5) The application complies with all written instructions and requirements described within the RFA and Project Narrative Template.
- 6) The budget relates logically to the project narrative describing the project.

Market Impact & Opportunities.....**20 Points**

- 1) The applicant plans to procure animals and provide producer opportunities relative to the existing processing establishments in their area and describes how the expanded processing capacity will meet producer, buyer, and consumer needs.
- 2) Whether the operation is a cooperative business model or otherwise shares profits or ownership with consumers, producers, or workers, if applicable.

6.2 REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

Step 1: Initial Qualification Screening

Each application is initially reviewed for overall completeness, as well as compliance with eligibility and program requirements as set forth in this RFA. If an application does not meet these requirements, it is removed from consideration. Please see [section 3.0](#) and [AMS’ Late and/or Non-Responsive Applications Policy](#) for more information.

Step 2: Technical Review

Each application that passes initial screening (Step 1) is evaluated by a panel of independent peer reviewers. Each reviewer signs a conflict of interest and confidentiality agreement regarding any assigned applications. The peer review panels evaluate their assigned applications using instructions prepared by AMS officials. Individual reviewers score applications and then confer with other panel members. The scoring and discussion serve as the basis for awarding and allocating grant funds and focuses on strengths and weaknesses of each proposal.

Step 3: Administrative Review

AMS will conduct a final administrative evaluation of each review panel's top rankings and recommendations. In addition to the rank and scores, AMS reviews each application to ensure that potential recommended projects align with the scope of the RFA, allowability of budget items, available funding, geographic diversity, and USDA priorities as noted in [section 1.3.5](#). AMS staff will work with top-ranked applicants to negotiate any revisions if necessary and possible. AMS will also assess an organization's ability to account for the use of Federal funds and monitor the performance associated with these monies using the guidance provided by [2 CFR § 200.206](#).

7.0 AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

7.1 AWARD NOTICES

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

The NOA will provide pertinent instructions and information including, at a minimum, the information described in [2 CFR § 200.211](#) and a reference to the [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#).

7.2 UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS

Unsuccessful applicants will be contacted by AMS via email as soon as possible after the awards are announced. The unsuccessful applicants will be provided anonymous review panel consensus comments regarding their application as feedback.

7.3 ADMINISTRATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS

As part of the NOA, all AMS recipients must abide by [Program Specific Terms and Conditions](#) and the [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#), which reference applicable *Administrative and National Policy Requirements*.

7.4 REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Reporting and award closeout requirements are included in the [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#). If there are any program or award-specific award terms, those will be identified in the award.

7.5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF USDA SUPPORT

Proper acknowledgement of your USDA-AMS funding in published solicitations (e.g., for State competitions), presentations, press releases, and other communications is critical for the success of our agency's programs. Grantees must meet the acknowledgement requirements outlined in the updated [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#).

8.0 AGENCY CONTACTS

8.1 PROGRAMMATIC QUESTIONS

After closely reviewing this RFA in its entirety, applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact the Local MCap staff by e-mail with questions about the grant program at LocalMCAp@usda.gov.

For additional information, please visit the Local MCap webpage:

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/localmcap>.

8.2 AVAILABLE RESOURCES

AMS provides resources and information on the [Local MCap website](#) that may be helpful to applicants, including Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's), descriptions of funded projects, and required application forms. AMS staff is available to provide timely technical assistance.

AMS also provides support through the [Meat and Poultry Processing Capacity Technical Assistance program](#) (MPPTA). MPPTA organizations can assist with navigating Federal grants processes and procedures, from pre-award applications processes through post-award grant management compliance. They can also assist with business and financial planning resources, market intelligence, and project feasibility analyses. Note: work with an MPPTA organization does not guarantee funding. Visit www.ams.usda.gov/mppta to connect with these services.

FSIS District Offices Points of Contacts: [Office of Field Operations \(OFO\) | Food Safety and Inspection Service \(usda.gov\)](#)

FSIS Small Plant Help Desk: [Small Plant Help Desk | Food Safety and Inspection Service \(usda.gov\)](#)

8.3 GRANTS.GOV QUESTIONS

All questions regarding Grants.gov technical assistance must be directed to Grants.gov's [Applicant Support](#).

9.0 OTHER INFORMATION

9.1 DEFINITIONS

Amenable species: The [Federal Meat Inspection Act \(FMIA\)](#) and [Poultry Products Inspection Act \(PPIA\)](#) require the USDA to inspect all amenable livestock and poultry offered for sale in commerce.

