



Division of Agricultural Conservation & Technical Assistance

Farm Readiness Grant Program

Fiscal Year 2026

Contract Execution – June 30, 2026

Request for Responses (RFR)

RFR File: AGR-FarmReady-FY26

To fund installation-ready capital improvements that improve the reliability, efficiency, and operational readiness of Massachusetts farms.

Application Deadline

Responses must be received no later than
4:00 PM, Tuesday, March 17th, 2026.

Submission Instructions

All proposals must be submitted as listed in Section 4:
www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-the-farm-readiness-grant-program

Contact Information

Program Contact: Laura J. Maul
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Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources
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Lakeville, MA 02347

GRANT OPPORTUNITY – FARM READINESS

Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs
 Rebecca L. Tepper, Secretary
 RFR ID: AGR-FarmReady-FY26

Proposals Sought For	The Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (“MDAR” or the “Department”) invites Massachusetts agricultural operations to submit proposals for reimbursement grant funds to implement installation-ready capital improvements that strengthen and modernize core farm infrastructure and support the continued production, handling, and distribution of agricultural products.
Overview & Goals	The Massachusetts Farm Readiness Grant Program (“Program”) supports targeted capital investments that maintain and strengthen the Commonwealth’s agricultural infrastructure by funding durable, long-lived assets that improve operational reliability, safety, environmental performance, regulatory compliance, and operational efficiency within the existing footprint of the agricultural operation. The Program is limited to commercially available, installation-ready projects that do not require discretionary or complex permitting that would delay purchase or installation, do not involve new building construction or expansion of building footprint, and can be fully completed and invoiced by June 30, 2026.
Eligible Applicants	Eligible applicants are Massachusetts farmers who operate an agricultural business engaged in production agriculture that has been in continuous operation on the same property for a minimum of three (3) years prior to the date of application. (See Section 2A – Eligible Applicants)
Eligible Projects	Eligible projects must be installation-ready capital improvement investments that support the purchase, replacement, or upgrade of durable systems, infrastructure, or equipment and fall within one or more of the Program’s project areas: Energy Efficiency Retrofits; Monitoring & Precision Agriculture Equipment; Soil Health Equipment; Food Safety & Cold Storage Equipment; and Compost Equipment (equipment only). (See Section 2B – Eligible Projects)
Application Deadline	Applications must be received by 4:00 PM, Tuesday, March 17 th , 2026. (See Section 4 – Application Instructions)
Funding Availability	Applicants may submit one (1) application requesting up to \$50,000 per agricultural operation (as identified by a unique tax identification number). (See Section 3A – Funding Availability)
Match Requirement	Applicants are required to contribute a minimum 20% cash match. In-kind services, donations, other services, or other state grant funds are not eligible as matching funds. (See Section 3D – Match Requirement)
Duration of Contract	All awarded projects must be invoiced by June 30, 2026. No extensions will be granted. (See Section 5B – Duration of Contracts)
Contact Information	Laura Maul Email: Laura.Maul@mass.gov Phone: (857) 507-5972

DEFINITIONS

Agricultural Business: A business, cooperative, nonprofit, municipal, Tribal, or other entity engaged in the growing, raising, cultivating, harvesting, marketing, storing, processing, or distribution of agricultural, aquacultural, horticultural, or livestock products within the Commonwealth. Activities that constitute “farming” and “agriculture” are interpreted consistent with M.G.L. c. 128, § 1A. No commercial profit objective is required.

Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR): A permanent deed restriction held and funded by the Department that preserves land for agricultural use by prohibiting non-agricultural development and requiring continued agricultural use.

Applicant: An individual, business, municipality, Tribal government, nonprofit, or organization submitting a proposal to the Department. Where the Applicant does not own the property associated with a proposed project, the term includes any co-applicant landowner(s), as applicable.

Capital Improvement / Capital Project / Capital Expenditure: A non-recurring investment in land, buildings, infrastructure, systems, or durable equipment that improves, creates, or extends the capacity, safety, or efficiency of agricultural or food system operations and has an expected useful life of at least five (5) years. Capital improvements do not include routine operating costs, maintenance, consumables, repairs, or supplies. Land acquisition is not eligible unless expressly permitted by the Program.

Commercial Agricultural Business: A for-profit agricultural business engaged in the growing, raising, cultivating, harvesting, marketing, storing, processing, and distribution of agricultural, aquacultural, horticultural, or livestock products within the Commonwealth that is operated for revenue, deriving verifiable gross income from the sale of agricultural products produced by the business. Agricultural activities are interpreted consistent with M.G.L. c. 128, § 1A

Department: The Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR).

Durable Equipment: Equipment with an expected useful life of at least five (5) years that contributes directly to production, processing, storage, distribution, or food access functions.

