



U.S. Department of Agriculture
Farm Service Agency

Outreach and Education, Technical Assistance,
and Financial Education for FSA Programs, Functions, and Activities

Announcement No.: USDA-FSA-CA-2016-001

For Fiscal Year 2016

Date Issued: September 22, 2015

Date Revised: January 13, 2016

Date Revised: February 26, 2016

Applications must be submitted electronically via the www.Grants.gov website.
Details are provided under Part III.

Amendment Information

- Amendment 1 01/13/2016 The purpose of Amendment 1 is to: (1) revise the final date to submit applications from May 27, 2016, to July 11, 2016; (2) eliminate Evaluation Periods 2 and 3; (3) rename Evaluation Period 4 as Evaluation Period 2; and (4) extend the renamed Evaluation Period 2 from May 27, 2016, to July 11, 2016. Eligible applications that may not be selected for funding during Evaluation Period 1 will be considered for the renamed Evaluation Period 2. However, any application received after July 11, 2016, will not be considered for funding. No other provisions were modified.
- Amendment 2 02/26/2016 The purpose of Amendment 2 is to comply with the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016, Pub. L. 114-113, Division E, Title VII, General Provisions Government-wide, sections 743, 744. These sections prohibited the Federal government from making cooperative agreements or grants with entities requiring employees or contractors to sign nondisclosure agreements or statements prohibiting them from reporting waste, fraud, or abuse to an investigative or law enforcement representative of the Federal Government. No other provisions were modified.

OPPORTUNITY NUMBER: USDA-FSA-CA-2015-001

OPPORTUNITY TITLE: Outreach and Education, Technical Assistance, and Financial Education for FSA Programs, Functions, and Activities

OPPORTUNITY CATEGORY: Discretionary

ANNOUNCEMENT TYPE: Request for Applications (RFA)

INSTRUMENT TYPE: Cooperative Agreement

COST SHARING OR MATCHING REQUIREMENT: No

EXPECTED NUMBER OF AWARDS: 25-125

ESTIMATED TOTAL PROGRAM FUNDING: \$2,500,000

AWARD CEILING: \$99,999

AWARD FLOOR: \$20,000

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS: Eligible applicants include:

- Nonprofits having a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS, other than institutions of higher education; and
- Public and State controlled institutions of higher education.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: As part of our mission supporting farmers and ranchers, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides extensive education and outreach for producers. This typically involves public meetings, mailings, news releases, and interactions with individual producers seeking additional information or to enroll in a program. However, there remains a need for additional outreach and education that could benefit potential participants in FSA's portfolio of programs. This RFA seeks proposals to further support and expand FSA's existing outreach and education efforts.

The additional outreach and education could, for example, be public meetings, training sessions, and/or workshops for producers including new and beginning farmers, veterans, underserved communities, and/or established producers. Emphasis will be afforded to proposals that propose to address producers who are ethnic minorities, women, new and beginning, veterans, urban, or who grow non-commodity crops (e.g., fruits and vegetables or specialty crops). Proposals may include innovative outreach approaches that ease the learning curve for farmers and ranchers through training on best practices, common challenges and solutions, and local networking opportunities. The subject matter should include an introduction to FSA, its programs, and common provisions that generally apply. FSA's common provisions include maintenance of producer-level records regarding payment eligibility and limitations, conservation compliance, and name and address, payments, and farm and tract information.

Additional information regarding FSA is available at www.fsa.usda.gov.

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I. Program Description

A. Background

The mission of the Farm Service Agency (FSA) is equitably serving all farmers, ranchers, and agricultural partners through the delivery of effective, efficient agricultural programs for all Americans. FSA supports the delivery of farm credit, and administers disaster assistance, livestock, specialty crop, commodity, and some USDA conservation programs. FSA also supports the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) which funds most of the commodity, export, and some of the USDA conservation programs. FSA delivers its programs through a network of 2,124 county-based Service Centers, 50 State Offices, and an area office in Puerto Rico.

FSA implements programs designed to provide an economic safety net through farm income support and loans to help improve the economic stability and viability of the agriculture sector and to ensure the production of an adequate and reasonably priced supply of food and fiber. Other programs assist producers in implementing practices to conserve soil, water, air, and wildlife resources to help protect the human and natural environment. FSA also manages CCC-owned commodities including donations and providing for overseas delivery.

Outlays supporting FSA's mission are expected to increase from over \$7.9 billion in fiscal year (FY) 2015 to over \$15.0 billion in FY 2017 then average at more than \$8.8 billion per year through FY 2024.

The twenty programs covered by this RFA comprise a substantial portion of FSA's mission. Each of the programs has its own unique producer eligibility, program and enrollment requirements, payment levels, and other unique provisions. In addition to individual programs, FSA also maintains common name, address, farm and tract records for producers.

FSA provides extensive education and outreach for producers which typically involves public meetings, mailings, news releases, and interactions with individual producers seeking additional information or to enroll in a program.

FSA is aware, however, the diversity of America's agriculture and farmers and ranchers may not be optimally served by FSA's in-house outreach. Therefore, this RFA is intended to provide additional outreach to producers in areas and communities where additional outreach would be beneficial.

B. Goal

Due to the complex nature of some of FSA's programs, FSA intends for this RFA to focus additional outreach and education to those producers in those areas who could benefit from the additional outreach. The goal of this RFA is to provide additional outreach and education to producers related to Agency programs and operations and thereby: (1) increase access to FSA programs and services; and (2) improve technical assistance and financial education related to FSA farm and farm loan programs.

C. FSA Strategic Plan

The additional outreach and education proposed by this RFA is intended to ensure greater awareness by a larger number of producers who can then make more informed decisions

regarding their farming operations. These better-informed decisions may result in participation in one or more of FSA's programs and support these FSA Strategic Plan goals:

- Goal 1 – Provide a financial safety net for America's farmers and ranchers to sustain economically-viable agricultural production;
- Goal 2 – Increase stewardship of America's natural resources while enhancing the environment;
- Goal 3 – Ensure commodities are procured and distributed effectively and efficiently to increase food security; and
- Goal 4 – Transform and modernize the Farm Service Agency.

D. Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number

Programs covered by this RFA include:

| CFDA No. | Program |
|-----------------|---|
| 10.051 | Commodity Loans and Loan Deficiency Payments |
| 10.053 | Dairy Indemnity Program |
| 10.054 | Emergency Conservation Program |
| 10.056 | Farm Storage Facility Loans |
| 10.069 | Conservation Reserve Program |
| 10.087 | Biomass Crop Assistance Program |
| 10.098 | Reimbursement Transportation Cost Payment Program for Geographically Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers |
| 10.099 | Conservation Loans |
| 10.102 | Emergency Forest Restoration Program |
| 10.105 | Disaster Relief Appropriations Act, Emergency Conservation Program |
| 10.106 | Disaster Relief Appropriations Act, Emergency Forest Restoration Program |
| 10.108 | Livestock Indemnity Program-2014 Farm Bill |
| 10.109 | Livestock Forage Program-2014 Farm Bill |
| 10.110 | Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program-2014 Farm Bill |
| 10.111 | Tree Assistance Program-2014 Farm Bill |
| 10.112 | Price Loss Coverage |
| 10.113 | Agriculture Risk Coverage Program |
| 10.116 | The Margin Protection Program |
| 10.404 | Emergency Loans |
| 10.406 | Farm Operating Loans |
| 10.407 | Farm Ownership Loans |
| 10.421 | Indian Tribes and Tribal Corporation Loans |
| 10.451 | Noninsured Assistance |

E. Examples

In addition to identifying producers (including those who are ethnic minorities, women, new and beginning, veterans, urban, or who grow non-commodity crops (e.g., fruits and vegetables or

specialty crops)) and geographic areas of the country, examples of the types of efforts covered by this RFA include:

Outreach:

- Urban agriculture – FSA has a limited footprint in urban areas and could benefit by having partners to reach urban producers regarding potential benefits of FSA programs. For urban areas where additional outreach and education would be beneficial, examples could include partnering with local service entities to reach producers by workshops, in-person meetings, or other community-level events.