- Amenable livestock refers to beef, swine, sheep, goats, and fish of the order Siluriformes.¹
- Amenable poultry refers to any domesticated bird (chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese, guineas, ratites, or squabs). Ratites (ostrich, emus, and rhea) are also on the list of amenable poultry species.

Beginning Farmer or Rancher: An individual or entity that has not operated a farm or ranch for more than 10 years and substantially participates in the operation.

Cooperatives: A business or service organization (1) that is owned and democratically controlled by the people who use its services and (2) whose benefits (services received and earnings allocations) are distributed to the user-owners based on how much they use the cooperative.

Cooperative Interstate Shipment (CIS): The USDA program that allows State-inspected plants to operate as Federally inspected facilities, under specific conditions, and ship their product in interstate commerce.

Domestically owned: An entity organized in the United States under the law of the State, the States, or under Tribal jurisdiction where the entity operates, and a majority of the entity is owned by US citizens.

Facility: A meat or poultry processing plant designed, built, equipped, etc., for Primary and/or Further Processing of meat or poultry.

Further Processing: Conversion of raw meat and poultry products, through smoking, curing, salting, fermenting, cooking, canning, curing, refining, or rendering into cooked, cured and preserved products for human consumption.

Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP): HACCP provides a framework for establishments to conduct science-based process controls that can be validated as effective in eliminating, preventing, or reducing to an acceptable level the food safety hazards that are reasonably likely to occur in an official establishment's particular production processes.

Historically Underserved Farmer or Rancher: Four groups are defined by USDA as "Historically Underserved," including farmers or ranchers who are: Beginning; Socially Disadvantaged; Veterans; and Limited Resource as described at [Historically Underserved Farmers and Ranchers | Natural Resources Conservation Service \(usda.gov\)](#).

Independently Owned and Operated: Not influenced or controlled by others in matters of opinion, conduct, etc. and not subject to another's authority or jurisdiction.

Local Producer: For the purposes of this program, local producer means a producer raising animals in the locality or region where the applicant is conducting processing activities, with the distance from farm or ranch to processing facility is at most 400 miles, or both the livestock producer and the processor are within the same State, territory, or Tribal land.

Majority-Controlled Producer-Based Business Venture: A venture with greater than 50 percent of the ownership and control held by one or more producers or one or more entities that are wholly owned and controlled by one or more producers. Entities described here include legal partnerships, limited liability corporations, limited liability partnerships, and corporations.

¹ The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is barred under the [2016 Consolidated Appropriations Act](#) from spending funds to perform ante-mortem inspection of horses intended for human consumption. Under this funding ban, FSIS is also not permitted to operate a fee for service program for the inspection of horses for human consumption. This effectively prohibits the slaughter of horses.

Mid-tier Value Chain: means a local or regional supply network that links independent producers with businesses and cooperatives that market value-added agricultural product in a manner that:

- Targets and strengthens the profitability and competitiveness of small and medium-size farms and ranches that are structured as a family farm; and
- Obtains agreement from an eligible agricultural producer group, farmer or rancher cooperative, or majority-controlled producer-based business venture that is engaged in the value chain on a marketing strategy.

Nonamenable Species: Refers to exotic species under voluntary inspection. Examples include bison, domestic rabbits, domestic deer, pheasant, quail, and captive raised waterfowl. Effective September 13, 2021, "exotic animal" means any reindeer, elk, deer, antelope, water buffalo, bison, buffalo, or yak ([9 CFR 352.1\(k\)](#)).

Nonprofit Corporations: Any organization or institution, including nonprofits with State or IRS 501 (c) status and accredited institutions of higher education, where no part of the organization or institution's net earnings inure to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual.

Processing: Includes slaughter, primary processing and further processing of meat or poultry for human consumption.

Primary Processing: Includes slaughtering, cutting, and boning of raw meat and poultry for human consumption.

Processor: For the purposes of this program, a processor is a business engaged in the slaughter, primary processing, or further processing of meat or poultry for human consumption.

Producer: An owner-operator or tenant that handles livestock and/or poultry and is entitled to a share of the farm income.

Producer Network or Association: Producer group- or member-owned organizations or businesses that provide, offer, or sell agricultural products or services through a common distribution system for the mutual member benefit of the owners, as well as organizations or other businesses that assist, represent, or serve producers or producer networks.

Rendering. Rendering is an off-site process that uses heat to convert animal carcasses into safe, pathogen-free feed protein and other valuable end products while reducing the negative effects of the carcasses on people and the environment.

