



**REQUESTS FOR PROPOSALS
FOR
FEDERAL-STATE MARKET IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM FY25**
Funded by the United States Department of Agriculture
In Cooperation with
The Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources

Request for Response (RFR): RFR File: [AGR-FSMIP-2025](#)

**Responses must be received by
2:00PM Friday, March 28, 2025**

**Responses must be sent to Keri Cornman
Email: Keri.Cornman@mass.gov**

To explore and identify new market opportunities for U.S. food and agricultural products, and encourage research and innovation aimed at improving the efficiency and performance of the U.S. agricultural marketing system. FSMIP funds a wide range of applied research projects that address barriers, challenges, and opportunities in marketing, transportation, and distribution of U.S. food and agricultural products domestically and internationally



**Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources
100 Cambridge Street 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02114**

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1. AVAILABLE FUNDING

Federal-State Market Improvement Grant Program (FSMIP) is funded by annual appropriations to the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), USDA. AMS anticipates that approximately \$1 million will be available for support for this program in fiscal year (FY) 2025. The final amount available is subject to Congressional action. The minimum award amount is \$50,000, the maximum award is \$250,000 per project.

2. APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

In accordance with authorizing legislation, FSMIP funds can be allotted to State Departments of Agriculture, State Agricultural Experiment Stations, and other appropriate Agencies. State agencies under the authorizing legislation should assume the lead role in FSMIP projects, and use cooperative or contractual linkages to fund participants such as other agencies, universities, institutions, and producer, industry or community-based organizations, as appropriate.

Partners and collaborators may be private or public, for-profit, or nonprofit entities, including but not limited to:

- New and beginning farmers and ranchers (individuals or entities that have not operated a farm or ranch for more than 10 years and substantially participate in the operation);
- Rural enterprises (small and emerging private businesses in rural areas that have fewer than 50 employees and less than \$1 million in gross revenue);
- Agri-businesses; and
- Local government entities

Applicants are required to show evidence of existing community or industry support and engagement. Applications should demonstrate a commitment to engage potential project beneficiaries as active participants.

3. PROJECT ELIGIBILITY

A. Project Type

Applicants must align their proposal to one of the four project types listed below. If a project aligns with more than one project type, the applicant MUST assign one primary project type. However, the applicant may select multiple secondary project types.

Project Type	Description
Agricultural Product Development	Innovation and enhancement of agricultural products, practices, and methodology
Agricultural Product Distribution	The handling, storage, processing, transportation, and distribution of agricultural products.
Cooperative Development	The cooperation among Federal and state agencies, producers, industry organizations, and others in the development and creation of research and marketing programs to improve the distribution processes of agricultural products
Economic Research	To clarify marketing barriers and opportunities, including regulatory compliance costs

All FSMIP applications:

- Must have a strong marketing focus, must involve research, and the primary beneficiaries must be agricultural producers and agribusinesses.

- May address topics dealing with any level of the marketing chain including direct, wholesale, and retail as well as issues of importance at the State, multi-State, or national level.
- Training or education related applications must include a research component that tests its effects on the marketing goals.
- AMS will consider unique smaller-scale applications that may serve as pilot projects or case studies as models for others. Such applications must include an objective to analyze opportunities and formulate recommendations regarding how the project could be scaled up or expanded to other regions.

ELIGIBLE PROJECT ACTIVITIES:

FSMIP projects can:

- Determine the best methods for processing, preparing for market, packing, handling, transporting, storing, distributing, and marketing agricultural products.
- Determine the costs of marketing agricultural products in their various forms and through various channels.
- Assist in the development of more efficient marketing methods, practices, and facilities to bring about more efficient and orderly marketing, and reduce the price spread between the producer and the consumer.
- Develop and improve standards of quality, condition, quantity, grade, and packaging in order to encourage uniformity and consistency in commercial practices.
- Eliminate artificial barriers to the free movement of agricultural products in commercial channels.
- Foster new/expanded domestic and foreign markets and new/expanded uses of agricultural products.
- Collect and disseminate marketing information to anticipate and meet consumer requirements, maintain farm income, and balance production and use.

B. Projects and Activities Not Eligible for Funding

Projects are not eligible for funding if the proposed activities:

- Are for agricultural production-related expenses, including crop production and the purchase of farm equipment, tools, materials, supplies, and other related costs.
- Are to purchase land, or for construction of a building or structure.
- Benefit only one agricultural producer, entity, or individual.
- Depend upon the completion of another project or the receipt of another grant.
- Duplicate activities of a project that has received a Federal award from another Federal award program.

For additional allowable and unallowable activities please refer to the applicable [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#). Applicants that have questions concerning the allowability of costs after reviewing the Terms and Conditions should contact Keri.Cornman@mass.gov.

C. Performance Measures

To evaluate and report on the outcomes of the FSMIP Program on a national scale, AMS collects information on performance measures. These measures focus on: Providing short- and long-term impact indicators.

- More accurately reflecting grant recipients' accomplishments.
- Reducing burden on grant applicants and recipients.
- Improving AMS's ability to report on the impact of its grant programs.
- Standardizing measures across programs where appropriate.

Each project submitted in the proposal **must** include **at least one of the six outcomes** listed in the [FSMIP Performance Measures](#) (also included as an attachment at the end of this RFR) and **at least one of the indicators** listed in the selected outcome(s). Additional information regarding the update to the performance measures can be found on the [AMS Grant Performance Measures website](#).

4. ADDITIONAL PROJECT DETAILS

A. Cost Sharing or Matching Funds

This funding opportunity requires a \$1-for-\$1 match in the form of cash and/or in-kind non-Federal resources. There is no competitive advantage for an applicant to provide a cost share or match that exceeds the required amount. If the project is selected for funding, any exceeding amount will be considered voluntary and must be documented and secured at the time of the award.

Cost sharing or the required match must be in the form of allowable direct or indirect costs. Refer to [2 CFR § 200.306](#) for additional Federal requirements and definitions, including the basis for determining the value of cash and in-kind contributions.

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. The applicant must be able to track and show the source of the match funding and that the funding source was dedicated entirely to the grant project and produce records to that effect (for example, taking the cash match in your accounting system, or from your partner, and placing it into a special 'grant project' account).

In-kind contributions are generally defined as the value of goods or services provided by a third party for the benefit of the grant program, where no funds transferred hands. For example, a partner may volunteer their professional expertise as an in-kind match contribution to the project as described in [2 CFR § 200.306\(e\)](#).

Match contributions cannot satisfy a cost sharing or matching requirement for this grant program if they are already being used toward satisfying a match requirement under any other Federal grant agreement to which the applicant is party.

All matching contributions **must be committed or secured** at the time an applicant is recommend for an award. An award will not be issued unless all matching funds over the life of the grant are secured. Additional anticipated matching funds not in place by the time the project commences cannot be counted toward the matching requirement.

Applicants will indicate the total amount of match and how it will specifically align with their requested funding when completing the budget section of the Project Narrative and submit letters or other documentation verifying the match for EACH cash and/or in-kind resource. Applicants must submit a signed letter(s) with the application, which serves as the verification for each cash and in-kind matching contribution. Refer to Section 5.(C.8.) Matching Funds and Letters of Verification for more information.

Indirect costs may count toward the match. Refer to section 6.A. Indirect Costs for more information.

Applicants cannot use program income (as defined in [2 CFR § 200.1](#)) or any kind of Federal funds as a match or cost share.

B. Travel

Recipients are expected to attend AMS sponsored grants management meetings during the project's period of performance. The proposed budget should include travel funds for the Project Coordinator and any additional key personnel as reasonably determined by the recipient and AMS.

