

Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program (MPPEP)—Phase 2

Fiscal Year 2023 Request for Applications (RFA)

Funding Opportunity Number: RD-RBS-23-02-MPPEP

Publication Date: August 24, 2023

Application Due Date: 11:59 PM Eastern Time November 22, 2023

PROGRAM SOLICITATION INFORMATION

Funding Opportunity Title: Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program—Phase 2

Funding Opportunity Number: RD-RBS-23-02-MPPEP

Announcement Type: Fiscal Year 2023 Request for Applications

Assistance Listing Number: 10.381

Submission Deadline: Applications must be received by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on November 22, 2023 through www.Grants.gov. Applications received after this deadline will not be considered for evaluation or funding.

Executive Summary: The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Rural Development (RD) Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBCS or Agency), requests applications for the Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program—Phase 2 (MPPEP). MPPEP is authorized under Section 1001(b)(4) of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), which provides funding to make “loans and grants and provide other assistance to maintain and improve food and agricultural supply chain resiliency.” Pursuant to this authority, USDA is making grant funding available to meat and poultry processors for new facilities and for the renovation and expansion of existing facilities. This will promote competition and give more and better options to producers by increasing meat and poultry processing capacity. Grants to meat and poultry processors have been delivered in two phases. This RFA is for MPPEP Phase 2; a separate RFA was issued in 2022 for MPPEP Phase I.

The Agency has entered into a cooperative agreement (the “Cooperative Agreement”) with the New Hampshire Community Loan Fund (the “Cooperator”) to assist the Agency with the administration of the Program, including but not limited to: working with the Agency on the selection of program awards; the management and disbursement of grant funds; the servicing of grant awards; the monitoring and tracking of projects, including conducting site visits; and will perform other related matters in connection with the administration of the Program. The Agency will remain responsible for program outreach, applicant eligibility determinations, and the scoring of program applications. Pursuant to the Cooperative Agreement, the Agency has obligated funds in the amount of \$123 million to the Cooperator to be made available for program applicants. The maximum award is \$10 million or 30 percent of total project costs, whichever is less. The minimum award is \$250,000. A cost share of 70 percent of the total project cost is required. Applicants will be required to identify sources and amounts to make up the 70 percent cost share in the application.

RBCS will award competitive grants to eligible applicants that submit high quality proposals that meet the purpose and requirements of this program. This announcement provides eligibility criteria for applicants and projects, details on cost share requirements, and the forms and instructions required to apply for an award. Eligible applicants include Tribes and tribal entities, for-profit and nonprofit entities, producer-owned cooperatives and corporations, certified benefit corporations, State or local government entities, and other business types (regardless of legal structure). Applicants must engage or propose to engage in either slaughter or slaughter and further processing with plans to operate under USDA or state-equivalent inspection. Private entities must be independently owned and operated, and

all entities must be domestically owned. Additionally, applicants' meat and poultry processing facilities must be physically located and operated in the United States (U.S.) or its territories.

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 beef, pork, chicken, or turkey processing.

Eligible projects must process meat and poultry for human consumption. The Agency may also consider geography, operation size, species, ownership structure, business model, underserved communities, and climate and environmental impacts to maximize diversity among awards.

USDA is offering technical assistance to help applicants prepare grant applications. Please see Section 2.6 for more information.

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

The application must include all the information in the checklist located below. Failure to submit all required information with an application will result in the application being ineligible for the grant program. Please see section 4.2 for more information and details on the required documents and supporting information.

Document	Details
<input type="checkbox"/> SF-424, "Application for Federal Assistance"	Maximum period of performance is 48 months
<input type="checkbox"/> SF-424C, "Budget Form – Construction Programs"	Budget Information – Construction Programs
<input type="checkbox"/> SF-424D, "Assurances for Construction Programs"	Assurances for Construction Projects
<input type="checkbox"/> AD-2106 – "Form to Assist in Assessment of USDA Compliance with Civil Rights Laws"	Voluntary; not required
<input type="checkbox"/> Project Narrative Application	Grant Purpose and Project Details. Narrative is limited to 20 pages, not including application template and Supporting Documents.
<input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Information	Environmental checklist, or information covered in the checklist
<input type="checkbox"/> Business Plan	Business plan including rationale for proposed project
<input type="checkbox"/> Financial Documents	Income Statement, Balance Sheets and Cash Flow Projections for the facility
<input type="checkbox"/> Feasibility Study – if applicable	Third-party feasibility analysis of the project, if applicable
<input type="checkbox"/> Resumes	Resumes of key personnel

Document	Details
<input type="checkbox"/> Letters of Support	Evidence of community support for the project
<input type="checkbox"/> Tribal Resolution of Support – if applicable	For projects on Tribal lands

TIPS FOR APPLICANTS

- To do business with the Federal Government and to submit your application electronically using Grants.gov, you must—
 - Have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and a Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN);
 - Be registered in SAM.gov (System for Award Management), the Government's primary registrant database;
 - Provide your UEI number and TIN on your application; and
 - Maintain an active SAM registration with current information throughout the application review period and, if you are awarded a grant, during the project period.
- Register and submit applications early. **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE DAY OF THE APPLICATION DEADLINE.**
- Thoroughly read this RFA and follow all the instructions.
- Thoroughly review the guidelines and policies as outlined in this RFA to ensure the application is received and eligible for consideration, and to understand allowable and unallowable costs.
- Apply for the correct grant program.
 - Assistance Listing number “**10.381**” and Funding Opportunity Number “**RD-RBS-23-02-MPPEP**”
- Make sure 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 Name Characters (50 or fewer).
- When uploading attachments, click the “Add Attachments” button (do NOT use the “paperclip” icon in Adobe Reader). Acceptable file types include .pdf, .doc, .docx, .xls, .xlsx.
- Do not password-protect your documents and make sure all tracked-changes are “accepted”.
- Avoid Special Characters in File Names (\$, %, &, *, Spanish "ñ", etc.).
- Input the correct UEI number on the SF-424 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 RBCS deadline to receive final application	November 22, 2023 –

and all supporting materials through Grants.gov	11:59pm 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	Up to 2 weeks

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1.0 FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

1.1 LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program (MPPEP) is authorized by Section 1001(b)(4) of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) ([Pub. L. No. 117—2](#)). This section provides funding “to make loans and grants and provide other assistance to maintain and improve food and agricultural supply chain resiliency.”

The MPPEP grants are administered by Rural Development’s Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBCS or Agency).