Small Disadvantaged Business: A business that is small according to SBA's size standards for its business type and that is 51% or more owned and controlled by one or more disadvantaged persons. The disadvantaged person or persons must be socially disadvantaged and economically disadvantaged. For the purposes of this designation, disadvantaged persons is defined per [eCFR :: 13 CFR 124.103 -- Who is socially disadvantaged?](#) as "Those who have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice or cultural bias within American society because of their identities as members of groups and without regard to their individual qualities. The social disadvantage must stem from circumstances beyond their control." See [Small Disadvantaged Business \(sba.gov\)](#) for more information.

Tribal Entities: Tribal Entities is expansive and includes all entities falling under the eligible legal structures, including but not limited to: Tribal owned corporations, Intertribal non-profits and associations, Alaska Native Corporations, Native entities within the State of Alaska recognized by and eligible to receive services from the U.S. Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs, Native Hawaiian organizations including Homestead Associations, State recognized Tribes/non-profits, and individually-owned Native American entities.

Tribe: means the term as defined in the Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act of 1994 (Public Law 103-454; 108 Stat. 4791, 4792).

Value-Added Agricultural Product: means any agricultural commodity or product that:

- Has undergone a change in the physical state or form of the product, such as milling wheat into flour or making strawberries into jam.
- Is produced in a manner that enhances the value of the agricultural commodity or product.
- Is physically segregated in a manner that results in the enhancement of the value of that commodity or product, such as an identity preserved product.
- Is a source of farm- or ranch-based renewable energy, including E-85 fuel; or
- Is aggregated and marketed as a locally produced agricultural food product and, as a result of the change in physical state or the manner in which the agricultural commodity or product is produced and segregated, the customer base for the commodity or product is expanded and a greater portion of revenue derived from the marketing, processing, or physical segregation is made available to the producer of the commodity or product.

Veteran Farmer or Rancher: is a producer who served in the United States Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, or Coast Guard, including the reserve component thereof, was released from service under conditions other than dishonorable, and has not operated a farm or ranch or has operated a farm or ranch for no more than 10 years or who first obtained status as a veteran during the most recent 10-year period.

Veteran-Owned Small Business: A small business, as defined by the SBA size standard for its business type that has no less than 51% of the business owned and controlled by one or more veterans. For those veterans who are permanently and totally disabled and unable to manage the daily business operations of their business, their business may still qualify if their spouse or appointed, permanent caregiver is assisting in that management. See [Veteran contracting assistance programs \(sba.gov\)](#) for more information.

Women-Owned Small Business: A small business according to SBA size standards for its business type that is at least 51% owned and controlled by women who are U.S. citizens; and have women manage day-to-day operations who also make long-term decisions. See [Women-Owned Small Business Federal Contract program \(sba.gov\)](#) for more information.

9.2 EQUAL OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, 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 the

Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

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.

9.3 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUESTS

The Freedom of Information Act of 1966 ([5 U.S.C. § 552](#)) (FOIA) and the Privacy Act of 1974 ([5 U.S.C. § 552a](#)), as implemented by USDA's regulations ([7 CFR § 1, Subpart A](#)) govern the release or withholding of information to the public in connection with this Federal award. The release of information under these laws and regulations applies only to records held by AMS and imposes no requirement on the recipient or any subrecipient to permit or deny public access to their records.

FOIA requests for records relating to this Federal award may be directed to USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service, FOIA/PA Officer, Room 2055-S, Stop 0201, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-0201, Telephone: (202) 302-0650; or email: AMS.FOIA@usda.gov.

9.4 PAPERWORK REDUCTION

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 ([44 U.S.C. 3501](#)), an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0581-0240. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 4 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering, and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information.

LOCAL MEAT CAPACITY GRANTS (LOCAL MCAP)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

PROGRAM INFORMATION

Q: What is the Local Meat Capacity Grant?

A: This program supports independently owned meat and poultry processing businesses with funds to provide more and better processing options for local livestock producers by modernizing, increasing, diversifying and decentralizing meat and poultry processing capacity, including support for rendering.

FUNDING PRIORITIES

Q: Are there priority considerations for the Local MCap program?

A: AMS will prioritize applications that demonstrate engagement with and benefit to local livestock producers, including underserved producers. See section 1.3.5 Funding Priorities of the RFA for additional information.

Q: Do the Project Types outlined in the RFA mean that applications must address at least one of the 2 Project Types listed?