Eligible Expenditures: Project costs that meet the definition of a Capital Improvement, are directly tied to the Department-approved Scope of Services and Budget, and are incurred and paid within the active contract period.

Farmer / Farm Operator: An individual who owns or exercises legal authority to make operational decisions for an agricultural business or commercial agricultural business engaged in activities defined in M.G.L. c. 128, § 1A.

Grantee: An individual or organization that has been awarded financial assistance under the Program that will enter into a contract with MDAR in order to receive funding.

Gross Income: The total revenue earned by a business or organization from the sale of goods or services before deducting expenses such as labor, materials, overhead, taxes, or any other operating costs.

Gross Sales: Total annual revenue generated from the sale of agricultural products intended for human or animal consumption before any expenses or deductions are taken.

Legal Site Control: The documented right to use property through ownership, recorded deed, lease, license, or other legally binding agreement that expressly authorizes the proposed project activities for the full contract duration and any applicable retention or covenant periods. Site control must authorize construction, installation, and use of infrastructure or equipment funded under the Program.

Match / Cash Match: The portion of eligible project costs paid by the Applicant in cash, not funded by the Department and not sourced from other state or federal grants. In-kind contributions, owner labor, donated materials, or other non-cash resources do not qualify as match unless expressly permitted by the Program.

Production Agriculture: Farming as defined by M.G.L. c. 128, Section 1A that focuses on agricultural production that will ultimately be sold in the retail market and not for subsistence purposes.

Project / Project Scope: The capital improvements and associated activities approved by the Department under the Program.

Scope of Services (Scope & Budget): The contract document that defines allowable activities, deliverables, expenditures, infrastructure and equipment, budget, and timeline under the Program.

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Program is to support targeted capital improvements that maintain and strengthen the Commonwealth's agricultural infrastructure. The Program provides funding for durable, long-lived capital investments that address critical operational needs on Massachusetts farms, reduce the risk of infrastructure failure, and support the continued production, handling, and distribution of agricultural products.

Funded projects must result in capital assets that improve the reliability, safety, environmental performance, regulatory compliance, or operational efficiency within the existing footprint of the agricultural operation. By investing in core farm infrastructure, including mechanical, electrical, climate control, food handling, soil health, and monitoring systems, the Program advances public benefits related to food system continuity, environmental protection, worker safety, resource efficiency, and the preservation of working agricultural lands across the Commonwealth.

The Program is specifically designed to support installation-ready projects that:

- Do not require discretionary or complex local, state, or federal permitting that would delay purchase or installation;
- Do not involve new building construction or expansion of building footprint; and
- Can be fully completed and invoiced by June 30, 2026.

The Program is limited to projects that are commercially available, installation-ready, and capable of rapid deployment. It is intended to address deferred or unmet capital needs that can be implemented on an accelerated timeline and is distinct from other MDAR programs.

2. ELIGIBILITY

A. Applicants

A1. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are Massachusetts farmers who operate an agricultural business engaged in production agriculture that has been in continuous operation on the same property for a minimum of three (3) years prior to the date of application.

A2. Ineligible Applicants

The following are not eligible to participate in this Program:

- Applicants not actively engaged in commercial agricultural production in Massachusetts.
- Applicants that have not been in continuous agricultural operation on the project property for at least three (3) years prior to the date of application.
- Applicants that cannot demonstrate legal site control for the project location for a minimum of three (3) years from the date of application.
- Applicants not in compliance with applicable federal, state, or local laws at the time of application.
- Applicants with unresolved Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) compliance issues or who cannot obtain required APR approvals prior to award, as determined by MDAR.
- Applicants proposing marijuana-related projects.

A3. Size of Operation

There is no minimum acreage requirement or gross income requirements.

A4. Property Ownership or Lease

If the proposed project is on a property not owned by the applicant, a lease agreement must demonstrate a long-term, legal right to use the property by the applicant. This typically means a lease agreement for not less than five (5) years from the date a response is submitted. The proposed project must also be allowed under the terms of the lease agreement. MDAR may request a copy of the lease agreement as part of its review.

A5. Previous Applicants

Proposals from individuals or organizations that have previously received funding under Department funding programs are eligible to apply for funding.

A6. Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Properties

Before applying to the program, APR landowners should consult with the APR Program to determine if there are any requirements applicable to the proposed project under the terms of their APR. APR applicants must obtain, or be in the advanced stages of receiving, all required approvals under their APR and must be in compliance with the terms of the APR or resolve any outstanding compliance or legal issues with the Department prior to submitting their proposal.