1.2 PURPOSE

The primary goal of MPPEP is to provide new, better and more processing options to meat and poultry producers in the applicant’s market. MPPEP is part of the broader \$4 billion USDA Build Back Better Initiative to transform the food supply chain. The meat and poultry processing sector is particularly vulnerable to disruption, consolidation and concentration. It is a high priority for USDA to support increasing capacity and promoting competition in this sector. Strategies that fulfill the primary goal and ensure lasting impacts, include support for more processing capacity, different species and increased processing volume, fair prices, contracts, agreements, and commitments to producers, elevating producer incomes; fair wages and new, stable and safe job opportunities at processing facilities, to keep profits circulating in the rural community; and diversity in business models, geography, and intended beneficiaries, including those in underserved communities.

For MPPEP, USDA is interested in supporting projects that are technically feasible, financially viable, and have already identified other sources of funding (e.g., Federal, State, Tribe or intertribal, local funding, or private funding) to complete projects.

MPPEP is aligned with USDA efforts to:

1. Assist rural communities to recover economically from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly disadvantaged communities.
2. Reduce climate pollution and increase resilience to the impacts of climate change through economic support to rural communities and support the policies of Executive Order 14008 (Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad).
3. Ensure equitable access to RD programs and benefits from RD funded projects and support the policies of Executive Order 13985 (Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government).
4. Contribute to the resilience of the food and agricultural supply chains and support the policies of Executive Order 14017 (America’s Supply Chains).
5. Promote competition in the meat and poultry processing sector and support the policies of Executive Order 14036 (Promoting Competition in the American Economy).

1.3 ACTIVITIES ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

An applicant selected for this grant must use funds for the purpose of expanding processing capacity in the applicant's market to accommodate more producers, process additional species, and/or to increase overall volume of processing.

The applicant is responsible for defining the MPPEP project which is limited to activities and costs associated with increasing meat and poultry processing capacity. MPPEP grant funds may only support costs incurred during the period of performance of the award. The period of performance starts when a Financial Assistance Agreement between the applicant and RBCS is executed. The maximum period of performance is 48 months. When defining your project, you should consider what expenses you will be incurring after April 30, 2024, the anticipated award date.

Eligible activities in this program include, but are not limited to:

- Construction of a new facility or purchase of an inoperable facility, including the purchase of the real estate for the facility;
- Modernizing, renovating, or expanding an existing facility (including expansion and modifications to existing buildings and/or construction of new buildings at existing facilities, construction of holding pens, upgrading human handling infrastructure, construction of wastewater management structures, etc.);
- Construction or renovation of mobile slaughter and processing units that are or will be operated under a Federal or State equivalent Grant of Inspection;
- Modernizing processing and manufacturing equipment (including cutting equipment, mixers, grinders, sausage stuffers, smokers, curing equipment, pipes, motors, pumps, and valves);
- Developing, customizing, and installing equipment, devices, and technology that automates processing functions to improve worker conditions and safety;
- Modernizing or upgrading equipment or facilities to ensure food safety;
- Developing, customizing, and installing climate-smart 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>);
- Purchasing or upgrading composting or rendering equipment related to the processing of animal protein for human consumption;
- Developing packaging and labeling capacities compliance under applicable law (e.g., sealing, bagging, boxing, labeling, conveying, and product moving equipment);
- Developing or improving workforce recruitment, training, apprenticeships, and retention to ensure expansion projects will be adequately staffed and offer opportunities for advancement to workers;
- Ensuring compliance with occupational and other safety requirements under applicable law; including developing Hazard, Analysis, and Critical Control Points (HACCP) plans;
- Staffing or operational costs specifically tied to the proposed project;
- Training on the use of all equipment purchased under the grant and associated new

processes; and

- Posting USDA's standard infrastructure investment signage during construction of the Project.

1.4 PROJECT ACTIVITIES NOT ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

All RBCS awards are subject to the terms and conditions, cost principles, and other considerations described in the Financial Assistance Agreement. In addition, MPPEP grant funds may not be used for:

- Purchase or lease of land that will not be the site of the new facility or of the expansion of an existing facility.
- Purchase personal or other vehicles that are not integral to the project operation.
- Further processing activities that do not include expanding primary processing capacity at the applicant facility.
- Further processing that sources more than 20 percent of inputs from entities that hold market share greater than or equal to the top four processors in beef, pork, chicken, or turkey, at the time of application.
- Processing or further processing that provides more than 20 percent of output to entities that hold market share greater than or equal to the top four processors in beef, pork, chicken, or turkey, at the time of application.
- Projects that do not include increased processing of animal protein for human consumption.
- Projects that fund routine maintenance and repair of an organization's buildings and operational facilities.
- Paying ongoing staffing or operational costs not specifically tied to the proposed expansion project.
- Paying for technical assistance.
- Project planning or feasibility study expenses or research and development.
- Expenses or activities that have been or will be reimbursed under any federal, state, or local government funding.
- Paying for costs incurred prior to the date the Financial Assistance Agreement is executed. Reimbursement for eligible expenses incurred 90 days prior to award may be allowed with Agency approval.
- Paying for indirect project costs.
- Subawards.
- Paying for costs that have been or will be reimbursed by a third party.
- Paying for costs that support or oppose union organizing.
- Support of an application (project) that has a proposed period of performance longer than 48

months.

- Support of an application (project) that has a grant request exceeding \$10 million or exceeding 30 percent of total project costs, whichever is less.

Applicants that have questions concerning the allowability of costs after reviewing this section should contact RD staff using the contact information listed under section 7.0 Agency Contacts.

1.5 NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA)

All activities funded under this RFA must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and related applicable Agency regulations at 7 CFR part 1970 (Environmental Policies and Procedures) and related instructions, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), other applicable Federal laws and regulations, and any applicable state, local, or Tribal laws or regulations. A review for NEPA compliance is required prior to the award of grant funds. RBCS may request additional information from the applicant for the purposes of completing the environmental review.

As a part of the application requirements in Section 4.2, applicants are asked to submit information to identify potential environmental impacts of a proposed project (see the [environmental checklist](#) for required information). This will allow USDA to determine the necessary steps to meet NEPA and related requirements. USDA can provide free technical assistance to help applicants complete the environmental review checklist during the application process. Please see Section 2.6 for resources. Applicants should not begin construction or other activities that may have environmental or related impact before formal notice of award. Doing so may make some or all project costs ineligible for grant funding.

1.6 BUILD AMERICA, BUY AMERICA ACT (BABAA)

Funding to Non-Federal Entities. Awardees that are Non-Federal Entities, defined by 2 CFR 200.1 as any State, local government, Indian Tribe, Institution of Higher Education, or nonprofit organization, shall be governed by the requirements of Section 70914 of the Build America, Buy America Act (BABAA) within the IIJA (Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) (Public Law 117-58)). Additional information is available at <https://www.rd.usda.gov/build-america-buy-america>.