A: Yes. In this program, applicants may only apply under one of the following project types:

- Processing Expansion Projects (See section 1.3.2 of the RFA)
- Simplified Equipment-Only Projects (See section 1.3.3 of the RFA)

Q: What is the minimum and maximum amount of the award?

A. Minimum and maximum award amounts for each project types are as follows:

| Project Type | Duration (Months) | Minimum Award | Maximum Award |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Processing Expansion Projects | 36 | \$100,000 | \$5,000,000 |
| Simplified Equipment-Only Projects | 24 | \$10,000 | \$250,000 |

ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

Q: Who is considered eligible to apply for the USDA Local MCap Program?

A: Eligible applicants for Local MCap grants include sole proprietor businesses or other business entities (regardless of legal structure) engaged in meat and poultry processing or rendering, including Tribes and Tribal Entities, for-profit entities, non-profit entities, and State or local government entities. Private entities must be independently owned and operated, and all applicants must be domestically owned.

For the purpose of this grant, an existing operation can include an entity who is restarting an existing facility (e.g., reopening a plant with a new owner).

Q: Can we apply for a Local MCap program award if our non-profit (501)(c)(3) status is still pending with the IRS?

A: Yes. If an award is offered, the applicant would need to verify their (501)(c)(3) status to receive the Local MCap award.

Q: Does an applicant need to have existed for a minimum amount of time to be eligible to apply?

A: No. However, applicants should consider the financial management and reporting requirements for a federal award when deciding if they have the capacity to take on and manage a federal award.

Q: Can meat or poultry processing facilities that have an MPIRG award from either FY21 or FY22 apply for funding under Local MCap?

A: Entities that received grants under the AMS Meat and Poultry Inspection Readiness Grant (MPIRG) program LMCG grant may apply for this program, but they must successfully complete and close out their MPIRG grant before being awarded a Local MCap grant award.

Q: Can an organization submit more than one application?

A: No, an organization can only be the lead applicant on one application. However, an organization can appear on multiple Local MCap applications as partners if they are not paid from both agreements for the same work.

Q: Are seafood processors included in this opportunity?

A: Only catfish of the order of Siluriform are included in the Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA).

APPLICATION PROCESS

Q: How can I get in touch with staff at AMS to talk about applying for a Local MCap award?

A: Please email LocalMCap@usda.gov and a member of our team will respond to your email within 2 business days.

Q: Does the Project Narrative page limit (of 15 pages?) exclude required documents such as key staff resumes?

A: Yes. The page limit only applies to content entered on the Project Narrative template itself. Other required documents such as commitment letters and key staff resumes do not count towards this limit.

Q: What type of attachments can be submitted with the application?

A: In terms of the attachments, we ask that applicants only include the attachments that were directly asked to be included within the application package (resumes, letters of support, letters verifying matching funds, negotiated indirect cost rate agreements (if applicable), equipment price quotes project beneficiaries questionnaire and the accounting system and financial capability questionnaire, equipment price quotes, evidence of critical resources and infrastructure template letter). Any additional attachments included in the application may not be read by reviewers.

Q: How are attachments uploaded in Grants.gov?

A: The completed – signed project narrative template must be attached to the “Project Narrative Attachment Form” on the application package. All other attachments must be attached to the Grants.gov application package using the “Add Attachments” button under Form SF-424 item #15. When uploading attachments, click the “Add Attachments” button (do NOT use the “paperclip” icon in Adobe Reader). If you use the “paperclip” icon in Adobe Reader, the attachments will not be received with the application package.

Q: Can AMS staff review a draft of my application prior to submission?

A: No, AMS cannot review draft applications before they are submitted through Grants.gov because this is a competitive grant application process. However, if you have specific questions about allowable costs and activities, you are welcome to reach out to us via email at LocalMCAp@usda.gov.

Q: Can I submit my application by fax, email, postal mail, or hand delivery?

A: No. AMS will not accept applications submitted by fax, paper, email, postal mail, or hand delivery. All applications must be submitted electronically through Grants.gov.

Q: Who should provide resumes and CVs for within the application?

A: Resumes of the members of the Project Team should be included with the Narrative Form as an attachment. The Project Team is the key staff who will collectively manage the financial and operational decisions of the Local MCAp project.

GRANTS.GOV INFORMATION

Q: What does AOR stand for?

A: AOR is the Authorized Organization Representative, which is the person who has the authority to sign and submit grant applications on behalf of the company, organization, institution, or government. AOR's are authorized by their EBiz POC (E-Business Point of Contact) so they can submit applications on behalf of their organization.