A7. Produce Farm Registration

All responses and information submitted in response to this RFR from produce operations are subject to registration under the Produce Safety and Market Access regulation promulgated at 330 CMR 34.03, regardless of whether the farm is a Covered Farm or a Non-Covered Farm, as defined in the regulation. Registration will be a condition of funding in any contract. For more information on the Department's Produce Safety Program, please refer the [Produce Safety Program](#).

A8. Environmental Justice

For the purposes of this RFR, "Environmental Justice" includes the equal protection and meaningful involvement of all people and communities in the development, implementation, and enforcement of energy, climate change, and environmental laws, regulations, and policies, as well as the equitable distribution of environmental and energy benefits and burdens. MDAR is committed to Environmental Justice and, in doing so, we are working to ensure communities across the state have the capacity to advance environmental, energy, and food justice, engage in meaningful ways, and help shape policies and programs with equity at the center. Through our programs and services, we aim to support applicants working directly with communities most impacted by environmental, energy, and food injustice, and the disproportionate impacts of climate change.

For more information, please refer to [EEA's Environmental Justice Program Webpage](#).

A9. Legal Compliance

Eligible Applicants must be able to demonstrate compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local requirements, including but not limited to, statutes, regulations, bylaws, and ordinances in effect at the time of application and throughout the duration of the project. Eligible Applicants will be responsible for obtaining and complying with any applicable license, permit, or other approval required by law for any project. The Department may request proof of licensure, permitting, or other permission required by law as part of the RFR process.

All records provided to the Department under this RFR shall be subject to the Massachusetts Public Records Law, M.G.L. c. 66, Section 10 and may be subject to disclosure unless otherwise exempt in accordance with M.G.L. c. 4, Section 7(26).

B. Projects

B1. Eligible Project Types/Areas

Eligible projects must be installation-ready capital improvement investments that strengthen and modernize core farm infrastructure. Projects must support the purchase, replacement, or upgrade of durable systems, infrastructure, or equipment that improve operational reliability, safety, environmental performance, food handling capacity, soil health, energy efficiency, or resource management on active Massachusetts farms.. Funded projects must result in the installation or replacement of a durable capital asset with an expected useful life consistent with state capital investment standards and are intended to address deferred or unmet infrastructure needs that support the continued production, handling, and distribution of agricultural products.

Project Area	Description	Examples
Energy Efficiency Retrofits	Installation-ready upgrades to existing agricultural buildings or systems that improve energy efficiency without requiring structural redesign, new construction, or permitting. Projects must involve commercially available equipment and interior or in-place retrofits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LED lighting upgrades • Variable frequency drives (VFDs) • Insulation retrofits • High-efficiency fans • Plate coolers (dairy) • Heat recovery units (packaged systems) • Greenhouse thermal curtains • Door seals, strip curtains, and weatherization improvements
Monitoring & Precision Agriculture Equipment	Commercially available monitoring, data, and precision tools that improve operational efficiency, environmental performance, irrigation management, or climate adaptation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weather stations • Soil moisture sensors • GPS guidance systems • Auto-steer systems • Irrigation controllers
Soil Health Equipment	Standard dealer-available equipment that supports conservation practices, soil health improvement, reduced tillage, and nutrient management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No-till drills (in-stock) • Interseeders • Roller crimpers • Mulchers • Compost spreaders • Pasture aerators • Portable or non-permanent shading systems
Food Safety & Cold Storage Equipment	Installation-ready equipment and upgrades that enhance on-farm food safety, handling, and cold storage capacity and do not require new construction, expansion of building footprint, or discretionary local, state, or federal permitting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walk-in coolers • Refrigeration system upgrades • Stainless wash/pack equipment • Food-grade harvest bins • Ice machines • Modular packing lines
Compost Equipment	Available equipment that improves on-farm compost management without site construction or permitting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compost turners (small or tractor-pulled models) • Compost screeners (portable) • Aeration blowers (above-ground systems) • Compost temperature monitoring systems • Reusable, multi-season windrow covers • Compost moisture monitoring systems

B2. Eligible Expenditures

Eligible expenditures are limited to capital costs associated with the purchase, replacement, or upgrade of durable equipment, systems, and related installation services that strengthen and modernize core farm infrastructure. Funding may be used only for costs that result in a long-term, tangible improvement to the agricultural operation and are completed within the contract period.

B3. Ineligible Expenditures

Operational Costs

- Routine operating expenses, including but not limited to fuel, seed, feed, chemicals, and utilities.
- Salaries, wages, management costs, administrative fees, or project oversight expenses.
- Labor performed by the agricultural operation in completing the proposed project.
- Proposals for establishing a new organization or business.