Any requests for waiver of these requirements must be submitted pursuant to USDA's guidance available online at <https://www.usda.gov/ocfo/federal-financial-assistancepolicy/USDABuyAmericaWaiver> .

2.0 AWARD INFORMATION

2.1 TYPE OF FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

RBCS will use a Financial Assistance Agreement (Form RD 4280-2) to provide a Federal award to successful applicants.

2.2 AVAILABLE FUNDING AND AWARD SIZE

Approximately \$123 million is available to fund projects. USDA does not guarantee minimum funding levels or a specific number of awards. Partial awards may be offered by the Agency.

The maximum award amount is \$10 million or 30 percent of the total project costs, whichever is less. The minimum grant amount is \$250,000. Projects including construction (and equipment associated with the project) are eligible for grants from \$250,000 to \$10 million. Projects that only require equipment purchases are eligible for grants from \$5 million to \$10 million.

2.3 FEDERAL AWARD PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE

The maximum period of performance for this grant is 48 months. The period of performance should be based upon the complexity of the project. When developing the workplan and budget, whether it is for purchase of equipment or real estate improvements, please ensure that adequate time and necessary expenses are included to complete the project.

2.4 ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants include Tribes and tribal entities, for-profit and nonprofit entities, corporations, producer-owned cooperatives and corporations, certified benefit corporations, state or local government entities, and other entities (regardless of legal structure) who currently engage – or plan to engage – in expanding meat and poultry processing capacity through slaughter or slaughter and further processing. Eligible applicants engaged in or planning to engage in only further processing activities are not eligible.

Private entities must be independently owned and operated. All entities must be domestically owned, and their meat and poultry processing facilities must be physically located and operated within the U.S. or its territories. There is no rural area requirement for the program.

Eligible applicants must process or plan to process one or more species subject to the Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA) or the Poultry Products Inspection Act (PPIA). Eligible applicants processing non-amenable species under voluntary Food Safety and Inspection Service inspection can also apply for funding.

Eligible applicants who receive an award must comply with FSIS standards, possess or plan to obtain a Federal Grant of Inspection, a grant of inspection under a Cooperative Interstate Shipment Program, or a state meat and poultry inspection program with standards at least equal to Federal inspection processes.

Eligible applicants, including affiliates of the eligible applicants, must not hold a market share greater than or equal to the entity that holds the fourth largest share of that market for beef, pork, chicken, or turkey processing. All applicants must certify whether they hold a market share greater to or equal to the top four processors as applicable in beef, pork, chicken, or turkey processing. Applicants are only required to certify their market share for beef, pork, chicken and turkey processing.

Applicants that engage or propose to engage in further processing may be eligible provided that the project increases demand for animals; increases opportunities for producers to access value-added markets; and improves the viability of an existing processing operation. Additionally, the inputs for further processing must include the products of slaughter by the applicant.

Applicants must not source in the aggregate more than 20 percent of inputs from entities that hold a market share greater than or equal to the entity that holds the fourth largest share of that market for beef, pork, chicken, or turkey processing, at the time of application. Similarly, applicants must not provide in the aggregate more than 20 percent of outputs to entities that hold a market share greater than or equal to the entity that holds the fourth largest share of that market for beef, pork, chicken, or turkey processing, at the time of application.

Eligible applicants must be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) at time of application and must maintain annual SAM registration while an application is active and through the term of an award. Please refer to Section 4.6.1 for instructions on how to register your entity in the SAM.

Multiple facilities owned by the same applicant entity may be combined into one application. An environmental review will be required for each project location.

2.5 APPLICANTS NOT ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

Applicants are not eligible for MPPEP funding if they:

- Hold a market share equal to or greater than the fourth largest share of the national market for beef, pork, chicken, or turkey processing.
- Source in the aggregate more than 20 percent of inputs from entities that hold a market share equal or greater than the fourth largest share of the national market for beef, pork, chicken, or turkey processing.
- Provide in the aggregate more than 20 percent of outputs to entities that hold a market share equal or greater than the fourth largest share of the national market for beef, pork, chicken, or turkey processing.
- Propose to, or engage in, further processing that does not expand primary processing capacity at the applicant's facility.
- Submit 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).
- Have facilities that are for exclusive non-commercial use.
- Will remain custom-exempt or otherwise uninspected, with no plans to operate under Federal inspection or state equivalent.
- Have received a grant award from MPPEP 1 (round one), the Indigenous Animals Grant (IAG) or the Agricultural Marketing Service's Local Meat Capacity Grant Program (Local MCAP). Applicants may apply to multiple programs but if they are awarded grant funds from one of the named programs, they are ineligible to receive funding from MPPEP under this notice.

2.6 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE & RESOURCES

RBCS provides resources and information on its website (<https://www.rd.usda.gov/mppep>) that may be helpful to applicants, including Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's), required application forms and Agency contact information. RBCS staff is available to provide timely responses to questions emailed to mppep@usda.gov.

USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) offers no-cost technical assistance to applicants to help prepare grant applications 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 preapplication 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. While services offered through MPPTA will not include co-drafting grant application elements, MPPTA service providers may be able to assist with activities such as writing a business plan.

Technical assistance includes educational and informational help either through one-on-one meetings or publicly available resources. Specific forms of assistance may include:

- Business plan development for processed products, strategic planning assistance, financial statement development, cash flow projections, capitalization plans, and distribution and supply chain innovation; and
- Assistance in providing innovative, yet practical, planning for the systematic aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storage, transportation, wholesaling, or distribution of food.

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 \(usda.gov\)](#)

3.0 FUNDING CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 COST SHARING

The applicant is required to cost share 70 percent of the total project cost. Evidence of the 70 percent cost share will be verified by the Agency at the time of award. If the applicant cannot verify cost share within the time frame specified in the letter of conditions for the award, the Agency may offer funding to the next highest ranked project.

The applicant is responsible for defining the total project costs of the MPPEP expansion project. Financial contributions must support expanding processing capacity as described in the application. Costs and activities that support existing processing capacity are not eligible.

Expenses must be incurred between the date of execution of the Financial Assistance Agreement and the end date of the Period of Performance, or 48 months, whichever is earlier.

4.0 APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

4.1 ELECTRONIC APPLICATION PACKAGE

Only electronic applications may be submitted via Grants.gov in response to this RFA. We urge applicants to submit applications early to the Grants.gov system. For an overview of the Grants.gov

application process, see the Grants.gov [Apply for Grants webpage](#). This RFA contains the information needed to obtain and complete required application forms and RD-specific attachments.

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 4.6 Grants.gov Application Submission and Receipt Procedures and Requirements for additional application instructions.

Applicants can find the opportunity under either the Assistance Listing number 10.381, or the Funding Opportunity Number “RD-RBS-23-02-MPPEP.”

4.2 APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

4.2.1 REQUIRED FORMS

- a. Form SF 424, “Application for Federal Assistance”.
- b. Form SF 424-C, “Budget Information- Construction Programs”.
- c. Form SF 424-D, “Assurances-Construction Programs”.
- d. Form AD-2106, “Form to Assist in Assessment of USDA Compliance with Civil Rights Laws”.
Submission of this form is optional.

4.2.2 PROJECT NARRATIVE & SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Required. Applicants are required to prepare and submit a project narrative and are encouraged to use the provided Application Template available at www.rd.usda.gov/mppep. Applicants are not required to use the template, but they are required to answer all the questions contained in the template.

The project narrative and all supporting documents must be submitted as one of the following file types: .pdf, .doc, .docx, .xls, .xlsx. and attached to the Grants.gov application package. Handwritten applications will not be accepted.

The project narrative must be typed, single-spaced, in an 11-point font, not to exceed twenty (20) 8.5 x 11” pages, not including the Application Template or supporting documents, as listed in Section 4.2.2. For example, if the template is 15 pages before you begin entering your project narrative information, your application may be up to 35 pages in length when completed (15 original pages + 20 pages of applicant content).

Prior to submitting an application to Grants.gov, make sure that it is in final form (e.g., if the “track changes” function was used, accept all changes before submitting so that the mark-up is not visible upon final submission).

The forms, environmental information, financial and all supporting documents in the subsequent sections do not count against the 20-page limit for the project narrative.

1. **Application Template.** Applicants are encouraged to use the provided Application Template for the

project narrative, to ensure all the following topics (a-f) are addressed. Sections in the template include:

- a. **Applicant & Project information**. Provide applicant, project, and facility information as described in the Application Template. Please refer to Section 2.4 for a description of eligible applicants.
- b. **Project Information and Executive Summary**. Provide a summary detailing project goals and objectives in 500 words or fewer.
- c. **Land Ownership and Access**. Applicants must describe who owns and controls or has access to the land where the project is located.
- d. **Performance Metrics** Applicants must track progress towards goals to demonstrate success. Applicants must provide baseline data for the following metrics:
 1. Processing space added (square foot processing space added; amount of equipment added) at the facility.
 2. Processing volume increased (number of head, pounds, or other unit of measure increase) at the facility.
 3. New value-added products developed by the facility.
 4. Increase in number of meat and poultry producers served by the facility.
 5. Number of new sales channels accessed by the facility.
 6. Number of jobs created and retained at the facility.
- e. **Merit Evaluation**: The application must be responsive to each Evaluation Criteria in Section 5.1. Your proposal should identify how your project will expand processing capacity in your market, create more processing opportunities for meat and poultry producers, and is supported by community stakeholders. Applicants must describe their proposed project and how the processing facility will achieve financial viability, technical feasibility, and achievability and address sourcing strategy, labor standards, and community impact.

Applicants will be asked to provide a work plan and budget and to include all key staff and activities performed within the proposed Period of Performance by task, associated costs, and proposed timeframe for completion. Please provide sufficient detail to allow the Agency to determine project eligibility, including all other funding that is needed to complete the project. Refer to Section 1.3 for a list of activities eligible for funding. Project Activities not eligible for funding are listed in Section 1.4.

- f. **Applicant Certification Acknowledgment**
2. **Supporting Information**. Applicants are required to submit the following supporting information. Please refer to the Tips for Applicants section for list of acceptable file types.
- a. **Environmental Review**. Please review the environmental checklist available on grants.gov and on the program website (www.rd.usda.gov/mppep) to ensure you are providing all relevant environmental documentation so that the NEPA and NHPA Section 106 environmental reviews can be completed. Please contact the Agency to assist in determining what documentation is required to be provided. Please refer to Section 1.5 and the MPPEP website at www.rd.usda.gov/mppep for additional information.
 - b. **Business Plan**. Provide a plan that includes the business goals and objectives, market analysis, and the rationale for the proposed project.

- c. **Financial Documents.** Provide the following to assist the Agency in determining financial viability of the project:
 - i. For existing businesses, provide three years of historical balance sheet and income statements. Applicants with fewer than three years of data should submit what is available, which may include but is not limited to balance sheets, income statements, and other related documentation to demonstrate the financial viability of the venture.
 - ii. For existing businesses, provide current balance sheet and income statements (within 90 days of application).
 - iii. For all applicants, provide two years of proforma and projected financial analysis including but not limited to a.) balance sheet, b.) income statement, and c.) cash flow analysis. Include financial projections with assumptions used in development of projections.
 - d. **Feasibility Study.** Provide a feasibility study completed by a qualified third-party consultant, if applicable. See Section 4.2.3 for details.
 - e. **Resumes.** Provide resumes of key personnel at the facility and on management team for the proposed project.
 - f. **Letters of Support.** Applicants should note that while a letter from a community leader is not required for a complete application, it is required for the application to receive points in the Community Impact & Support Section 5.1.7 below. Letters of support must be submitted with the application in Grants.gov to be considered.
 - g. **Tribal Resolution of Support.** For a project located on Tribal Lands where the applicant is not a member of the Tribe nor an entity owned or operated by that Tribe, a Tribe's Resolution of Consent must be provided. Other documentation such as a Letter of Support from the Tribal Council for the governing body of the Tribe with jurisdiction over the Tribal Lands where the project is located (if applicable) is also an acceptable acknowledgement of Tribal consent. Any applicant that fails to provide a Tribal Resolution or Letter of Consent from the Tribe will not be considered for funding.
3. **Applicant certifications.** By signing and submitting the SF-424 "Application for Federal Assistance" as a part of the grant application package, applicants are certifying that they agree to the following statements:
- a. The applicant does not have a known relationship or association with an Agency employee. (If there is a known relationship, the applicant must identify each Agency employee with whom the applicant has a known relationship.)
 - b. The applicant is a legal entity in good standing and operating in accordance with the laws of the State(s) or Tribe(s) where the applicant has a place of business, including child labor laws.
 - c. The applicant has not been found or may be found to be unfit to obtain a grant of Federal or state equivalent inspection because of convictions, in a Federal or State court, of a felony, or multiple misdemeanors involving the acquisition, handling, or distribution of adulterated or misbranded meat or poultry products or fraud in connection with transactions in food, or other factors.
 - d. The applicant who receives an award must comply with FSIS standards, possess or plan to obtain a Federal Grant of Inspection, a grant of inspection under a Cooperative Interstate

Shipment Program, or a state meat and poultry inspection program with standards at least equal to Federal inspection processes. In addition, if inspection services have been suspended in the past five years, disclose the reasons for the suspension and how the action was resolved.

- e. The applicant has developed a Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) plan or will develop a HACCP plan over the Period of Performance.
- f. Any equipment required for the project is available, can be procured and delivered within the proposed project development schedule, barring any unforeseen supply chain disruptions to availability, and will be installed in conformance with manufacturer's specifications and design requirements. This would not be applicable when equipment is not part of the project.
- g. The applicant has identified the balance of funding necessary (70 percent of total project costs) to complete the project on timeline and budget proposed in its MPPEP application. Evidence of cost share will be verified at the time of award.
- h. The project will be constructed in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, agreements, permits, codes, and standards.
- i. The applicant does not hold market share equal to or greater than the fourth largest share of the national market for beef, pork, chicken, or turkey processing.
- j. The applicant does not source in the aggregate more than 20 percent of inputs from entities that hold market share equal to or greater than the fourth largest share of the national market for beef, pork, chicken, or turkey processing.
- k. The applicant does not provide in the aggregate more than 20 percent of outputs to entities that hold market share equal to or greater than the fourth largest share of the national market for beef, pork, chicken, or turkey processing.
- l. Applicant certifies and acknowledges that:
 - i. The Agency will check the Do Not Pay System to verify that the applicant entity: has an active entity registration in the System for Award Management; has not been debarred or suspended; is not listed on Credit Alert Verification Reporting System; is not listed on the Treasury Offset Program; and does not appear on the Social Security Death Records; and
 - ii. The applicant is responsible for resolving any issues that are reported in the Do Not Pay System. If issues are not resolved by the time the Agency makes program awards, the Agency may proceed to award funds to other eligible applicants.

4.2.3 FEASIBILITY STUDY

A feasibility study conducted by a qualified third-party consultant is required for businesses that have been in operation less than one full year. Feasibility studies are also required for existing businesses that are building a new facility outside of their current market, processing a new species, or establishing a new product line.

Feasibility studies are not required for businesses that have been in business for more than one year and plan to expand, renovate, or retrofit their existing facility; upgrade technology or equipment; or add processing equipment infrastructure. However, all applicants should address the financial and market

viability of the project in their business plan.

4.3 SUBMITTED APPLICATION QUALIFICATION

Your application will **not be reviewed or be considered for funding** if it is:

- Received after the application submission deadline.
- Submitted via any method other than through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov).
- Submitted to the wrong grant program.
- Not responsive to the requirements of this RFA (eligibility, incomplete application, not providing all required documents, etc. as required in Section 4.2).

4.4 SUBMISSION DATE AND TIME

Applications must be submitted electronically through Grants.gov. Ensure that all components of the application 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. RBCS encourages you to submit your application at least two weeks prior to the application deadline to ensure all certifications and registrations are met.

Only applications submitted and validated by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on November 22, 2023, on [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) will be accepted.

4.5 INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW

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

4.6 GRANTS.GOV APPLICATION SUBMISSION AND RECEIPT PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS

4.6.1 HOW TO REGISTER TO APPLY THROUGH GRANTS.GOV

The registration process can take **up to four weeks** to complete. Therefore, complete your registration allowing sufficient time to ensure it does not impact your ability to meet required application submission deadlines.

Instructions for entities interested in applying for this grant funding opportunity can be found here: [Applicant Registration | GRANTS.GOV](#) . If further assistance is needed, MPPTA providers can assist. Please see Section 2.6 for details.

- 1) [Obtain a Unique Entity Identifier \(UEI\)](#): All entities applying for funding, including renewal funding, must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) from SAM.gov. Instructions for obtaining the UEI are available at <https://sam.gov/content/entity-registration>. Applicants must enter the UEI number in the data entry field labeled "UEI" on the SF- 424 form.
- 2) [Register with the System for Award Management \(SAM\)](#): In addition to having a UEI number, entities applying online through Grants.gov must register with the SAM.gov. Each current SAM.gov registrant has already been assigned a UEI number and can view it within SAM.gov. All organizations must register with SAM.gov to apply for a grant. Failure to register with the SAM.gov will prevent your organization from applying through Grants.gov. SAM.gov accounts must be updated annually, and your organization must have an active SAM.gov account to submit your application to Grants.gov.

- 3) [Create a Grants.gov Account](#): The next step in the registration process is to create an account with Grants.gov. Applicants must know their organization's UEI number to complete this process. Completing this process automatically triggers an email request for applicant roles to the entity's E-Business Point of Contact (EBiz POC) for review. The EBiz POC is a representative from your organization who is the contact listed for SAM.gov. To apply for grants on behalf of your organization, you will need designation as the Authorized Organization Role (AOR).
- 4) [Authorize Grants.gov Roles](#): After creating an account on Grants.gov, the EBiz POC receives an email notifying him or her of your registration and request for roles. The EBiz POC will then log in to Grants.gov and authorize the appropriate roles, including the AOR role, thereby giving you permission to complete and submit applications on behalf of the organization. You will be able to submit your application online any time after you have been approved as an AOR.
- 5) [Track Role Status](#): After registering with Grants.gov and authorizing the applicant AOR, Grants.gov allows you to track your status.
- 6) [Electronic Signature](#): When applications are submitted through Grants.gov, the name of the entity's AOR who submitted the application is inserted into the signature line of the application, serving as the electronic signature. The EBiz POC must authorize individuals who are able to make legally binding commitments on behalf of the organization to act as an AOR; **this step is often missed, and it is crucial for valid and timely submissions.**

4.6.2 HOW TO SUBMIT AN APPLICATION TO RBCS 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 RD forms. The individual PDF forms can be downloaded and saved to your local storage device, network drive(s), or external drives, then accessed through Adobe Reader.

NOTE: You may need to visit the Adobe Software Compatibility page on Grants.gov at <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility.html> 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 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 application deadline** to provide you with time to correct any potential technical issues that may prevent application submission.

SPECIAL NOTE: Grants.gov **does not** check for RBCS's required attachments. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all required attachments listed in Section 4.2 are included.

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

Applicant Support: Grants.gov provides additional [training resources, including video tutorials](#). Applicants may also 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 to if the issue is not resolved. For questions related to the specific grant opportunity, refer to section 7.0 Agency Contacts.

4.6.3 TIMELY RECEIPT REQUIREMENTS AND PROOF OF TIMELY SUBMISSION

All applications must be received by the due date established in Section 4.4. Submission Date and Time. 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 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.

When RBCS successfully retrieves the application from Grants.gov, and acknowledges the download of submissions, Grants.gov will electronically acknowledge receipt of the application to the applicant AOR's email address. Applications will be deemed to have been received at the date and time that Grants.gov receives your application.

RBCS will not accept application packages by fax, email, or postal mail. Applications received after the established due date for the program will be considered late and will not be considered for funding by RBCS. Supplemental information will not be accepted as part of the application package for competitive review after the application deadline.

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

5.0 APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

5.1 MERIT EVALUATION CRITERIA

Every complete and eligible application will be evaluated based on the scoring criteria below. Discretionary points may be added to the total score to generate the final score. The most competitive applications will describe project objectives that align with MPPEP goals as described under Section 1.2 and that are specific to the applicant's project, market, and community. Failure to address all or part of a criterion, or to insufficiently communicate relevant project information, will result in a lower score.

The maximum number of points for the core categories is 100 points.

1) Alignment and Intent: Up to 10 Points.

Applicants should describe how their proposed project aligns with the program as described in this RFA. Higher scores will be given for projects that are strongly aligned with the goals of the program as indicated in Section 1.2 of this RFA and that:

- a) promotes competition and contributes to resilient food and agriculture supply chains by expanding processing options within the applicant's market.
- b) provides more processing capacity, by accommodating different species; or increases overall processing volume, for agriculture producers of meat and poultry.
- c) provides meat and poultry processing for human consumption.

2) Market Impact & Opportunities: Up to 20 points.

Applicants should describe the planned impact of the proposed project on the producer, consumer, and other relevant markets. Higher scores will be awarded for projects that demonstrate positive impact on meat and poultry producers.

- a) Applications describe a clear plan for procuring animals from meat and poultry producers and provide more opportunities for producers relative to the existing processing opportunities in their area, including but not limited to:
 - i. How the project will increase processing volume or shackle space resulting in procurement of more animals from meat and poultry producers.
 - ii. Increase in diversity of species procured by the processing facility.
 - iii. Increase in geography or region from which animals are sourced, in particular from underserved communities.
- b) Applications provide evidence of providing fair prices to meat and poultry producers through its commitments and contracts, specifically, for facilities that:
 - i. **purchase livestock or poultry**, include additional information about estimated purchase types and volumes (i.e., cash, formula, forward contract, negotiated grid, etc.).
 - ii. **own livestock or poultry**, include a general description of any production contract terms for the livestock or poultry.

- iii. **provide fee-for-service processing**, include a list of the services provided, along with estimated prices charged to producers and anticipated volumes procured.
- iv. **provide further processing in addition to slaughter**, include a plan for sourcing inputs from producers and note the percentage of inputs that will be sourced from such producers.

3) Financial Viability: Up to 20 Points

Applicants should describe how and when their project will achieve financial viability. Higher scores will be given for projects that are highly likely to achieve financial viability.

- a. The work plan and budget provide a clear, detailed description for each budget line item, and
 - i. The budget is consistent and well justified with the size and scope of the project activities.
 - ii. All budget items are directly linked to project activities and key staff included in the application.
- b. The project will achieve financial viability either through profitability or assurance of ongoing financial support, supported by income and expense projections for three years.
 - i. Application describes commitments from producers and potential buyers, and the geographic region being served by the processing facility, and how these help support full operational capacity at the facility.

4) Technical Merit and Achievability: Up to 20 Points

Applicants should describe plans for addressing technical feasibility, compliance, and related issues. Higher scores will be given for projects that provide a clear workplan that will thoroughly address these issues.

- a. The project work plan is clear, well-conceived, complete, and appropriate to advance meat and poultry processing.
- b. The schedule for implementing the proposed project objectives during the award project period is realistic and achievable.
- c. Key staff have the experience and capacity to implement the project (including construction management, if applicable) and maintain expanded operations after the grant period ends.
- d. The applicant has identified all necessary permits and inspections aligned with stage of project, including construction permits, if applicable.
- e. The applicant demonstrates a commitment to developing and implementing food safety measures, including regulatory compliance.
- f. The application identifies major risks (e.g., product recall, labor risks, access to operating capital risk, and other legal risks) and appropriate risk mitigation strategies.

5) Labor and Personnel: Up to 10 Points

Applicants should describe their workforce policies. Higher scores will be awarded for projects that create good jobs in the local community, a safe work environment, and opportunities for employee advancement.

- a. The applicant describes commitment to well-paying jobs, the free and fair choice to join a union, job security, and a safe and healthy workplace.
- b. The applicant provides access to essential benefits like health insurance and retirement plans, and protections from workplace harassment and other forms of discrimination for workers.
- c. The applicant will provide job opportunities in the local community for staff, contracting, and/or construction, and describes a plan for workforce recruitment, training, and retention framed in the context of the local job market.

6) Environmental Impact: Up to 10 Points

Applicants should describe key environmental impacts of their proposed project. Higher scores will be awarded for projects that reduce impacts on the environment.

- a. Applicant describes strategies for managing water quality and offal and solid waste, including whether the applicant is obtaining the appropriate zoning permits.
- b. The project mitigates negative environmental impacts by employing pollution control equipment and technologies, energy efficiency technologies, or other strategies to manage water pollution from waste.

7) Community Impact & Support: Up to 10 points.

Applicant describes how the project will be beneficial for its community and that the project has the support of stakeholders in the community.

In order to receive any points for this section, applicants must also provide letters of support from state, or local leadership or the Tribe where the proposed startup or expansion activities will take place. For a project located on Tribal Lands where the applicant is not a member of the Tribe nor an entity owned or operated by that Tribe, a Tribal Resolution of Consent must be provided. Other documentation such as a Letter of Support from the Tribal Council for the governing body of the Tribe with jurisdiction over the Tribal Lands where the project is located (if applicable) is also an acceptable acknowledgement of Tribal consent. Any applicant that fails to provide a Tribal Resolution or Letter of Consent from the Tribe will not be considered for funding.

Qualifying leaders may include but are not limited to state government officials, local government officials, associations of agricultural producers, and labor unions. All letters should include the following:

- a. Identify the stakeholder producing the letter and their connection to the project activities,
- b. Describe the sustained community impact that will be supported by the proposed startup or expansion activities to be carried out under the grant, and
- c. Provide further information relative to the project's impact on the long-term needs and goals of the community.

8) Discretionary Points – Up to 15 points

During Administrative Agency Review, up to 15 discretionary points may be assigned for projects to maximize diversity among awards on the basis of geography, operation size, species, ownership

structures, business model, underserved communities and environmental and climate impacts.