Q: How do you become or register to be an AOR?

A: You would first register as an applicant on Grants.gov. Once you have a UEI and your organization has an active SAM account, your EBiz POC will receive an email notifying them that you have registered and need to be authorized.

Q: What is EIN?

A: The EIN is the Employer Identification Number. This number is assigned by the IRS.

Q: How do I know if my application was submitted on time?

A: After you submit your application to [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov), you (the AOR) will receive an automatic notification of receipt from the system that contains a Grants.gov tracking number and official date/time stamp of application submission. This notification ONLY indicates receipt by Grants.gov and does not indicate receipt by AMS. Grants.gov may also send you an error message if your application was not submitted correctly. If application submission passes Grants.gov validation, AOR will receive a second electronic acknowledgment of receipt. Once USDA-AMS has retrieved application from Grants.gov, AOR will receive a third email notification. Lastly, if AMS assigns its own agency tracking number/notes a fourth email is sent to AOR.

Q: Can we apply before having the Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and SAM.gov registration?

A: No, you must first have your UEI number to register in SAM.gov. In order to apply as an organization you must have an active SAM account.

Q: Do I have to register before I can see the requirements of the grant application?

A: No, you do not have to register in Grants.gov to view the opportunity and download it. Also, you can access the Request for Application, and the required documents on the program website, under the “How to apply” tab. However, you must be registered in Grants.gov to apply.

Q: Is the EBiz POC someone in my organization or a federal employee?

A: The EBiz POC is a member of your organization and is often the person that oversees the business operations. The EBiz POC is the one that registers the organization in SAM. EBiz POC is responsible affiliating and assigning roles to all applicants registered in Grants.gov on behalf of the organization.

Q: Can the EBiz POC and AOR be the same person?

A: Yes. In that case, you’d need two accounts/log-ins. One to serve in each capacity.

Q: Can an organization have multiple EBiz POC’s?

A: No, you can only have one EBiz POC but may have multiple AOR’s.

Q: How do I contact Grants.gov if there is an issue with my registration?

A: You may contact the Customer Contact center by either e-mail support@grants.gov or phone 1-800-518-4726. You can also use the Self Help link <https://grants-portal.psc.gov> to find answers to common questions.

SAM REGISTRATION

Q: If we already have a UEI, can we go straight to SAM.gov?

A: Yes. SAM registration can take up to 2 weeks, and often longer, to complete so register early. Check the [SAM.gov website](https://sam.gov) for additional login procedures.

Q: If I have already had a SAM.gov account, do I have to do anything else?

A: Yes, you must be sure that your SAM.gov account is up to date. If the account expired, you must renew your account before applying.

Q: Do I have to pay to activate a SAM.gov account?

A: No, registering and renewing a SAM.gov account is completely free. If you received notification on having to pay to renew your account beware that it is likely a SCAM and should be reported to the appropriated authorities.

Q: Do I need to have an active SAM.gov registration to receive payments?

A: Yes. You must have an active SAM registration for the agency to process your claims/payments. If the UEI is showing inactive in the Payment Management System (PMS), the payment will not be processed. It is the responsibility of the organization to contact SAM.gov to renew the registration annually.

MATCHING INFORMATION

Q: What is cost sharing or matching?

A: Cost sharing or matching is the portion of project costs not paid by the Federal funds, which could be cash and/or in-kind contributions. Cash can be a financial outlay, or cash donations from non-Federal third parties. In-kind can be the value of non-cash contributions typically in the form of value of personnel, goods, and services, including direct and indirect costs. Other Federal funds cannot be used as match. (See 2 CFR §§ 200.1 and 200.306.)

Q: How should an applicant document if they qualify for reduced match?

A: Qualifying applicants should self-certify in their project narrative to be eligible for the reduced match to 25% match for the equipment and processing expansion projects grant award. See question 4 of Processing Expansion Project Narrative Template.

Q: Can unallowable costs be brought as an in-kind or cost share match?

A: No. Only costs allowable under Subpart E of the Cost Principles can be brought as a match. The basis for determining the value of cash and in-kind contributions must be in accordance with 2 CFR § 200.306.

Q: Can land, buildings or labor count as in-kind matches?

A: Donated land and/or buildings cannot be used as an in-kind match. Labor/personnel may be used as a match as long as you are only bringing the percentage of time the person is working on the project. For example, if someone is only spending 15% of their time working on the project, then you can only bring that 15% to the project as a match. Also, you must ensure that what you would normally pay that individual is reasonable according to standard personnel rates for similar positions in your geographic locality.