Maintenance and Non-Capital Equipment

- Routine maintenance, repairs, or replacement-in-kind that do not constitute a capital improvement.
- Short-term, consumable, or non-durable equipment or materials.
- Used equipment or materials.
- Disposable or short-life materials

Construction and Site Work

- Earthwork, grading, drainage installation, or concrete work.
- Structural redesign or engineered site modifications.
- New building construction or expansion of building footprint.
- Projects requiring discretionary permitting, zoning relief, or regulatory approvals.

Non-Agricultural or Non-Production Costs

- Infrastructure not directly related to agricultural production.
- Marketing, advertising, promotional materials, or events.
- Planning, feasibility studies, audits, or pre-development costs.
- Subscription-based software or recurring service fees.
- Extended warranties.
- Office equipment, furniture, computers, or other equipment not directly related to agricultural production.
- Vehicles, including trucks, cars, boats, utility carts, and ATVs.

Financial and Legal Costs

- Interest payments, financing fees, or other loan-related expenses.
- Land acquisition or lease payments.
- Permit fees (if required) are not reimbursable.
- Legal fees.
- Costs for work initiated or completed prior to contract execution with the Department.

Eligibility and Compliance

- Marijuana-related projects.
- Projects submitted by applicants not in compliance with applicable laws, regulations, or Program eligibility requirements at the time of application or during the award period.

Specific Ineligible Project Types

- Tile drainage systems.
- Drones, including for spraying or seeding.
- Composting toilets or septic systems.
- Food safety proposals focused on value-added production activities.
- Large-scale compost handling equipment, including tractors, front-end loaders, or similar heavy equipment primarily used for compost handling.

3. FUNDING & BUDGET GUIDELINES

3A. Funding Availability / Maximum Funding

Applicants may submit one (1) application per fiscal year requesting up to \$50,000. Awards are limited to one (1) award per agricultural operation, as identified by a unique tax identification number. A single application may include multiple eligible projects, provided the total request does not exceed \$50,000.

Applicants may not submit multiple applications under different business names or legal entities for the same agricultural operation for the purpose of exceeding the maximum funding limit. The Department reserves the right to award an amount different from that requested.

3B. Budget Guidelines & Grant Levels

Applicants must submit a complete project budget that does not exceed the maximum award amount of \$50,000.

3C. Appropriation

All contracts shall be subject to available funding, whether through the appropriation and authorization of sufficient funds or the receipt of sufficient revenues. If available funding ceases for any reason, a contract shall be deemed under suspension and contract performance must halt. A contractor will not be entitled to compensation for any performance provided during the period of contract suspension. The Department may lift the suspension if available funding is received. In the absence of foreseeable available funding, the Department may terminate the contract.

3D. Match Requirement

Applicants are required to contribute a minimum of a 20% cash-match. In-kind services, donations, or other services, or other state grant funds are not eligible as matching funds.

3E. Multiple Program Applications

Applicants may submit proposals to more than one Department grant program within the same fiscal year; however, the Department will not issue funding from multiple programs for the same or substantially similar project activities. If an applicant applies to multiple department programs for the same project, the Department reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to determine under which program, if any, the project will be funded. The Department's determination shall be final and binding. Applicants are encouraged to review all program eligibility requirements and apply under the program that most closely aligns with their proposed project scope and objectives.

4. APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS & EVALUATION

4A. Application Submission Instructions

Applicants must complete and submit all required materials as outlined below. Incomplete or late applications will not be considered.

Submission Deadline:

Applications must be **received by 4:00 PM, Tuesday, March 17th, 2026**. Late submissions, including those delayed by technical issues, will not be accepted.

Submission Options:

Applicants may submit their completed applications through the online submission as specified below. Applicants are responsible for ensuring timely receipt of their submission. This RFR does not allow for the submission of hard copy or emails of the application.

Option 1 – Online Submission

An application form **must** be completed in its entirety. Applications must be submitted through the online application available at: www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-the-farm-readiness-grant-program

Important Notes

- Applicants are strongly encouraged to retain a copy of their entire submission.
- All applicants/Bidders are advised to allow adequate time for submission of their proposal by considering delays online impediments like Internet traffic, internet connection speed, file size, and file volume.
- The Department is not responsible for delays encountered by Bidders or their agents, or for a Bidder's local hardware failures, such as computers or related networks, associated with bid compilation or submission.