5.2 REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

Step 1: Initial Application 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 and will not be scored.

Step 2: Panel Review.

Each application that passes initial screening (Step 1) is evaluated by a panel of independent reviewers. Each reviewer signs a conflict of interest and confidentiality agreement regarding any assigned proposals. The review panel evaluates their assigned proposals using instructions prepared by RBCS officials. Individual reviewers confer with other panel members to derive a consensus score. The consensus score serves as the basis for awarding and allocating grant funds and the panel will provide strengths and weaknesses of each proposal.

Step 3: Agency Review.

RBCS will conduct a final administrative evaluation of each panel's top rankings and recommendations. In addition to the rank and scores, RBCS reviews each application to ensure that potential recommended projects align with the scope, allowability of budget items, available funding, and USDA priorities as outlined in the RFA. RBCS staff will work with top-ranked applicants to negotiate any revisions as necessary. RBCS 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.

RBCS will review projects for environmental impacts, to determine next steps for the project to achieve compliance under NEPA and NHPA Section 106 as outlined in Section 1.5.

Step 4: Ranking of Applications.

RBCS will rank complete and eligible applications based on their scores with higher scoring applications receiving first consideration.

Step 5: Funding selected applications.

The Administrator of RBCS will make the final award decisions based on all of the foregoing scores, reviewed information, and discretionary points.

6.0 AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

6.1 AWARD NOTICES

Successful applicants will receive a signed notice of Federal award, containing instructions on requirements necessary to proceed with execution and performance of the award.

6.2 UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS

If an application is not selected for funding, the Applicant will be notified in writing via postal or electronic mail and informed of any review and appeal rights. See [7 CFR part 11](#) for USDA National Appeals Division procedures. Funding of successfully appealed applications will be limited to available funding. USDA anticipates that there will be no available funds for successful appellants once all MPPEP

funds are awarded and obligated.

6.3 ADMINISTRATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS

As part of the Notice of Award all grant recipients must abide by the Federal Assistance Agreement.

Additional requirements that apply to recipients selected for this program can be found in the Grants and Agreements regulations of the Department of Agriculture codified in 2 CFR parts 180, 200, 400, 415, 417, 418, 421; 2 CFR parts 25 and 170; and 48 CFR 31, and successor regulations to these parts.

All recipients of Federal financial assistance are required to report information about first-tier sub-awards and executive compensation (see 2 CFR part 170). The recipient must have the necessary processes and systems in place to comply with the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 (Pub. L. 109-282) reporting requirements (see 2 CFR 170.200(b), unless exempt under 2 CFR 170.110(b)).

All grants made under this RFA are subject to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as required by the USDA (7 CFR part 15, subpart A) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

6.4 REPORTING REQUIREMENTS, ACCOUNTABILITY AND GRANT DISBURSEMENT

Project Performance/Reporting. The maximum Period of Performance is 48 months. However, once the project has been completed, the period of performance ceases. After grant approval and through grant completion, you will be required to provide the following, as indicated in the Financial Assistance Agreement:

(a) A SF-425, "Federal Financial Report," and a project performance report will be required on a quarterly basis (due 30 working days after end of the quarterly period). For the purposes of this grant, quarterly periods end on March 31st, June 30th, September 30th, and December 31st. The project performance reports will include the elements prescribed in the Financial Assistance Agreement, including but not limited to:

1. Processing space added (square foot processing space added; amount of equipment added) at the facility.
2. Processing volume increased (number of head, pounds, or other unit of measure increase) at the facility.
3. New value-added products developed by the facility.
4. Increase in number of meat and poultry producers served by the facility.
5. Number of new sales channels accessed by the facility.
6. Number of jobs created and retained at the facility.

(b) A final project and financial status report within 120 days after the expiration or termination of the grant.

(c) Awardees must comply with FSIS, Cooperative Interstate Shipment, or state-based equivalent officials as required to attain and maintain inspection status.

(d) Outcome project performance report. One year after project completion the applicant must provide a project performance report describing the outcomes in expanding processing capacity as

identified in the MPPEP application and Financial Assistance Agreement. The report is due 60 days after the first full year following the year in which the expansion project was completed.

The Agency will conduct onsite reviews more frequently during construction and at least annually for all projects during the period of performance.

Please note that if MPPEP grant funds will be utilized for the purchase of or improvements and fixtures to real property, the Agency will file a Notice of Federal Financial Interest on the subject real property. Improvements and fixtures must be used for the originally authorized purpose of the grant award. If a situation arises where the original authorized purpose of the grant is no longer feasible, RBCS will work with the entity that owns and operates the facility to ensure the improvements and fixtures are used for a comparable purpose. Recipients must not dispose of or encumber their title or other interests if it is being used for the originally authorized purpose.

RBCS must be notified if a sale or change of total or partial ownership of the facility is under consideration. RBCS will issue disposition instruction in accordance with 2 CFR 200.313(e) and the recipient may be expected to return a proportional amount of funds received from the sale or change of total or partial ownership.

If the facility is going to be sold or undergo a change of total or partial ownership within ten years after receiving the grant, the awardee will notify USDA and the sale will be subject to USDA review to determine if the sale or change of total or partial ownership is consistent with the purposes of the program. After ten years of receiving the grant, the sale will not be subject to the Agency's approval. However, 2 CFR 200.313(e) will still apply if a Notice of Federal Financial Interest is filed. A proportional amount of funds received from the sale of the real property must be returned to the Agency.

6.5 PAYMENTS AND GRANT DISBURSEMENTS

There are two options for obtaining grant disbursement under MPPEP.

- (a) Single Disbursement—Grant funds will be disbursed in full after the project is completed and a valid grant of inspection (Federal or equivalent) is provided to the Agency. If this option is utilized, the Agency will modify and make applicable the construction planning and performing development requirements at 7 CFR 4280.125; or
- (b) Reimbursements—Grant funds will be disbursed on a reimbursement basis through 90 percent of grant disbursement as the project is completed. The final 10 percent of grant funds will be held until construction or installation of the project is completed and a valid grant of inspection (Federal or equivalent) is provided to the Agency. If this option is utilized, the Agency will follow the construction planning and performing development requirements at 7 CFR 4280.125.
 - 1. Recipients may submit requests for reimbursement no more frequently than monthly. Ordinarily, payment will be made within 30 days after receipt of a proper request for reimbursement.

2. Recipients must not request reimbursement for the Federal share of amounts withheld from contractors to ensure satisfactory completion of work until after any such payments have been made to the contractors.
3. Recipients must use SF-270, "Request for Advance or Reimbursement" to request grant reimbursements. Fund requests must at a minimum include documentation of costs and evidence of payment(s), including payment date(s). Failure to provide sufficient documentation of costs and evidence of payment, including payment date, may result in a denial of reimbursement.