Q: Can unrecovered indirect cost be used as part of the cost sharing or matching?

A: Yes, it is allowable to use unrecovered indirect costs as part of cost sharing or matching. Unrecovered indirect cost means the difference between the amount charged to the Federal award and the amount that could have been charged to the Federal award under the potential recipients approved negotiated indirect cost rate.

Q: Does the non-federal match have to be confirmed at the time of proposal submission or can it be lined up by the time of the award?

A: All matching contributions must be committed or in place when the proposal is submitted to AMS. Additional anticipated matching funds not in place by the time the project commences cannot be counted toward the matching requirement. Match verification letters are required to be submitted with the application.

Q: How many match verifications letters do I submit?

A: An applicant must submit one letter verifying the match for EACH cash and/or in-kind resource signed by the matching organization. Each application requires written verification of match commitment from the applicant and/or any third party who will contribute cash and/or in-kind matching non-Federal resources. Letters may be submitted in either PDF or MS Word formatting. Letters must be signed.

Q: Can I use pre-award costs to count towards the match requirement at time of application?

A: No, only costs that are incurred within the period of performance can be used as a match source.

ALLOWABLE/UNALLOWABLE COSTS

Q: Can Local MCap funds be used to purchase land or buildings?

A: No. It is unallowable to use Local MCap funds for the acquisition of buildings, facilities, or land. This noted, funds may be used to rent a building or facility for project-specific purposes, during the project's period of performance.

Please see the [Program Specific Terms and Conditions](#) and the [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#) for more information.

Q: Can funds be used for construction?

A: Local MCap funds may be used for improvements, rearrangements, or alterations of an existing building or facility to use a space more effectively and to accommodate new or upgraded equipment and processes.

Funds may NOT be used for new construction of buildings/facility or structural changes to an existing building/facility resulting in a square foot expansion or requiring changes to the building's floor, foundation, and exterior or load bearing walls.

Please see the [Program Specific Terms and Conditions](#) and the [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#) for more information.

Q: Could you provide additional information on what qualifies as "special purchase equipment?"

A: Please see the [Program Specific Terms and Conditions](#) and the [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#) for more information on special purpose equipment.

Q: What are the reporting requirements and timelines for administering a Local MCap program award?

A: The grantee's administrative duties for the Local MCap program (including reporting requirements) are explained in more detail in the [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#).

Q: Would only the applicant staff go under Personnel and all other Project Team partners go under Contractual?

A: Yes. The applicant would list all personnel and fringe benefit costs for its project staff under those budget sections, and partner costs would be listed in the Contractual section.

Q: Are administrative fees allowable under the Local MCap program?

A: The Local MCap program allows for the inclusion of indirect costs (also known as Facility & Administration Fees) as part of the project budget for both Processing Expansion Projects and the Simplified Equipment-Only Projects.

More information on indirect costs can be found in the section 4.2 of the RFA.

Q: Are the maximum award amounts inclusive of indirect/administrative costs?

A: Yes.

Q: Can funds be used to purchase vehicles?

A: The [Program Specific Terms and Conditions](#) outline the allowable costs related to special purpose equipment.

Q: How will purchased equipment be monitored?

A: Purchased equipment will be monitored by AMS as required by [2 CFR § 200.313](#).

Q: Can operational and financial support staff be written into the budget as direct costs?

A: Yes, administrative and clerical staff are normally treated as indirect costs, however, these costs can be direct costs if the conditions outlined in [2 CFR 200.413\(c\)](#) are met.

Q: Are applicants able to use a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA)?

A: Yes. USDA is required to accept the Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) from those entities that have one. Any non-Federal entity that does not have a current negotiated (including provisional) indirect cost rate, except State and Local Government and Indian Tribe Indirect Cost Proposals, may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10 percent of modified total direct costs (MTDC). See section 4.2 of the RFA for more details on indirect costs.

Q: Can a Federal agency or pass-through entity allow a non-Federal entity with a negotiated indirect cost rate to voluntarily charge less than or waive their indirect rate to an award?

A: The non-Federal entity should consult with the Federal agency or pass-through entity. If a non-Federal entity receiving a Federal award or subaward voluntarily chooses to waive indirect costs or charge less than the negotiated indirect cost rate, Federal awarding agencies and pass-through entities may allow this. The decision must be made solely by the non-Federal entity that is eligible for indirect cost rate reimbursement and must not be encouraged or coerced in any way by the Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity.