



Regional Food System Partnership Program – 2024 RFA Summary

Program Information

RFSP Purpose: RFSP supports partnerships that connect public and private resources to plan and develop local or regional food systems. This program focuses on building and strengthening the viability and resilience of the local or regional food economy. RFSP offers *Planning and Design* and *Implementation and Expansion* project types.

Publication Date: February 27, 2024

Due Date: May 14, 2024

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-AMS-TM-RFSP-G-24-0027

Assistance Listing Number/CFDA: 10.177

To find grant opportunity, visit [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) and search by keyword, opportunity number or CFDA.

- Visit the [Program Website](#) for additional information

Application Package Requirements

- Form SF-424 – Application for Federal Assistance (Grants.gov)
- Form SF-424A – Budget Summary (Grants.gov)
- Project Abstract Summary (Grants.gov)
- [Project Narrative Form](#)
 - Must use required template.

- Executive Summary shows how project supports RFSP goals and objectives and must not exceed 250 words.
- Text must not exceed page limit specified in the RFA.
 - 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 form content).
 - DO NOT modify the margins of the RFSP Project Narrative form or delete or change any text in it. Evaluation points will be deducted if the Project Narrative form is modified.
 - The supporting documents (matching funds letters of verification, letters of commitment from partner organizations and Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement) do not count toward the 15-page limit.
- Ensure the federal funds requested do not exceed the maximum or minimum award amount.
 - Planning and Design: \$100,000 - \$250,000
 - Implementation and Expansion: \$250,000 - \$1,000,000
- Signed [Letter\(s\) of Verification for Matching Funds](#) for EACH resource (PDF or MS Word Attachment)
- Signed [Letter\(s\) of Commitment from Partner and Collaborator Organizations](#) (PDF or MS Word Attachment)

If applicable, application packages are required to include the following documents:

- Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (PDF Attachment)

Things to Complete Before Writing Your Proposal

Required Action	Timing to Obtain	Support Resources
Obtaining Your Organization’s UEI Number (if you do not already have one)	7-10 business days	UEI Quick Start Guide
Establishing an Active SAM.gov Account (if you do not already have one)	7-10 business days	Quick Start Links
Obtaining a TIN/EIN (if you do not already have one)	Up to 2 weeks	Applying for EIN Online
Creating your Grants.gov profile and registering your Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR)	Up to 2 weeks	Register with Grants.gov
AMS Deadline to receive final application and all supporting materials through Grants.Gov	May 14, 2024 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time	

Total Program Funds: ~\$5 million

Project Type	Duration (Months)	Start Date	End Date	Minimum Award	Maximum Award
Planning and Design	24	September 30, 2024	September 29, 2026	\$100,000	\$250,000
Implementation and Expansion	36	September 30, 2024	September 29, 2027	\$250,000	\$1,000,000

Project Types

Option 1: Planning and Design Projects

Planning and Design projects support partnerships in the early stages of convening, envisioning, goal setting, and identifying strategies for developing local or regional food systems. Specifically, these projects support food system's efforts to build community connections (public and private) that allow a region to drive the discovery and promotion of collaboration opportunities within the food system. Applicants should seek public and private partners that operate across the regional food economy and can access diverse non-Federal financial and technical resources.

Option 2: Implementation and Expansion Projects

Implementation and Expansion projects support partnerships building on prior or ongoing efforts within a local or regional food system. Partnerships funded in this track will have already completed most or all the activities discussed for Planning and Design projects. Applicants should describe how the goals, objectives, and activities in the application build on previous efforts within the food system.

Examples of Eligible and Ineligible Activities

RFSP partnerships are encouraged to focus on activities not commonly funded under other USDA programs, such as but not limited to value chain coordination, convening multiple types of partners and stakeholders for strategic planning, grant-writing, and program exploration on behalf of partners and entities.

Planning and Design Projects can include, but are not limited to:

- Convening partners to define the regional food system, share opportunities and challenges, and develop inclusive approaches to address challenges and improve connection across the regional food system.
- Creating and conducting feasibility studies and data-driven implementation plans that achieve measurable goals for the partnership's work in developing the regional food system.
- Connecting food value chain entities with partners and funders to engage in activities that strengthen the regional food system.
- Conducting research on specific market, mid-tier value chain, or infrastructure investments (including studies analyzing the capital needs or gaps of the regional food system) to prioritize next steps at the local, regional, state, or tribal government level.
- Researching and developing metrics to measure and evaluate the partnership's early development work and establish performance benchmarks for achieving partnership goals.