4B. Supporting Documentation

Document / Requirement	Description or Instructions
Budget	Required. Template is provided (Attachment B). Must include all project costs, the 20% cash match, and the total amount requested. The budget must be complete, accurate, and consistent with submitted quotes. Failure to provide a budget will result in the application being ineligible.
Quotes	Required. At least one quote for each budgeted expenditure. Quotes must be from qualified vendors and reflect current, itemized pricing for commercially available, installation-ready equipment or services.
Lease Agreement	Optional. Must demonstrate legal site control for a minimum of five years from the date of application and authorize the proposed project.
Balance of Funding	Optional. Documentation demonstrating the ability to pay project costs upfront, such as recent bank statement, line of credit letter, financing approval, or other non-state funding commitment.
Maps	Optional. Image showing property boundaries and the specific location where the equipment or retrofit will be installed. Helps confirm feasibility and installation readiness.

4C. Additional Contract Documentation

If selected, the applicant will be required to fill out and submit the following forms to complete the contract:

- Commonwealth Standard Contract Form with Commonwealth Terms & Conditions
- Commonwealth W-9 tax information form
- Completed Contractor Authorized Signature Verification Form
- Completed Electronic Funds Transfer Form

These forms do not need to be completed as part of the response. Assistance to complete these forms will be provided to Respondents selected to participate in the Program. These forms are available for review at www.mass.gov/osd or by request.

4D. Review Process / Evaluation Timeline

The Department cannot assist in the preparation of grant applications. In order to maintain integrity of the competitive grant process, the Department is unable to advise and/or provide individuals with any information regarding specific applications during the solicitation process.

There will be two steps of review following the grant application period.

Step I: An initial review to evaluate eligibility and completeness to determine if all required information is provided. The application will then be reviewed, and a point score will be given based on the criteria listed in Evaluation Criteria, Section 4E.

Step II: All projects which are favorably reviewed in Step I may require a field visit prior to final award determinations being made. A favorable initial evaluation and field visit DOES NOT guarantee funding for a proposed project. The purposes of the field visit are as follows:

- To verify the information presented in the proposal;
- To view the agricultural operation and assess the project request;
- To verify the operation is engaged in commercial agriculture;
- To determine the appropriateness of the practice proposed for the farm;
- To confirm the ability to implement and maintain the practice;
- To explore other items deemed necessary; and
- To develop a basis for future 'before and after' comparisons.

Department staff may modify the scope of the proposed project to more effectively achieve program goals. The Department may request additional project information.

Final recommendations will be conveyed to the Commissioner of Agricultural Resources and the Secretary of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs for final decisions. All acceptances shall be conditional upon the availability of funding. Once the review period has ended and award decisions are finalized, applicants will be notified via the primary email address listed on the application if they were selected for funding or not.

4E. Evaluation Criteria

Each eligible response will be reviewed and receive a point score based on the assigned values to Very Good, Good, Fair, Poor, and No Evidence as defined.

Very Good - The application is specified and comprehensive. There is complete, detailed, and clearly articulated information as to how the criteria are met. The ideas presented are innovative, well-conceived, and thoroughly developed.

Good - The application is reasonably comprehensive and includes sufficient detail. It contains many of the characteristics of a response that is very good even though it may require additional specificity, support, or elaboration in places.

Fair - The application is non-specific, and lacks focus and detail. The response addresses some of the selection criteria, but not all. Some ideas presented are sound, but others are not responsive to the purpose of the grant. Additional information is needed in order to be reasonably comprehensive and meet the criteria of a response that is good.

Poor - The application does not meet many criteria; provides inaccurate information or provides information that requires substantial clarification as to how the criteria are met; lacks meaningful detail; demonstrates lack of preparation; or otherwise raises substantial concerns about the applicant's understanding of the issue in concept and/or ability to meet the requirement in practice.

No Evidence - The application does not address the criteria or simply re-states the criteria.

Proposals will be evaluated based on the criteria listed below. The evaluation will assess the proposal's alignment with program goals, feasibility, budget, and anticipated outcomes.

1. Applicant Information & Operation Details – 10%

Overview of the Business: The extent to which the applicant provides sufficient context about their farm or agricultural operation, including the scale and type of production, and demonstrates active commercial agricultural activity in Massachusetts.

Operational Capacity: The extent to which the applicant demonstrates the capacity to complete the project within the accelerated timeline, including prior experience managing projects or grant funding, where applicable.

2. Project Details & Immediate Impact – 30%

Project Description: The extent to which the project is clearly defined and installation-ready. The application should clearly identify the equipment or retrofit being purchased and the operational issue being addressed.

Project Goals: The clarity and specificity of the short-term objectives of the project, particularly how it will improve operational efficiency, environmental performance, food safety, soil health, composting capacity, or energy efficiency.

Impacts: The anticipated short-term outcomes of the project, focusing on practical and measurable operational improvements expected upon completion.

3. Feasibility & Installation Readiness – 35%

Timeline: A clear and achievable timeline demonstrating that the project can be fully completed and invoiced by June 30, 2026.

Project Implementation: The extent to which the project involves commercially available equipment and straightforward installation.

Permitting & Compliance: Confirmation that the project does not require zoning relief, site plan approval, wetlands review, utility interconnection approval, or other discretionary permitting.

Budget Accuracy: The completeness and consistency of the budget and vendor quotes.

4. Financial Readiness & Documentation – 25%

Demonstration of Financing: The extent to which the applicant demonstrates the ability to finance the project upfront and meet the required match.

Support Documents: The completeness and accuracy of required documentation, including vendor quotes and any supporting financial documentation.

5. PROJECT TERMS & COMPLIANCE

5A. Contract Terms

If awarded, all projects will be required to execute and abide by the standard Commonwealth of Massachusetts Terms and Conditions. In addition, all final contracts are subject to successful negotiation of a Final Scope of Services. No project may commence until a contract has been executed by all parties. The Department does not guarantee that any contract may result or that any particular funding level will be awarded from this RFR. It is anticipated that projects can commence immediately upon contract execution. A contract is considered fully executed once signed by both parties.

The Department reserves the right to interpret, clarify, modify, or supplement the terms and conditions of this RFR and any resulting contract at any time, at its sole discretion, to ensure proper administration of the Program and compliance with all applicable state and federal requirements. The absence of a specific provision within this RFR shall not limit the Department's authority to impose additional terms, conditions, or requirements determined necessary for the effective implementation of the Program.

All determinations made by the Department, including eligibility decisions, allowable expenditures, reporting requirements, compliance actions, and award amounts, shall be final and binding. By entering into a contract with the Department, contractors agree to comply with any such directives issued during the contract period.

Requirements will be defined in the grant contract and Scope of Services.

5B. Duration of Contracts

All awarded projects must be fully completed and invoiced by June 30, 2026. No extensions will be granted.

5C. Installation Standards & Permits

Funded projects must be installed in accordance with all applicable federal, state, and local codes and regulations. Any required permits or inspections must be secured and finalized prior to reimbursement. Failure to obtain or remain in compliance with required approvals may result in termination of the contract.

All equipment and materials must be new, commercially available, and installed according to manufacturer specifications. Equipment must carry a manufacturer's warranty of at least one (1) year.

Replacement of existing equipment with new equipment must result in the removal of the older unit from active service. Removed equipment may not be resold.

All equipment must be purchased in full and owned by the applicant prior to reimbursement. Leased or financed equipment is not eligible.

6. DELIVERABLES, REPORTING & INVOICING

6A. Project Deliverables

Award recipients will be required to complete all capital improvements and associated project activities as outlined in their approved Scope of Services and Budget. Deliverables include the purchase, installation, and operational readiness of approved equipment or infrastructure and verification of completion through site inspection or documentation review by the Department.

6B. Reporting Requirements

Reporting requirements will be outlined in the Scope of Services for awarded proposals.

6C. Invoicing & Payment

- Disbursement of funds under this RFR will be done on a reimbursement basis and will require that acceptable documentation be submitted to the Department prior to any payment. **Only expenses incurred during the period of the contract are eligible for reimbursement. Any costs incurred prior to an executed contract, regardless of whether they were included in a proposal and associated with the project, are NOT eligible for reimbursement from the Department.**
- Invoices must be submitted no later than June 30, 2026.
- The funded contractual activity will be evaluated prior to full reimbursement. Work will be evaluated for satisfactory completion and compliance to standards. Spot inspections may be conducted at the Department's discretion on all work for the life of the project. Only work that satisfies the terms and conditions for this RFR, contract, and any other instructions by the Department shall be eligible for reimbursement.
- Satisfactory documentation in the form of cancelled checks, receipts, invoices, etc. for costs associated with approved projects must be submitted to the Department and approved prior to reimbursement.
- Funded projects will be limited to one reimbursement for the amount awarded.
- Funds awarded through this program may be considered taxable income, and recipients are solely responsible for determining and satisfying any resulting tax obligations. Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 7A, § 3 and 815 CMR 9.00, the Office of the Comptroller may intercept or withhold payments to satisfy outstanding debts owed to the Commonwealth, including unpaid taxes, child support, or other legally enforceable obligations, which may reduce the amount disbursed to the recipient. The Department does not provide tax advice and applicants are strongly encouraged to consult a qualified tax professional to understand the potential tax implications of accepting an award.

7. DEADLINES & PROCUREMENT CALENDAR

Release of RFR	Friday, February 20, 2026
Information Session	None planned.
Question Deadline	Applicants may submit questions regarding this RFR and application process. Questions must be submitted by email to mdargrants@mass.gov . The deadline for written questions is Thursday, March 5 th , 2025. All questions and answers will be posted at www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-the-farm-readiness-grant-program so that all applicants can review.
Application Due Date	Must be received by 4:00 PM, Tuesday, March 17 th , 2026.
Estimated Award Date	May 2026.
Estimated Contract Start Date	May 2026. Notwithstanding any verbal representations by the parties, or an earlier start date listed in the Standard Contract Form, and only after an award is issued and a final scope of services has been negotiated, the effective start date of a contract shall be the latest of the following dates: the date the Standard Contract Form has been executed by an authorized signatory of the contractor and the procuring department; the date of secretariat or other approval(s) required by law or regulation; or a later date specified in the Standard Contract Form.

8. MISCELLANEOUS

Type of Procurement	Grant
Use of This Procurement by Single or Multiple Departments	This RFR is a single department procurement. All contracts awarded under this RFR will be utilized only by MDAR.
Request for Single or Multiple Contractors	Multiple Contractors
RFR Distribution Method	<p>This RFR has been distributed by MDAR's Farm and Market Newsletter, posted to the program's website at www.mass.gov/agr, and by a distribution list of requested applicants.</p> <p>This RFR has been distributed electronically via COMMBUYS. It is the responsibility of every applicant to check COMMBUYS for any addenda or modifications to an RFR to which they intend to respond. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts and its subdivisions accept no liability and will provide no accommodations to applicants who fail to check for amended RFRs and submit inadequate or incorrect responses. Potential Respondents are advised to check the "last change" field on the summary page of RFRs for which they intend to submit a response to ensure they have the most recent RFR files.</p> <p>Respondents may not alter RFR language or any RFR component files. Those submitting a proposal must respond in accordance to the RFR directions and complete only those sections that prompt a Respondent for a response. Modifications to the body of this RFR, specifications, terms and conditions, or which change the intent of this RFR are prohibited. Any unauthorized alterations will disqualify response.</p>
List of Attachments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Application Form B. RFR Required Specifications

ATTACHMENT A

Applicant Information

Legal Name of Agricultural Operation

Legal Structure Sole Proprietor Corporation Partnership LLC Other _____

Primary Contact First Name Last Name

Role/Title

Mailing Address

City, State, Zip

County

Home Phone **Mobile Phone**

E-Mail **Website**

Site address same as above

Site Address

Site City, State, Zip

Operational Details

YEAR ESTABLISHED	PROPERTY OWNERSHIP	OWNER (if leased)	YEAR LEASE ENDS
	<input type="checkbox"/> Owned <input type="checkbox"/> Leased		
TYPE OF OPERATION			
<input type="checkbox"/> Produce	<input type="checkbox"/> Livestock	<input type="checkbox"/> Dairy	<input type="checkbox"/> Greenhouse
<input type="checkbox"/> Vineyard	<input type="checkbox"/> Other Livestock	<input type="checkbox"/> Aquaculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Horse
<input type="checkbox"/> Nursery	<input type="checkbox"/> Cranberry	<input type="checkbox"/> Other	
ACREAGE OWNED	ACREAGE LEASED	ACREAGE IN PRODUCTION	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	
ESTIMATED ANNUAL GROSS SALES			
<input type="checkbox"/> \$0 - \$24,999 <input type="checkbox"/> \$25,000 - \$249,999 <input type="checkbox"/> \$250,000 - \$499,999 <input type="checkbox"/> \$500,000 +			
APPROXIMATELY WHAT PERCENTAGE OF YOUR ORGANIZATION'S ANNUAL OPERATING REVENUE IS GENERATED FROM NON-FARM AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION (e.g. sales of crops, livestock, aquaculture products)?			
<input type="checkbox"/> 0 - 25% <input type="checkbox"/> 25% - 50% <input type="checkbox"/> 50 - 75 % <input type="checkbox"/> 75 - 100 %			
<input type="checkbox"/> I certify that this operation has been in continuous agricultural production on the same property for at least three (3) years by the applicant.			
<input type="checkbox"/> I am a farmer as identified in Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 128. Sec. 1A			

Other Programs

OPERATION HAS AN AG PRESERVATION RESTRICTION (APR):		PROJECT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED ON APR:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
APR HAS BEEN CONTACTED TO DETERMINE IF PROJECT NEEDS A CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL (COA):		PROJECT NEEDS APPROVAL FROM APR:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
YEAR APR WAS RECORDED	NAME ON APR			
APR CONTACT PERSON				
PRODUCE REGISTRATION STATUS (if applicable)				
<input type="checkbox"/> Registered <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/> Will register				
I HAVE APPLIED TO OTHER GRANT PROGRAMS FOR COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THIS PROJECT				
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No				
NAME(S) OF OTHER GRANT PROGRAMS				
PREVIOUS MDAR GRANT FUNDING – (List any MDAR grants received within in the past 5 years)				
Program	Year	Award Amount	Project Summary	Completion Status

Overview of Business

Provide a brief overview (1-2 paragraphs) of your agricultural operation, including scale of production, primary products, and confirmation of active commercial production.

Apply Online: www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-the-farm-readiness-grant-program

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Organizational Capacity & Team Members

Who will be responsible for purchasing and installing the project/equipment?
If contractors will be used, identify them.

	Name	Role	Relevant Experience	Responsibilities
A				
B				
C				

Briefly describe any prior experience completing equipment purchases, infrastructure upgrades, or grant-funded projects on your farm:

General Financing

Explain how you will cover upfront costs and the required 20% match prior to reimbursement. Include any available bank letters, lines of credit, or other documentation.

I confirm that I have the financial capacity to cover upfront costs prior to reimbursement.

Project Area

Select the project area that best fits your proposal:

- Energy Efficiency Retrofits
- Monitoring & Precision Agriculture Equipment
- Soil Health Equipment
- Food Safety & Cold Storage Equipment
- Compost Equipment

PROJECT DETAILS:

Project Title

Short descriptive title of what is being applied for.

Project Details

Clearly describe the equipment or system being purchased or upgraded, the operational issue it addresses, and why it is installation-ready. Include make/model (or system type), if the item is in-stock or the lead time, where it will be installed, and what currently exists that this replaces or improves.

Project Goals

List 2–3 short-term operational improvements expected from this project. Focus on the direct results of the work being done. Do not include long-term benefits here.

Project Impacts

Describe the anticipated measurable outcomes of the project. The impacts should reflect the changes that will result from the project and be quantifiable where possible. Include metrics or estimates where available. Do not repeat the project goals.

Project Timeline

Provide project specific timeline from project start to completion.

Is your project ready to begin upon award (shovel-ready)? Yes No

I confirm that the proposed equipment is commercially available and can be purchased and installed immediately upon contract execution.

Has the vendor confirmed availability and delivery timeline consistent with completion by June 30, 2026?

Yes No

Estimated Purchase Date:	
Estimated Installation Date:	
Completion Date:	(must be by June 30 th , 2026)

Project-Specific Permits

Does this project require zoning relief, site plan approval, wetlands review, utility interconnection, or any other discretionary local, state, or federal permit?

Yes No If yes, this project is not eligible under this program.

Project-Specific Operation & Maintenance (O&M)

Describe how the equipment will be maintained, who will maintain it, expected useful life, storage location (for seasonal equipment) and confirm any manufacturer warranties included with equipment.

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Budget:

Capital Equipment & Infrastructure				
Item	Vendor	Unit Cost	Qty	Total Costs
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
Vendor Installation/Delivery/Setup (if applicable)				
Description of Service		Vendor Name	Costs (from Quote)	
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
Other Costs				
Description	Amount	Qty	Total Costs	
1				
2				
3				
4				
Total Project Costs:				\$
Applicant Cash Match (20% minimum):				\$
Grant Request (maximum \$50,000 and ≤ 80% of total eligible costs):				\$

Apply Online: www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-the-farm-readiness-grant-program
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Supporting Documentation

Required		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Budget	Must be complete, include the 20% cash match, and be consistent with submitted vendor quotes.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Vendor Quotes	At least one quote for each budgeted item. Quotes must reflect current pricing for commercially available equipment or services.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lease Agreement	Must demonstrate site control for a minimum of five years from the date of application and authorize the proposed project. (if the project is not on land owned by the applicant)
Optional (used to assess financial readiness)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Balance of Funding	Examples: recent bank statement, line of credit letter, financing approval, or other non-state funding commitment.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Map	Showing property boundaries and the installation location of the proposed project.

Amount Requested:

Enter the total amount of funding you are requesting from MDAR. Please note that MDAR may negotiate the final award amount before a contract is executed. Project costs incurred prior to a fully executed contract are not eligible for reimbursement.

Total Project Costs (from Budget):	\$	<input type="text"/>
Amount Requested (Max of 80% of Total Project Costs):	\$	<input type="text"/>
Match Requirement (Min of 20% of Total Project Costs):	\$	<input type="text"/>

Attestation:

By signing this application, you attest all statements herein are accurate and true. By signing this application, you give permission to have a site visit by MDAR staff which may be necessary before a funding decision is made. All site visits will be arranged with you in advance.

Signature	<input type="text"/>	Date	<input type="text"/>
Print Name	<input type="text"/>		



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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RFR - Required Specifications for Commodities and Services

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

ATTACHMENT B

RFR - Required Specifications for Commodities and Services

(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.