To estimate these costs in your budget, please account for flight, hotel, per diem, and ground transportation expenses for a 3-day, 2-night stay. Location and dates are to be determined with a possibility of a virtual conference. If the conference is virtual, recipients will be able to reallocate those funds to another allowable item. Please utilize the [GSA website](#) to determine rates for travel.

C. Project Length

FSMIP projects must be completed within 36 months (3 years). It is acceptable to complete a project before the scheduled ending date. The grant period must begin on September 30, 2025, and end no later than September 29, 2028. A proposal that builds on previous FSMIP project may also be submitted. In such cases, the narrative should indicate clearly how the new proposal complements previous work. It is generally FSMIP's policy not to fund successive projects beyond a period of three years.

D. Environmental Justice Policy

For the purposes of this RFR, "Environmental Justice" is based on the principle that all people have a right to be protected from environmental hazards and to live in and enjoy a clean and healthful environment regardless of race, color, national origin, income, or English language proficiency. Environmental justice is the equal protection and meaningful involvement of all people and communities with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of energy, climate change, and environmental laws, regulations, and policies and the equitable distribution of energy and environmental benefits and burdens.

For more information, please review the Environmental Justice Policy in Attachment B of this RFR. We also encourage you to complete the Environmental Justice Questions form also contained in Attachment B.

5. APPLICATION PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS

A. Submission Deadline

FSMIP funds will be allocated on the basis of one round of competition. Grant proposals must be **received** by the Department no later than **March 28, 2025 by 2:00 PM** in order to comply with the Federal deadline in May 2025.

Send Grant proposal via email to:

Keri Cornman

Keri.Cornman@mass.gov

Division of Agricultural Development
Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources
100 Cambridge Street, Ste 900
Boston, MA 02114-2534

This RFR requires the submission of electronic proposals. All Applicants are advised to allow adequate time for submission of their proposal by considering potential online impediments like Internet traffic, Internet connection speed, file size, and file volume. MDAR is not responsible for delays encountered by applicants or

their agents, or for an Applicant's local hardware failures, such as computers or related networks, associated with proposal compilation or submission. Proposals submitted via email to the Program Manager are time and date stamped received by the email system clock which is considered the official time of record.

B. Informational Webinar

Informational Webinars where questions may be asked will be held for interested applicants on the dates listed below. Please click the link(s) below to access one or more of the webinars. Webinars will be 1 hour in length.

- Tuesday, February 11, 2025 at 3:00pm
 - Register for this webinar date [here](#).
- Wednesday, March 5, 2025 at 11:00am
 - Register for this webinar date [here](#).

Webinars are to provide general information about the grant. This is not an opportunity to get assistance from MDAR on the drafting or development of a specific project or proposal. Webinars will be recorded and the recording may be shared to the MDAR [FSMIP webpage](#).

C. Contents of Proposal

A narrative description of the proposal is required. Applicants MUST prepare and submit a project narrative that include the six sections below and clearly describes the objectives and goal, type of activities, applicable outcomes indicators, and fiscal plan and resources information. The Project Narrative must be typed, single-spaced, in an 11-point font, not to exceed thirty (30) 8.5 x 11 pages. The Project Narrative must be submitted as a PDF. Handwritten applications or applications in MS Word will not be accepted.

The supporting documents in the subsequent sections do not count against the page limit for the Project Narrative.

- 1) **Cover Page** - Include proposal title (no more than 10 words), name and contact information of the project leader. Required Cover Letter template is included in Attachments below. Includes Environmental Justice Questionnaire.
- 2) **Project Abstract** – Include a summary of 250 words or less suitable for dissemination to the public. This summary should include a concise outline of the project's purpose; activities to be performed, including subawards (when applicable); deliverables and expected outcomes; intended beneficiaries; and other pertinent information
- 3) **Alignment and Intent** –
 - (i) Clearly state the purpose of the project and Project Type identified in Section 3A. Project Type. Describe the specific issue, problem, or need that the project will address. Include data and/or estimates that describe the extent of the issue, problem, or need.
 - (ii) List the objectives of the project. The objectives must be related to addressing the issue(s), problem(s), or need(s) mentioned in section (2)(i).
 - (iii) Provide a description of the benefits that are intended to be achieved as a result of engaging in the activities associated with this project, including the number of affected producers or processors.
- 4) **Technical Intent** –

- (i) Provide a Work Plan that describes the activities and timeline associated with each project objective mentioned in the Alignment and Intent section.
The workplan should include: a timeline for each activity and major output including the anticipated date of completion; how and where the activities will take place; required resources; milestone(s) for assessing progress and success; the person(s) responsible for completing the activity, including collaborative arrangements or subcontractors; if conducting training and technical assistance, how participants will be recruited; and how you will help guide program development and delivery. A table with this information is recommended.
- (ii) If the proposed project will be or has been submitted to another federal program for funding, provide the grant program name.
- (iii) If the proposed project builds on work previously funded by a federal program, including [AMS grant programs](#), provide the year and grant program name, and describe how the proposed project, if funded, would not duplicate work previously funded by the federal government.

5) Achievability –

- (i) Provide at least one distinct, quantifiable, measurable project outcome and associated indicator listed in the [FSMIP Performance Measures](#). If the outcome measures are long-term and occur after the project's completion, identify an intermediate outcome that occurs before, and is expected to help lead to the fulfillment of long-term outcomes. AMS will use outcomes measures to report impacts on a national scale and demonstrate the program performance.
- (ii) For each completed outcome indicator, describe how you derived the numbers, how you intend to measure and achieve each relevant outcome and indicator, and any potential challenges to achieving the estimated targets and action steps for addressing them.
- (iii) Describe how you will disseminate the project's results (positive and negative) to similar organizations, stakeholders, and others that may be interested in the project's results or implementing a similar project.

6) Expertise and Partners –

- (i) List key staff, including personnel and external project partners and collaborators that comprise the Project Team, their roles, and their relevant experience and past successes in developing and operating projects similar to this project. Ensure that you have included Letters of Commitment from Partner and Collaborator Organizations to support the information.
- (ii) Describe your management plan for coordinating, communicating, and sharing data and reports among members of the Project Team and stakeholder groups, both internally to personnel and externally to partners and collaborators.
- (iii) Describe how the project, and its partnerships and collaborations, will be sustained beyond the project's period of performance (without grant funds) if the project is expected to extend beyond the grant period.

Provide a one- to two-page resume or summary of relevant experience and/or qualifications of the principal investigator(s) and for each of the other major project participants. Longer resumes will be disregarded. The resume or summary do not count against the page limit for the Project Narrative.

7) Fiscal Plan and Resources

The Fiscal Plan and Resources must include the Budget Spreadsheet and Budget Narrative. The Budget Spreadsheet must show the relevant expenditure categories in the far-left column.

Relevant cost categories include:

- Personnel
- Fringe Benefits
- Travel (please see Section 4B. for required travel costs)
- Special Purpose Equipment
- Supplies
- Contracts/Subawards
- Indirect Costs
- Program Income
- Other

Proceeding across the page, there must be a column showing the dollar amount of Federal funds requested and separate columns showing the dollar amount for each of the non-Federal entities that will provide matching resources. Provide separate Year 1, Year 2, Year 3, and cumulative budgets. The Budget Narrative must break down and explain how the dollar amounts for each category shown on the Budget Spreadsheet were derived and what they cover. See section 8 of the applicable [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#) for a full listing of allowable and unallowable costs.

8) Supporting Documents

The supporting documents in the subsequent sections do not count against the page limit for the Project Narrative.

(i) Matching Funds and Letters of Verification

Required. Applicants MUST have written verification of match commitment from any party, including the applicant, who will contribute cash or in-kind matching non-Federal resources to the project.

Submit one letter verifying the match for EACH cash or in-kind resource, signed by the matching organization. AMS strongly encourages applicants to use the [SUGGESTED MATCH VERIFICATION TEMPLATE LETTER](#) on the AMS application website. If you do not use this template, 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/hour, 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 Fund 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.

(ii) Letters of Commitment from Partner and Collaborator Organizations

Required. Applicants MUST provide letters of commitment (not support) from all project partners and collaborators. The letter must state the partner or collaborator agrees to the project management plan presented in the Project Narrative. Emails will not be accepted. The federally negotiated indirect rate, distribution base, and rate type must be available publicly on an OMB-designated Federal website.

AMS strongly encourages you to use the [Suggested Partner Organization Template Letter](#) on the program application website. If you do not use this template, your Letter of Commitment must minimally include the following:

- Project Applicant
- Project Title
- A short introduction describing the partnering organization's mission and its interest in FSMIP development
- What the organization commits to participating in and supporting
- The time period of the partnership
- Roles of the participating individuals, as applicable, and any individual time commitment
- A statement that these individuals and the organization agree to abide by the management plan contained in the application

Submit Letters of Commitment on letterhead and address them to the applicant (i.e., Project Director). Clearly indicate at the top of the documents that they are LETTERS OF COMMITMENT. Letters must accompany the proposal at the time of application. Unsigned letters will not be accepted.

PLEASE NOTE: FSMIP does not require Congressional letters of support nor do such letters carry additional weight during the evaluation process.

(iii) Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA)

Required if the applicant has a NICRA. Refer to Section 6A. Indirect Costs for more information. The NICRA must be in PDF format.

D. Project Evaluation Criteria

Proposals are reviewed and evaluated by subject matter specialists from AMS and elsewhere in USDA, and/or another Federal agency as appropriate to the subject matter and scope of the proposal.

As a basis for allocating FSMIP funds among competing proposals, AMS is guided by the following criteria:

- **Alignment and Intent (25 points) –**
 - The application provides a clear and concise description of the specific issue, problem, or need addressed by and objectives for, the project.
 - The project addresses an important marketing barrier, challenge, or opportunity and aligns with FSMIP’s legislative and program goals.
 - The applicant identifies the intended beneficiaries and how they will benefit, including the number of beneficiaries. The application demonstrates a commitment to engage potential project beneficiaries as active participants in partnership activities.
- **Technical Merit (25 points) –**
 - The application presents a clear, well-conceived, and suitable overall methodology for fulfilling the goals and objectives of the proposed project.
 - The application presents a realistic schedule for implementing the proposed project during the award project period.
 - If the project or entity was previously funded, the extent to which the previous lessons learned are incorporated into the proposed project.
 - The application complies with all written instructions and requirements described within the RFA and Project Narrative Template.
- **Achievability (15 points) –**
 - The selected Outcomes and Indicator(s) are appropriate for the scale and scope of the project including:
 - a. How indicator numbers were derived, with a clear means to collect feedback to evaluate and achieve each relevant Outcome Indicator; and
 - b. The anticipated key factors that are predicted to contribute to and restrict progress toward the applicable indicators, including action steps for addressing identified restricting factors.
 - The proposed project can be easily adapted to other regions, communities, and/or agricultural systems.
 - The applicant provides a comprehensive plan to disseminate the project’s results (both positive and negative) electronically and in person to target audiences, stakeholders, and interested parties.
- **Expertise and Partners (25 Points) –**
 - The proposed project represents qualifications of the applicant (individual and team) and the relevant partnerships and collaborations to accomplish the project’s goals and objectives and meets the needs of the intended beneficiaries, including:
 - a. Commitment from the key staff demonstrated through Letters of Commitment from Partner and Collaborator Organizations;
 - b. The key staff who will be responsible for managing the projects and the individuals (name and title) who comprise the Project Team; and
 - c. The expertise and experience of the Project Team necessary to successfully manage and implement the proposed project.
 - The application describes plans for coordination, communication, data sharing, and reporting among members of the Project Team and stakeholder groups, both internal applicant personnel **and** external partners and collaborators.
 - The application describes how the project, and its partnerships and collaborations, will be sustained beyond the project’s period of performance (without grant funds).
- **Fiscal Plan and Resources (10 Points) –**
 - The application Budget Narrative/Justification provides a clear, detailed description for each budget line item and is consistent with the size and scope of the project.
 - The budget and justification relate logically to the Project Narrative describing the project.

- The application provides evidence that critical resources and infrastructure that are necessary for the initiation and completion of the proposed project that are currently in place.
- The applicant demonstrates its partners' or collaborators' contribution of non-Federal cash resources or in-kind contributions are available and obtainable for the project as evidenced through the submitted Matching Funds and Letters of Match Verification.

6. RESTRICTIONS AND LIMITATIONS ON PROGRAM ACTIVITIES AND EXPENDITURES

A. 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.

In accordance with [2 CFR § 200.414\(f\)](#), 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). The applicant is authorized to determine the appropriate rate up to this limit. The de minimis rate does not require documentation to justify its use and may be used indefinitely. 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. Once elected, this methodology must be used consistently for all Federal awards until a recipient chooses to negotiate for a rate, which the recipient may apply any time.

All applicants who elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10 percent must use the MTDC as the base. MTDCs 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 its cognizant agency for indirect costs.

If an applicant has a 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 cognizant agency assignments, see [2 CFR § 200.1](#).

Using Indirect Costs for Cost Sharing or Matching

The maximum amount of indirect costs allowed for a project may be included under the Federal portion of the budget or, alternatively, may be offered as a matching contribution if no indirect costs are requested on the Federal portion of the budget. For example, if a proposed project's maximum allowable indirect costs are \$20,000, the applicant may include \$20,000 on the Federal portion of the budget or \$20,000 as a matching contribution, but not both.

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. Alternatively, the recipient may request any other combination that, when combined, does not exceed the maximum indirect costs allowable. Refer to [2 CFR § 200.413](#) and [414](#) for additional information on determining if costs charged to the award are direct or indirect.

Sample Calculation

Total Direct Cost = \$80,000
 Total Indirect Cost assuming a negotiated cognizant rate of 30% = \$24,000
 Total Project Cost = \$104,000
 FSMIP Share = \$52,000
 Applicant Share = \$52,000

Some examples of possible allocations of Indirect Cost:

- A. FSMIP covers all indirect cost:
 FSMIP = \$28,000 direct + \$24,000 indirect; Applicant = \$52,000 direct
- B. Applicant covers all indirect cost:
 FSMIP = \$52,000 direct; Applicant = \$28,000 direct + \$24,000 indirect
- C. FSMIP and Applicant split indirect cost:
 FSMIP = \$40,000 direct + \$12,000 indirect; Applicant = \$40,000 direct + \$12,000 indirect

B. Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities

The following link provides information on allowable and unallowable costs in common categories of FSMIP proposal budgets. Note that the allowable costs listed in the link below may also be cost-shared or brought as part of the required match. Unallowable costs cannot be brought as a match.

[AMS General Terms and Conditions – Section 8.0 Allowable Costs and Activities](#) (Section 8.0 begins on Page 12).

7. REPORTING

The Annual Performance Report is due to MDAR within 90 calendar days after each one-year period of performance. An Annual and Final Performance Report Template will be provided in the final contract. The 3-year period of performance begins September 30, 2025, and ends September 29, 2028. Recipients must submit two interim reports to MDAR.

Annual Report Number	One-Year Marker	Due Date
1	September 15, 2026	December 1, 2026
2	September 15, 2027	December 1, 2027

To officially close out a FSMIP award, the final performance report is due by December 1, 2028. A Final Performance Report Template will be provided in the final contract.

The recipient should submit the reports to FSMIP electronically as required in the FSMIP Terms and Conditions of Award.

8. SELECTION OF GRANTEES

Proposals will be reviewed by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources - staff and will be sent to the USDA Agricultural marketing Service 'FSMIP' program where final analysis and funding will be decided.

Upon announcement of the grant awards, FSMIP will prepare and send grant agreements and certification to State agencies for signature by the appropriate official. Unsuccessful applicants will be contacted by State

FSMIP coordinator as soon as possible after the awards are announced and upon request; will receive feedback on their proposal.

9. PROPOSAL DEADLINE TO DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

March 28, 2025 by 2:00pm – only one round of FSMIP funding.

Send Proposals via email to: Keri Cornman, Federal Funds Program Manager: keri.cornman@mass.gov



RFR - Required Specifications for Commodities and Services

Revision Date: July 10, 2024

In general, most of the required contractual stipulations are referenced in the *Standard Contract Form and Instructions* and the *Commonwealth Terms and Conditions*. However, the following RFR provisions must appear in all Commonwealth departmental competitive procurements conducted under 801 CMR 21.00.

The terms of *801 CMR 21.00: Procurement of Commodities and Services* are incorporated by reference into this RFR. Words used in this RFR shall have the meanings defined in 801 CMR 21.00. Additional definitions also may be identified in this RFR. Other terms not defined elsewhere in this document may be defined in OSD's [Glossary of Terms](#). Unless otherwise specified in this RFR, all communications, responses, and documentation must be in English, all measurements must be provided in feet, inches, and pounds and all cost proposals or figures in U.S. currency. All responses must be submitted in accordance with the specific terms of this RFR.

1. COMMBUYS Market Center. COMMBUYS is the official source of information for this Bid and is publicly accessible at no charge at www.commbuys.com. Information contained in this document and in COMMBUYS, including file attachments, and information contained in the related Bid Questions and Answers (Q&A), are components of the Bid, as referenced in COMMBUYS, and are incorporated into the Bid and any resulting contract.

Bidders are solely responsible for obtaining all information distributed for this Bid via COMMBUYS. Bid Q&A supports Bidder submission of written questions associated with a Bid and publication of official answers.

It is each Bidder's responsibility to check COMMBUYS for:

- Any amendments, addenda, or modifications to this Bid, and
- Any Bid Q&A records related to this Bid.

The Commonwealth accepts no responsibility and will provide no accommodation to Bidders who submit a Quote based on an out-of-date Bid or on information received from a source other than COMMBUYS.

2. COMMBUYS Registration. Bidders may elect to register for a free COMMBUYS Seller account which provides value-added features, including automated email notification associated with postings and modifications to COMMBUYS records. However, to respond to a Bid, Bidders must register and maintain an active COMMBUYS Seller account.

All Bidders submitting a Quote (previously referred to as Response) in response to this Bid (previously referred to as Solicitation) agree that, if awarded a contract: 1) they will maintain an active seller account in COMMBUYS; 2) they will, when directed to do so by the procuring entity, activate and maintain a COMMBUYS-enabled catalog using Commonwealth Commodity Codes; 3) they will comply with all requests by the procuring entity to utilize COMMBUYS for the purposes of conducting all aspects of purchasing and invoicing with the Commonwealth, as added functionality for the COMMBUYS system is activated; and 4) in the event the Commonwealth adopts an alternate e-procurement platform, successful Bidders will be required to utilize such system, as directed by the procuring entity. Commonwealth Commodity Codes are based on the United Nations Standard Products and Services Code (UNSPSC).

COMMBUYS uses terminology with which bidders must be familiar to conduct business with the Commonwealth. To view this terminology and to learn more about COMMBUYS, please visit the [Learn about COMMBUYS Resources](#) page on mass.gov.

3. Multiple Quotes. Bidders may not submit Multiple Quotes in response to a Bid unless the RFR authorizes them to do so. If a Bidder submits multiple quotes in response to an RFR that does not authorize multiple responses, only the latest dated quote submitted prior to the bid opening date will be evaluated.

4. Quote Content. Bid specifications for delivery, shipping, billing, and payment will prevail over any proposed Bidder terms entered as part of the Quote, unless otherwise specified in the Bid.

5. Supplier Diversity Office (SDO) Programs. Pursuant to [Executive Order 599](#), the Commonwealth supports the use of diverse and small businesses through the Small Business Purchasing Program (SBPP) and the Supplier Diversity

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Program (SDP). Based on the estimated value of the procurement, one of the above-mentioned programs shall be applicable to this RFR. For more information on the program that applies to this solicitation, see the body of this RFR.

6. Small Business Purchasing Program (SBPP)

Program Background. The Massachusetts [Small Business Purchasing Program](#) (SBPP) was established pursuant to [Executive Order 599](#) to increase state contracting opportunities with small businesses having their principal place of business within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Pursuant to the SBPP, it is the intention of the issuing department to award this Small Procurement to one or more SBPP participating business(es) as described below.

SBPP Award Preference. While all businesses, no matter the size or principal place of business, may submit responses to this solicitation, should an SBPP participant respond and meet the best value criteria described in this solicitation, the SBPP participant shall be awarded the contract. The Strategic Sourcing Services Team (SST) will not evaluate submissions from non-SBPP participants unless no SBPP Bidder meets the SSST's best value evaluation criteria.

SBPP Participation Eligibility. To be eligible to participate in this procurement as an SBPP participant, an entity must meet the following criteria, and be marked as an SBPP-registered business in [COMMBUYS](#):

1. Have its principal place of business in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts;
2. Been in business for at least one year;
3. Employ a combined total of 50 or fewer full-time equivalent employees in all locations, or employees work less than a combined total of 26,000 hours per quarter; and
4. Have gross revenues, as reported on appropriate tax forms, of \$15 million or less, based on a three-year average.

Non-profit firms also must be registered as a non-profit or charitable organization with the MA Attorney General's Office and be up to date with all filings required by that office and be tax exempt under Section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code.

SBPP Compliance Requirements. It is the responsibility of the Bidder to ensure that their SBPP status is current at the time of submitting a response and throughout the life of any resulting contract. Misrepresentation of SBPP status will result in disqualification from consideration, and may result in debarment, contract termination, and other actions. To learn more about the SBPP, including how to apply, visit the SBPP webpage, <http://www.mass.gov/sbpp>.

Program Resources and Assistance. Bidders and Contractors seeking assistance regarding SBPP may visit the [SBPP Webpage](#), or contact the SBPP Help Desk at sbpp@mass.gov.

7. Supplier Diversity Program (SDP)

Program Background. Pursuant to [Executive Order 599](#), the Commonwealth's [Supplier Diversity Program](#) (SDP) promotes business-to-business relationships between awarded Contractors and diverse businesses and non-profit organizations ("SDP Partners") certified or recognized (see below for more information) by the [Supplier Diversity Office \(SDO\)](#).

All Bidders and Contractors are strongly encouraged to create a profile on the SDO's Supplier Diversity Hub to access the Commonwealth's supplier diversity resources and tools.

Financial Commitment Requirements. All Bidders responding to this solicitation are required to make a significant financial commitment ("SDP Commitment") to partnering with one or more SDO-certified or recognized diverse business enterprise(s) or non-profit organization(s). This SDP Commitment must be expressed as a percentage of contract sales resulting from this solicitation that would be spent with the SDP Partner(s).

After contract award (if any), the Total SDP Commitment shall become a contractual requirement to be met annually on a Massachusetts fiscal year basis (July 1 – June 30) for the duration of the contract. The minimum acceptable Total SDP Commitment in response to this solicitation shall be 1%. Bidders shall be awarded additional evaluation points for higher SDP Commitments.

No contract shall be awarded to a Bidder without an SDP Commitment that meets the requirements stated herein. This requirement extends to all Bidders regardless of their own supplier diversity certification.

Eligible SDP Partner Certification Categories

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SDP Partners must be business enterprises and/or non-profit organizations certified or recognized by the SDO in one or more of the following certification categories:

- Minority-Owned Business Enterprise (MBE)
- Minority Non-Profit Organization (M/NPO)
- Women-Owned Business Enterprise (WBE)
- Women Non-Profit Organization (W/NPO)
- Veteran-Owned Business Enterprise (VBE)
- Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Enterprise (SDVOBE)
- Disability-Owned Business Enterprise (DOBE)
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Business Enterprise (LBGTBE)

Eligible Types of Business-to-Business Relationships. Bidders and Contractors may engage SDP Partners as follows:

- **Subcontracting**, defined as a partnership in which the SDP partner is involved in the provision of products and/or services to the Commonwealth.
- **Ancillary Products and Services**, defined as a business relationship in which the SDP partner provides products or services that are not directly related to the Contractor's contract with the Commonwealth but may be related to the Contractor's own operational needs. These may include but are not limited to the following examples: professional services (e.g., IT, legal, advertising, HR, accounting etc.), maintenance services (e.g., cleaning, landscaping, tradespersons services, etc.), office expenses (e.g., office supplies, furniture, IT supplies, etc.). Anything declared as a business expense in which a certified vendor is used would qualify.

Other types of business-to-business relationships are not acceptable under this contract. If subcontracting is proposed, it must meet all the subcontracting provisions (if any) listed in this RFR.

Program Flexibility. The SDP encompasses the following provisions to support Bidders in establishing and maintaining sustainable business-to-business relationships meeting their needs:

- SDP Partners are **not** required to be subcontractors.
- SDP Partners are **not** required to be Massachusetts-based businesses.
- SDP Partners **may be changed or added** during the term of the contract, provided the Contractor continues to meet its SDP Commitment.

SDP Plan Form Requirements. All Bidders must complete the SDP Plan Form included in this solicitation and attach it to their bid response. In addition to proposing an SDP Commitment, each Bidder must propose one or more SDP Partner(s) to utilize to meet its SDP Commitment. Certified diverse Bidders may not list their own companies, their subsidiaries, or affiliates as SDP Partners and may not meet their SDP Commitment by spending funds internally or with their own subsidiaries or affiliates.

Bidders may propose SDP Partners that are:

- **Certified or recognized by the SDO:** Such partners appear in the [SDO Directory of Certified Businesses](#) or in the [SBA Veteran Small Business Certification \(VetCert\)](#) directory. After contract award (if any), spending with such partners will contribute to meeting the Contractor's SDP Commitment.
- **Certified by one of SDO's recognized third-party certification bodies but not yet listed in the SDO Directory of Certified Businesses:** Such partners must be certified in eligible categories by one of SDO's recognized third-party certification bodies, which include the [City of Boston](#), the [Greater New England Minority Supplier Development Council \(GNEMSDC\)](#), the [Center for Women & Enterprise \(CWE\)](#), [Disability: IN](#), [National LGBT Chamber of Commerce \(NGLCC\)](#), or the [National Veteran Owned Business Association \(NaVOBA\)](#) but have not yet opted to be listed in the SDO Directory of Certified Businesses. In order to opt into SDO's Directory of Certified Businesses, the SDP partner must follow the applicable expedited instructions on SDO's Apply for Recognition as a Third-Party Certified Business webpage. Self-certification is not acceptable. While Bidders may list such proposed SDP Partners on their SDP Plans, spending with such partners will not contribute to meeting the Contractor's SDP Commitment unless they apply for and are granted SDO supplier diversity certification or recognition. If proposed SDP Partners do not receive SDO supplier diversity certification or recognition, the Contractor must find alternative SDP Partners to meet the SDP Commitment.
- **Not yet certified or recognized by the SDO or one of SDO's recognized third-party certification bodies:** Such partners must be certified in eligible categories by other third-party certification bodies that are not yet recognized by the SDO, such as another city or state supplier diversity certification office, the [National Minority Supplier Development Council](#), or the [Women Business Enterprise National Council](#), but are not listed in the above-mentioned directories. Self-certification is not acceptable. While Bidders may list such

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proposed SDP Partners on their SDP Plans, spending with such partners will not contribute to meeting the Contractor's SDP Commitment unless they apply for and are granted SDO supplier diversity certification or recognition. If proposed SDP Partners do not receive SDO supplier diversity certification or recognition, the Contractor must find alternative SDP Partners to meet the SDP Commitment.

It is the responsibility of the Contractor to ensure that their proposed SDP Partners obtain such certification or recognition by the SDO after contract award (if any). The issuing department and the SDO will not conduct outreach to proposed SDP Partners to ensure their certification. Furthermore, no guarantee may be made that a proposed SDP Partner will be certified, or regarding the time it may take to process a proposed SDP Partner certification. Contractors may direct partners to the SDO's homepage, www.mass.gov/sdo and the [Certification Self-Assessment Tool](#) for guidance on applying for certification.

It is **desirable** for Bidders to provide a description of supplier diversity businesses practices. Specifically, listing contact information for the individual or unit responsible for establishing and maintaining supplier diversity relationships, and including a written policy for establishing and maintaining supplier diversity relationships.

It also is **desirable** for Bidders to use the SDP Plan Form to describe additional creative initiatives (if any) related to engaging, buying from, and/or collaborating with diverse businesses. Such initiatives may include but not be limited to:

- Serving as a mentor in a mentor-protégé relationship.
- Technical and financial assistance provided to diverse businesses.
- Participation in joint ventures between nondiverse and diverse businesses.
- Voluntary assistance programs by which nondiverse business employees are loaned to diverse businesses or by which diverse business employees are taken into viable business ventures to acquire training and experience in managing business affairs.

Evaluation of SDP Forms. To encourage Bidders to develop substantial supplier diversity initiatives and commitments as measures valuable to the Commonwealth, at least 25% of the total available evaluation points for this bid solicitation shall be allocated to the evaluation of the SDP Plan submissions. Because the purpose of the SDP is to promote business-to-business partnerships, the Bidders' workforce diversity initiatives will not be considered in the evaluation.

SDP Spending Reports. After contract award, Contractors must submit reports at least annually to demonstrate compliance with the agreed-upon SDP Commitment. To submit SDP spending reports using the Hub, Contractors must first create a profile in the Hub. Once registered, awarded contractors must report information such as, but not limited to, SDO or SDO-recognized SDP partner(s), spend with SDO partner(s), and total contract sales. Contractors must follow report submission instructions from the issuing department and the SDO.

SDP Spending Compliance. Only spending with SDP Partners that appear in the [SDO Directory of Certified Businesses](#) or in the [SBA Veteran Small Business Certification \(VetCert\)](#) directory shall be counted toward a Contractor's compliance with their SDP Commitment. Spending with SDP Partners that do not appear in the directories above shall not be counted toward meeting a Contractor's SDP Commitment.

It is the responsibility of the Contractor to ensure they meet their SDP Commitment, and the SDO and the issuing department assume no responsibility for any Contractor's failure to meet its SDP Commitment.

SDP Spending Verification. The SDO and the contracting department reserve the right to contact SDP Partners at any time to request that they attest to the amounts reported to have been paid to them by the Contractor.

Program Resources and Assistance. Contractors seeking assistance in the development of their SDP Plans or identification of potential SDP Partners may visit the SDP webpage, www.mass.gov/sdp, or contact the SDP Help Desk at sdp@mass.gov.

8. Agricultural Products Preference (only applicable if this is a procurement for Agricultural Products). Chapter 123 of the Acts of 2006 directs the State Purchasing Agent to grant a preference to products of agriculture grown or produced using locally grown products. Such locally grown or produced products shall be purchased unless the price of the goods exceeds the price of products of agriculture from outside the Commonwealth by more than 10%. For purposes of this preference, products of agriculture are defined to include any agricultural, aquacultural, floricultural, or horticultural commodities; the growing and harvesting of forest products; the raising of livestock, including horses; raising of domesticated animals, bees, and/or fur-bearing animals; and any forestry or lumbering operations.

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9. Best Value Selection and Negotiation. The Strategic Sourcing Services Team or SSST may select the response(s) which demonstrates the best value overall, including proposed alternatives that will achieve the procurement goals of the department. The SSST and a selected bidder, or a contractor, may negotiate a change in any element of contract performance or cost identified in the original RFR or the selected bidder's or contractor's response which results in lower costs or a more cost effective or better value than was presented in the selected bidder's or contractor's original response.

10. Bidder Communication. Bidders are prohibited from communicating directly with any employee of the procuring department or any member of the SSST regarding this RFR except as specified in this RFR, and no other individual Commonwealth employee or representative is authorized to provide any information or respond to any question or inquiry concerning this RFR. Bidders may contact the contact person for this RFR in the event this RFR is incomplete or the bidder is having trouble obtaining any required attachments electronically through COMMBUYS.

11. Contract Expansion. If additional funds become available during the contract duration period, the department reserves the right to increase the maximum obligation to some or all contracts executed as a result of this RFR or to execute contracts with contractors not funded in the initial selection process, subject to available funding, satisfactory contract performance and service or commodity need.

12. Costs. Costs which are not specifically identified in the bidder's response and accepted by a department as part of a contract will not be compensated under any contract awarded pursuant to this RFR. The Commonwealth will not be responsible for any costs or expenses incurred by bidders responding to this RFR.

13. Electronic Communication/Update of Bidder's/Contractor's Contact Information. It is the responsibility of the prospective bidder and awarded contractor to keep current on COMMBUYS the email address of the bidder's contact person and prospective contract manager, if awarded a contract, and to monitor that email inbox for communications from the SSST, including requests for clarification. The SSST and the Commonwealth assume no responsibility if a prospective bidder's/awarded contractor's designated email address is not current, or if technical problems, including those with the prospective bidder's/awarded contractor's computer, network, or internet service provider (ISP) cause email communications sent to/from the prospective bidder/awarded contractor and the SSST to be lost or rejected by any means including email or spam filtering.

14. Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT). All bidders responding to this RFR must agree to participate in the Commonwealth Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) program for receiving payments, unless the bidder is able to provide compelling proof that it would be unduly burdensome. EFT is a benefit to both contractors and the Commonwealth because it ensures fast, safe, and reliable payment directly to contractors and saves both parties the cost of processing checks. Contractors may track and verify payments made electronically through the Comptroller's [Vendor Web system](#). A link to the EFT application may be found on the [OSD Forms](#) page (www.mass.gov/lists/osd-forms). Additional information about EFT is available on the [VendorWeb](#) site (www.mass.gov/osc). Click on MASSfinance.

Successful bidders, upon notification of contract award, will be required to enroll in EFT as a contract requirement by completing and submitting the *Authorization for Electronic Funds Payment Form* to this department for review, approval, and forwarding to the Office of the Comptroller. If the bidder already is enrolled in the program, it may so indicate in its response. Because the *Authorization for Electronic Funds Payment Form* contains banking information, this form, and all information contained on this form, shall not be considered a public record and shall not be subject to public disclosure through a public records request.

The requirement to use EFT may be waived by the SSST on a case-by-case basis if participation in the program would be unduly burdensome on the bidder. If a bidder is claiming that this requirement is a hardship or unduly burdensome, the specific reason must be documented in its response. The SSST will consider such requests on a case-by-case basis and communicate the findings to the bidder.

15. Executive Order 509, Establishing Nutrition Standards for Food Purchased and Served by State Agencies. Food purchased and served by state agencies must be in compliance with Executive Order 509, issued in January 2009. Under this Executive Order, all contracts resulting from procurements posted after July 1, 2009, that involve the purchase and provision of food must comply with nutrition guidelines established by the Department of Public Health (DPH). The nutrition guidelines are available at the Department's website: [Tools and Resources for Implementation of Executive Order 509](#).

16. HIPAA: Business Associate Contractual Obligations. Bidders are notified that any department meeting the definition of a Covered Entity under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) will

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include in the RFR and resulting contract sufficient language establishing the successful bidder's contractual obligations, if any, that the department will require in order for the department to comply with HIPAA and the privacy and security regulations promulgated thereunder (45 CFR Parts 160, 162, and 164) (the Privacy and Security Rules). For example, if the department determines that the successful bidder is a business associate performing functions or activities involving protected health information, as such terms are used in the Privacy and Security Rules, then the department will include in the RFR and resulting contract a sufficient description of business associate's contractual obligations regarding the privacy and security of the protected health information, as listed in 45 CFR 164.314 and 164.504 (e), including, but not limited to, the bidder's obligation to: implement administrative, physical, and technical safeguards that reasonably and appropriately protect the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of the protected health information (in whatever form it is maintained or used, including verbal communications); provide individuals access to their records; and strictly limit use and disclosure of the protected health information for only those purposes approved by the department. Further, the department reserves the right to add any requirement during the course of the contract that it determines it must include in the contract in order for the department to comply with the Privacy and Security Rules. Please see other sections of the RFR for any further HIPAA details, if applicable.

17. Minimum Quote (Bid Response) Duration. Bidders Quotes made in response to this Bid must remain in effect for at least 90 days from the date of quote submission.

18. Prompt Payment Discounts (PPD). All bidders responding to this procurement must agree to offer discounts through participation in the Commonwealth's Prompt Payment Discount (PPD) initiative for receiving early and/or on-time payments, unless the bidder provides compelling proof that it would be unduly burdensome. PPD benefits both contractors and the Commonwealth. Contractors benefit by increased, usable cash flow as a result of fast and efficient payments for commodities or services rendered. Participation in the Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) initiative further maximizes the benefits with payments directed to designated accounts, thus eliminating the impact of check clearance policies and traditional mail lead time or delays. The Commonwealth benefits because contractors reduce the cost of products and services through the applied discount. Payments that are processed electronically may be tracked and verified through the Comptroller's Vendor Web system. The PPD form may be found as an attachment for this Bid on [COMMBUYS](#).

Bidders must submit agreeable terms for Prompt Payment Discount using the PPD form within their proposal, unless otherwise specified by the SSST. The SSST will review, negotiate, or reject the offering as deemed in the best interest of the Commonwealth.

The requirement to use PPD offerings may be waived by the SSST on a case-by-case basis if participation in the program would be unduly burdensome on the bidder. If a bidder is claiming that this requirement is a hardship or unduly burdensome, the specific reason must be documented in or attached to the PPD form.

19. Public Records. All responses and information submitted in response to this RFR are subject to the Massachusetts Public Records Law, M.G.L., c. 66, s. 10, and to c. 4, s. 7, ss. 26. Any statements in submitted responses that are inconsistent with these statutes, including marking by bidders of information as confidential during the quote submission process in COMMBUYS, shall be disregarded.

20. Reasonable Accommodation. Bidders with disabilities or hardships that seek reasonable accommodation, which may include the receipt of RFR information in an alternative format, must communicate such requests in writing to the contact person. Requests for accommodation will be addressed on a case by case basis. A bidder requesting accommodation must submit a written statement which describes the bidder's disability and the requested accommodation to the contact person for the RFR. The SSST reserves the right to reject unreasonable requests.

21. Restriction on the Use of the Commonwealth Seal. Bidders and contractors are not allowed to display the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Seal in their bid package or subsequent marketing materials if they are awarded a contract because use of the coat of arms and the Great Seal of the Commonwealth for advertising or commercial purposes is prohibited by law.

22. Subcontracting Policies. Prior approval of the department is required for any subcontracted service of the contract. Contractors are responsible for the satisfactory performance and adequate oversight of its subcontractors. Human and social service subcontractors are also required to meet the same state and federal financial and program reporting requirements and are held to the same reimbursable cost standards as contractors.

23. Acceptable Forms of Signature

Effective June 15, 2021, for all 1) CTR forms, including the Standard Contract Form, W-9s, Electronic Funds Transfer

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(EFT) forms, ISAs, and other CTR-issued documents and forms, or 2) documents related to state finance and within the statutory area of authority or control of CTR (i.e. contracts, payrolls, and related supporting documentation), CTR will accept signatures executed by an authorized signatory in any of the following ways: 1. Traditional “wet signature” (ink on paper); 2. Electronic signature that is either: a. Hand drawn using a mouse or finger if working from a touch screen device; or Page 2 b. An uploaded picture of the signatory’s hand drawn signature 3. Electronic signatures affixed using a digital tool such as Adobe Sign or DocuSign. If using an electronic signature, the signature must be visible, include the signatory’s name and title, and must be accompanied by a signature date. Please be advised that typed text of a name not generated by a digital tool such as Adobe Sign or DocuSign, even in computer-generated cursive script, or an electronic symbol, are not acceptable forms of electronic signature.

Federal State Marketing Improvement Program

Outcomes and Indicators

The grant program outcomes and performance measures outlined below reflect direct stakeholder feedback and provide a framework that allows grant recipients to evaluate project activities more accurately in relation to each program's statutory purpose.

For recipients, the measures are:

- More feasible to accomplish and measure within a grant's period of performance;
- Better aligned with grant program purpose and recipient activities; and
- More reflective of work performed during the project.

These performance measures will go into effect beginning with the FY2023 grant application cycle.

Outcome 1: Increase Access to Expand Production and Distribution

- 1.1** Number of stakeholders that gained technical knowledge about producing, preparing, procuring, more efficient and effective distribution systems and/or accessing products ____.
- 1.2** Number of stakeholders that reported producing, preparing, procuring, distributing and/or accessing more products ____.
- 1.3** Number of stakeholders that adopted best practices or new technologies to improve production/distribution systems ____.
- 1.4** Total number of partnerships established between producers, distributors, and/or other relevant intermediaries related to improving distribution systems ____.
- 1.5** Total number of new/improved production/distribution systems developed _____. Of those, the number that:
 - 1.5a** Stemmed from new partnerships ____.
 - 1.5b** Increased efficiency ____.
 - 1.5c** Reduced costs, increased grower participation ____.
 - 1.5d** Expanded customer reach ____.
 - 1.5e** Increased online presence ____.
- 1.6** Total number of new individuals who went into production/distribution _____. Of those, the number who are:
 - 1.6a** beginning farmers or ranchers ____.
 - 1.6b** socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers ____.
 - 1.6c** Number of related jobs created and maintained ____.
- 1.7** Number of producers/distributors that reported increased revenue, sales, and/or cost savings ____.
- 1.8** Number of producers/distributors who increased production to meet increased demand ____.

Outcome 2: Increase Viability of Food Processors

- 2.1 Number of processors who gained knowledge about new market opportunities ____.
 - 2.1a Number of processors that implemented new or improved operational methods ____.
- 2.2 Number of processors that reported increased engagement with new delivery systems or market access points ____.
- 2.3 Number of processors that reported selling new local/regional food products ____.
 - 2.3a Number that reported selling new value-added products ____.
- 2.4 Number of processors that reported a reduction in on-farm food waste through new business opportunities ____.
- 2.5 Total number of new producers who went into local/regional food production _____. Of those, the number who are:
 - 2.5a Beginning farmers/ranchers _____.
 - 2.5b Socially disadvantaged farmers/ranchers _____.
 - 2.5c Family farmers/ranchers _____.
 - 2.5d Veteran farmers/ranchers _____.

Outcome 3: Promote Business Development that Diversifies Income Through Processing Innovations

- 3.1 Number of businesses that gained knowledge about product processing development or business improvement methods ____.
- 3.2 Number of businesses that implemented new or modified processing methods ____.
- 3.3 Number of businesses that expanded their existing product line and number of businesses that began processing new products ____.
- 3.4 Number of products created or enhanced, and number of related jobs created or maintained ____.

Outcome 4: Enhance the Competitiveness of Marketing through more Sustainable, Diverse, and Resilient Systems Indicators

- 4.1 Number of new or improved innovation models (biological, economic, business, management, etc.), technologies, networks, products, processes, etc. developed for entities including producers, processors, distributors, etc. ____.
- 4.2 Number of delivery systems/market access points that reported increased or improved processing, distribution and storage ____.
- 4.3 Number of those that aggregate locally or regionally produced agricultural products ____.
- 4.4 Number of delivery systems/market access points that reported increased revenue, sales, and/or cost savings ____.

Outcome 5: Expand Product Development and Market Research

5.1 Number of expanded markets that increased sales and processing opportunities ____.

5.2 Number of methods and designs used for products ____.

5.3 Number of new and innovative end-uses for products ____.

Outcome 6: Develop New Market Opportunities for Regional Producers/Processors

6.1 Number of collaborators established between producers and processors and market access points ____.

6.1a Of those, the number formalized with written agreements (i.e., MOU's, signed contracts, etc.) ____.

6.1b Of those, the number with and/or between underserved organizations ____.

6.1c Of those, the number that reported high profits, increased access to institutional consumers and other mid-tier value chain enhancements (such as improved capacity to transport products to market) ____.

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CONTACT INFORMATION

Applicant/Organization Name:
Contact First and Last Name:
Legal Mailing Address:
Project Site Address:
County:
Contact Phone Number:
Contact Email Address:
Unique Entity ID (UEI):

Project Title (no more than 10 words):

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE QUESTIONNAIRE

For the purposes of this RFR, “Environmental Justice” is based on the principle that all people have a right to be protected from environmental hazards and to live in and enjoy a clean and healthful environment regardless of race, color, national origin, income, or English language proficiency. Environmental justice is the equal protection and meaningful involvement of all people and communities with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of energy, climate change, and environmental laws, regulations, and policies and the equitable distribution of energy and environmental benefits and burdens.

While encouraged, the following questions are voluntary and will not impact eligibility. Answers to these questions help MDAR track progress towards the goals set forth in the [2021 Environmental Justice Policy](#), and [the 2022 Environmental Justice Strategy](#), which require MDAR to a) report the amount of public funds used in Environmental Justice Communities, and b) track the number of new applicants for grant programs from Environmental Justice Communities and BIPOC Farmers. More information can be found in below. MDAR encourages stakeholders to provide feedback on the Environmental Justice Policy and Strategy, by visiting mass.gov/environmental-justice.

Answers to the following questions are optional. This information will not in any way affect your eligibility for MDAR programs and is used for statistical purposes only.

1. Has the applicant applied for MDAR Funding Programs before this current application?
 Yes No I don't know
2. Has the applicant received funding from any MDAR Funding Programs?
 Yes No I don't know

Questions 3-5 are for Farmer or Individual Applicants:

3. Select one or more of the racial categories below:
 American Indian/Alaska Native/Indigenous Middle Eastern or North African
 Asian/South Asian Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 Black or African American White

Other:

Please state with understanding that the races above may not be reflective of everyone.

4. Select one or more of the ethnic categories below:
Answers to the following questions are optional. This information will not in any way affect your eligibility for MDAR programs and is used for statistical purposes only.

Not Hispanic or Latino Hispanic or Latino

Other:

Please state with understanding that the races above may not be reflective of everyone.

5. Is the applicant a Historically Underserved Farmer? Please check any of the following categories that apply based on these USDA definitions: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/getting-assistance/underserved-farmers-ranchers>

Please check any of the following categories that apply based on [these USDA definitions](#).

Limited Resource Farmer

(With direct or indirect gross farm sales not more than the current indexed value in each of the previous two years, and who has a total household income at or below the national poverty level for a family of four, or less than 50 percent of county median household income in each of the previous two years. A [Self-Determination Tool](#) is available to the public and may be completed online.)

Socially Disadvantaged Farmer

(Individual or entity who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group. A socially disadvantaged group is a group whose members have been subject to racial or ethnic prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities.)

Beginning Farmer

(Has not operated a farm or ranch, or who has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 consecutive years)

Veteran Farmer

(Serves 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 not more than 10 years; or Who first obtained status as a veteran during the most recent 10-year period.)

N/A

Question 6 is for Organization/Collective-Applicants

6. For organizations, regardless of formal legal status, or other collective applicants – does the majority of your board membership, majority owner (or owners), majority of your leadership team, fall into one or more of these groups? MDAR has adapted USDA’s definition of [Historically Underserved Farmers and Ranchers](#) to allow organizations or entities representing multiple applicants to respond.

Limited Resource Farmer, Low-income Individuals, or Individuals with Lived Experience Relevant to the Organization’s Mission

Socially Disadvantaged Groups (American Indian/Alaska Native/Indigenous, Asian/South Asian, Black or African American, Middle Eastern or North African, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islands, Hispanic or Latino) Other: _____

Please state with understanding that the races and ethnicities above may not be reflective of everyone

Beginning Farmers

Veteran Farmers

N/A

If you feel that this application did not allow you to fully explain the diversity of the applicant for this grant (whether you are applying as an individual or on behalf of an entity), please explain here:

If you have any input on these questions, please come [this feedback form](#). The review team will not see this information, and responses will not affect eligibility.

Attachment B

Environmental Justice Policy

For the purposes of this RFR, “Environmental Justice” is based on the principle that all people have a right to be protected from environmental hazards and to live in and enjoy a clean and healthful environment regardless of race, color, national origin, income, or English language proficiency. Environmental justice is the equal protection and meaningful involvement of all people and communities with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of energy, climate change, and environmental laws, regulations, and policies and the equitable distribution of energy and environmental benefits and burdens.

While encouraged, the following questions are voluntary and will not impact eligibility. Answers to these questions help MDAR track progress towards the goals set forth in the [2021 Environmental Justice Policy](#), and the [2022 Environmental Justice Strategy](#), which require MDAR to a) report the amount of public funds used in Environmental Justice Communities, and b) track the number of new applicants for grant programs from Environmental Justice Communities and BIPOC Farmers. More information can be found in below. MDAR encourages stakeholders to provide feedback on the Environmental Justice Policy and Strategy, by visiting mass.gov/environmental-justice.

Environmental Justice Questions *Answers to the following questions are optional. This information will not in any way affect your eligibility for MDAR programs and is used for statistical purposes only.*

Has the applicant applied for MDAR funding programs before this current application?

Yes No I don't know

Has the applicant received funding from any MDAR funding programs?

Yes No I don't know

Questions for Farmer or Individual Applicants:

A. Select one or more of the racial categories below:

American Indian/Alaskan Native/Indigenous Black or African American Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander White
 Asian/South Asian Middle Eastern or North African Other: _____ Please state with the understanding that the races above may not be reflective of everyone.

B. Select one or more of the ethnic categories below:

Not Hispanic or Latino Hispanic or Latino Other: _____ Please state with the understanding that the races above may not be reflective of everyone.

C. Are any applicants a Historically Underserved Farmer? Please check any of the following categories that apply based on these USDA definitions:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/getting-assistance/underserved-farmers-ranchers>

Limited Resource Farmer (With direct or indirect gross farm sales not more than the current indexed value in each of the previous two years, and who has a total household income at or below the national poverty level for a family of four, or less than 50 percent of county median household income in each of the previous two years. A Self-Determination Tool is available to the public and may be completed on-line at: <https://lrftool.sc.egov.usda.gov/>)
 Socially Disadvantaged Farmer (Individual or entity who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group. A socially disadvantaged group is a group whose members have been subject to racial or ethnic prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities.)
 N/A
 Beginning Farmer (Has not operated a farm or ranch, or who has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 consecutive years)
 Veteran Farmer (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 not more than 10 years; or Who first obtained status as a veteran during the most recent 10-year period.)

Question for Organization/Collective-Applicants *For organizations, regardless of formal legal status, or other collective applicants – does the majority of your board membership, majority owner (or owners), majority of your leadership team, fall into one or more of these groups? MDAR has adapted USDA's definition of Historically Underserved Farmers and Ranchers to allow organizations or entities representing multiple applicants to respond.*

Limited Resource Farmer, Low-Income Individuals, or Individuals with Lived Experience Relevant to the Organization's Mission
 Beginning Farmers
 Veteran Farmers
 N/A
 Socially Disadvantaged Groups (American Indian/Alaska Native/Indigenous, Asian/South Asian, Black or African American, Middle Eastern or North African, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islands, Hispanic or Latino) **Other:** _____ Please state with understanding that the races and ethnicities above may not be reflective of everyone

If you feel that this application did not allow you to fully explain the diversity of the applicant for this grant (whether you are applying as an individual or on behalf of an entity), please explain here:

If you have any input on this form, please complete [this feedback form](#). The review team will not see this information, and responses will not affect eligibility

RFR - Further Information on MDAR's Environmental Justice Goals

Revision Date: February 23, 2024

MDAR strives to promote and integrate EJ considerations across their programs, policies, and activities to ensure the equal access and meaningful involvement of all people residing in the Commonwealth with respect to agricultural economic and environmental sustainability and the equitable development, implementation, and accessibility to information and resources.

Among the priorities and goals outlined in the [2021 Environmental Justice Policy](#), and the [2022 Environmental Justice Strategy](#), EEA agencies are tasked with ensuring that Environmental Justice neighborhoods benefit from positive impacts of environmental programs, grants and investments.

A. Environmental Justice Populations

EJ populations are those segments of the population that EEA has determined to be most at risk of being unaware of or unable to participate in environmental decision-making or to gain access to state environmental resources, or are especially vulnerable.

"Environmental Justice Population" is defined by the Environmental Justice Policy, issued by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs in 2017, and updated in June, 2021, as

- A. a neighborhood that meets 1 or more of the following criteria:
 - i) the annual median household income is not more than 65 per cent of the statewide annual median household income;
 - ii) minorities comprise 40 per cent or more of the population;
 - iii) 25 per cent or more of households lack English language proficiency; or
 - iv) minorities comprise 25 per cent or more of the population and the annual median household income of the municipality in which the neighborhood is located does not exceed 150 per cent of the statewide annual median household income; or
- B. a geographic portion of a neighborhood designated by the Secretary as an environmental justice population in accordance with law.

B. MA Environmental Justice Map Viewer

The [MA Environmental Justice Map Viewer](#) was designed to map Environmental Justice populations as census block groups in Massachusetts.

Please note - The data submitted in your application will be used to determine whether your project falls within an Environmental Justice block group, and will be used to design a map, available on the MDAR website, to show the positive impact of its grant awards, demonstrating the reach of its programs in EJ communities.

For more information on MDAR's Environmental Justice Program, or to provide feedback, please visit <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/mdars-environmental-justice-program>.