Implementation and Expansion Projects can include, but are not limited to:

- Expanding and enhancing networks where producers, manufacturers, buyers, and other related actors can continue to form collaborative, transparent partnerships with a commitment to shared operational values.
- Developing processes for ongoing community and business engagement to provide a forum for ideas, concerns, and updates across the regional food system.
- Identifying resources for food system enterprises (this could include analyzing capital needs and gaps), providing technical assistance for partners and stakeholders, and applying for programs and resources that align with regional food system efforts, including other LAMP programs or capital investments.
- Analyzing capital needs and gaps and identifying resources to support the regional food system.

Ineligible Activities

A project is ineligible if it benefits only one agricultural producer, vendor, or individual. For this grant opportunity, applicants must collaborate with others to benefit the larger community. Projects will also be deemed ineligible if they are dependent upon the completion of another project or the receipt of another grant.

This grant opportunity does not support agricultural production related expenses. This includes crop production and the purchase of farm equipment, tools, materials, supplies, and other related costs. It also includes training or other activities related to agricultural production, including harvesting, crop rotation, and planting techniques. For USDA programs that do support production related activities, visit the [USDA Local and Regional Food Systems Resource Guide](#).

Other Ineligible Activities:

- Purchasing land for production or for construction of a building or structure.
- Registering, training, and/or educating customers about Food Assistance Programs (such as SNAP, WIC, etc.), other than providing information about how they can use those benefits at the market.
- Paying legal fees and other costs associated with establishing a business or organization.
- Duplicating activities in a project that has received funding from another Federal award program.
- Providing capital for revolving loan funds or seed equity funds.

Eligible Applicants – Partnerships

A partnership is an agreement between one or more eligible entities and one or more eligible partners. Only eligible partnerships may apply to RFSP.

Eligible Entities (must include at least one):	Eligible Partners (must include at least one):
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Producer ▪ Farmer or Rancher Cooperative ▪ Producer Network or Association ▪ Majority-Controlled Producer-Based Business Venture ▪ Food Council ▪ Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Network ▪ Local Governments ▪ Nonprofit Corporations ▪ Public Benefit Corporations ▪ Economic Development Corporations ▪ Regional Farmers Market Authority ▪ Tribal Governments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ State Agencies or Regional Authorities ▪ Philanthropic Corporations ▪ Private Corporations ▪ Institutions of Higher Education ▪ Commercial, Federal or Farm Credit System Lending Institutions

Priority Consideration

AMS will prioritize applications that:

- Leverage significant non-Federal financial and technical resources and coordinate with other local, State, Tribal, or national efforts. Any match above and beyond the match requirement may lend support to the application.
- Cover an area that includes distressed low-income rural or urban communities with areas of persistent poverty that provide significant opportunities for high impact investment, as demonstrated by a “distressed “or “at-risk” score on the [Distressed Communities Index](#) (DCI) developed by the Economic Innovation Group.
- Have multiple entities and partners, including a diversity of entity and partner types.

Applicants are not required to meet these priorities to be eligible to apply or receive grant funds. AMS will review and apply priority consideration, based on applicant narrative responses, during its administrative review process. AMS may prioritize partnerships or regions which have not received awards in the recent past.

Subawards

The recipient may use sub-awarding and/or sub-contracting methods with eligible partners via its partnership agreement to accomplish the proposed project. The recipient may not use the grant to competitively “re-grant” RFSP funds in mini-grant programs, or for activities that are not central to the purpose of the project, or for unknown costs.

The recipient may use its cash match to offer mini-grants if so desired, as long as they further the project’s purposes and comply with Federal match requirements at [2 CFR § 200.306](#).

Cost Sharing and Matching

This funding opportunity requires matching funds from non-Federal sources in the form of cash contributions equal to 25% of the amount of Federal funds being requested.

- [Match](#) must be in the form of allowable direct or indirect costs and align with the project goals and purposes.
- You cannot use program income (funds generated from the proposed program) as match or cost sharing.
- Cash match contributions are generally defined as an actual cash contribution (not the 'value' of someone's time/effort) from the applicant's general revenue/reserves/savings/line of credit, or 3rd-party partner(s), or other non-Federal grants.
- Match contributions cannot be used for RFSP if they are already being used toward satisfying a match requirement under any other Federal grant agreement to which the applicant is a party.

If an applicant decides not to request indirect costs in the full amount they are allowed, the applicant can offer that portion as an in-kind match contribution. This would not be considered as part of the required 25% cash match.

All matching contributions must be committed or secured at the time an applicant is recommended for an award. An award will not be issued unless all matching funds over the life of the grant are secured.

Contact Us and Learn More!

For questions about these grant opportunities, after closely reviewing the RFA and FAQs, please email:

IPPGrants@usda.gov for questions related to the Regional Food System Partnership Program.

Visit <https://wwwcp.umes.edu/extension/ams-grants-evaluation-bipoc/> for more technical assistance resources.

For additional examples of funded grant projects, visit [RFSP Funded Awards](#).

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