6.6 ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF USDA SUPPORT

Proper acknowledgement of a Recipient's USDA funding in published solicitations (e.g., for state competitions), presentations, press releases, and other communications is critical for the success of Agency's programs. As required in 2 CFR § 415.2, grant recipients must acknowledge USDA support in all publications written or published with USDA grant or cooperative agreement support.

The following acknowledgment of USDA funding must appear in all published materials or products, in any format (web sites, audiovisuals, etc.), that are substantially based upon or developed under a USDA award:

"Funding for [Project or Publication] was made possible by a grant/cooperative agreement from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the USDA."

Recipients are strongly encouraged to acknowledge Federal funding in public statements, such as press releases regarding projects and activities.

The Recipient is encouraged to display USDA's standard infrastructure investment signage, available for download from the Agency, during construction of the Project. Expenditures for such signage shall be a permitted eligible cost of the Project.

7.0 AGENCY CONTACTS

7.1 PROGRAMMATIC QUESTIONS

After closely reviewing this RFA in its entirety, applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact MPPEP staff at mppep@usda.gov.

For additional information, please visit the MPPEP Website: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/mppep>.

7.2 GRANTS.GOV QUESTIONS

All questions regarding Grants.gov technical assistance must be directed to the Grants.gov Applicant Support portal at <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/support.html>.

8.0 OTHER INFORMATION

8.1 DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this program, the following definitions will apply:

Agency. The Rural Business—Cooperative Service or successor Agency assigned by the Secretary of Agriculture to administer the Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program.

Amenable Species. Amenable Species are: a) Livestock products amenable to the FMIA are prepared from cattle, sheep, swine, goats, horses, mules and other equines, and fish of the order Siluriformes (catfish). However, the slaughter of horses and other equines is effectively prohibited by the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 Pub. L. 116-260; and b) Poultry products amenable to the PPIA are prepared from any domesticated bird, including chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese, guineas, ratites, or squabs, whether live or dead.

Business Plan: A formal statement of a set of business goals, the reasons why they are attainable, and the plan for reaching those goals, including Pro Forma Financial Statements appropriate to the term and scope of the project and sufficient to evidence the viability of the project. It may also contain background information about the organization or team attempting to reach those goals.

Complete application. An application that contains all parts necessary for the Agency to determine applicant and project eligibility, and the financial feasibility and technical merit of the project and contains sufficient information to determine a priority score for the application as determined by the Agency.

Cooperative. An entity that is legally chartered by the State or Tribe in which it operates as a cooperatively operated business, or an entity that is not legally chartered as a cooperative but is owned and operated for the benefit of its members, with returns of residual earnings paid to such members on the basis of patronage.

Cooperative Interstate Shipment (CIS) Compliance. The USDA program that allows state-inspected plants to operate as federally inspected facilities, under specific conditions, and ship their product in interstate commerce and may provide the opportunity to export the product to foreign countries, provided the CIS participating State has entered into a supplemental agreement that addresses the export of CIS inspected products.

Domestically owned. An entity organized in the United States under the law of the State, the states, or under a Tribe's jurisdiction where the entity operates, and a majority of the entity is owned by members meeting the citizenship test.

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

Feasibility study. A report including an opinion or finding conducted by a qualified third-party consultant(s) evaluating the economic, market, technical, financial, and management feasibility of a proposed project or operation in terms of its expectation for success.

Financial Assistance Agreement. Form RD 4280-2, Rural Business-Cooperative Service Financial Assistance Agreement or successor form. It is the grant agreement between the Agency and the recipient setting forth the provisions under which the grant will be administered.

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. A management system in which food safety is addressed through the analysis and control of biological, chemical, and physical hazards from raw material production, procurement and handling, to manufacturing, distribution and consumption of the finished product.

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.

Meat. Species amenable to USDA inspection including cattle, sheep, swine, goats, Siluriformes (catfish), and equine. Also, nonamenable species eligible for voluntary inspection including exotic species as described in 9 CFR part 352 and rabbit as described in 9 CFR part 354.

National Appeals Division. A division of the United States Department of Agriculture as described in 7 CFR part 11.

Poultry. Species amenable to USDA inspection including chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese, guineas, ratites, squabs (young pigeons). Also, nonamenable species subject to voluntary inspection, including migratory waterfowl and game birds as described in 9 CFR part 362.

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

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

Processor: 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.

Program. Program means the Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program authorized by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 and administered by the Agency.

Public Body. A state, municipality, county, or other political subdivision of a State; a special purpose district; a Tribe; or an organization controlled by any of the above.

Qualified Consultant. An independent third-party person possessing the knowledge, expertise, and experience to perform the specific task required.

Slaughter. The killing of animals for food.

State. Any of 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.

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. Tribal Governments of Indian Tribes as defined by the Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act (List Act) of 1994 (Pub. L. No. 103-454), their wholly owned arms and instrumentalities, and joint or multi-tribal government entities are eligible to apply.

Value-added. The incremental profit earned from each transaction or step in manufacture after deducting production costs, depreciation, and other relevant expenses. Each stage of production or ownership transfer typically adds value to a good, product, or service.

Work Plan. A narrative provided by the applicant that demonstrates the feasibility of the proposed project and facility to meet the objectives of the MPPEP program, including a set of goals, strategies, anticipated outcomes, and well-developed targeting criteria for doing so.

8.2 NON-DISCRIMINATION AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY STATEMENTS

In accordance with Federal civil rights laws and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Mission Areas, agencies, staff offices, 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.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language) should contact the responsible Mission Area, agency, or staff office; or the 711 Relay Service.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, *USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form*, which can be obtained online at <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant’s name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation.

The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted 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; or

(2) Fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or

(3) Email: program.intake@usda.gov

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8.3 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUESTS

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) of 1966 ([5 U.S.C. § 552](#)) and the Privacy Act of 1974 ([5 U.S.C. § 552a](#)), as implemented by USDA's regulations ([7 CFR](#) Part 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 USDA Rural Development 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 Rural Development Business Center, Records and Information Management Branch; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, STOP 0706; Washington, DC 20250-0706; Telephone: 202-720-2826. To submit a request electronically, please visit the Public Access Link at <https://efoia-pal.usda.gov> or email: RD.FOIA@usda.gov. Further information about the FOIA process is available at <http://www.rd.usda.gov/contact-us/freedom-information-act-foia>.

8.4 PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT

In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. §§ 3501 et seq), 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 0570-0079.