Technical Assistance:

- Heir property – the lack of clear title to land, particularly in underserved communities, is a barrier to participation in some FSA programs. Providing technical assistance to producers and landowners to resolve heir property uncertainty would have both FSA-related benefits and other broader benefits, which include being able to participate in applicable FSA programs.
- Value-added production – FSA is looking for assistance in reaching and providing technical assistance to diversified fruit and vegetable production and other value-added enterprises. Improved FSA assistance through farm storage facility loans, non-insured crop disaster assistance program (NAP) buy-up coverage options, and microloans make this an area where FSA is seeking to package benefits for new participants. Proposals may also include information related to USDA programs such as hoop houses or value-added producer grants as a package of related programs. Proposals may include innovative outreach approaches that ease the learning curve for beginning farmers and ranchers through training on best practices, common challenges and solutions, and local networking opportunities.
- Livestock contracts – The terms, conditions and practices common as part of producing livestock or poultry under contract, can be daunting for prospective producer that may also be prospective FSA borrowers. A successful proposal would include workshops, in-person training, or other community events regarding FSA's livestock programs.

Financial and Borrower Technical Assistance:

- FSA is looking for assistance in providing financial training to farmers and ranchers. Agriculture remains a capital intensive business and there are heightened risks associated with getting started in agriculture. The lack of business and financial acumen necessary to develop business plans, present them in a way to successfully obtain financing, and execute against those plans in a way that leads to financial growth and loan repayment are barriers faced by underserved and beginning farmers. For example, technical assistance could include local meetings, workshops, or other community-level events to provide intensive financial and risk management training as a precursor to becoming qualified to become a participant in FSA farm loan programs.
- A successful proposal might provide credit technical assistance and resources to underserved and beginning FSA program applicants by hosting a financial education workshops. FSA could work with cooperator to ensure the workshop encompassed all required elements of financial borrower training, which is an eligibility criterion for FSA

farm loan programs. Workshop attendees would then be better prepared to apply for an FSA farm loan and have a better understanding of their credit history and credit opportunities available.

Educational materials and tools:

- Recordkeeping systems and tools – FSA programs often require specific records in order to be eligible for disaster assistance or to be able to select the level of risk protection provided. If more producers were aware and provided simple tools to assist in recording and reporting inventory, yields, and other production information, they would be better positioned to be able to meet the eligibility requirements of programs such as Livestock Indemnity Program (especially open-range), Tree Assistance Program, and NAP. Tools could include smart phone applications to assist with keeping track of planting locations, production yields, and to make loss notifications to FSA which is especially important for 72-hour notification required for hand-harvested crops.
- Materials tailored to specific industry segments – For programs like NAP that offer coverage across a wide spectrum of types of crops and commodities, specific educational and instructional materials may include worksheets and spreadsheets targeted to specific industries and geographic areas such as aquaculture, floriculture or nursery production that would benefit producers. A successful proposal might include local workshops, in-person training, or other community-level events.

Analysis and research:

- Wholesale and Premium Price information – NAP requires FSA to identify an average market price for any covered commodity. Also, new options under buy-up coverage allow for the recognition of premium prices for direct marketing, organic, and fresh versus processed.

Data collection and analysis to support either the FSA national office or State offices would support improved program integrity by accurately setting prices and expanding the premium price options to more producers. A project that examined and estimated the correlation between retail, wholesale, and the different premium prices would similarly allow FSA to expand these offerings.

- Livestock and plant diseases – LIP, ELAP, and TAP require specialized knowledge of plant and animal diseases in order to determine whether a disease is eligible and under what conditions. This is especially challenging when it relates to less common plants and animals and understanding the appropriate good farming practices and availability and efficacy of vaccines and treatments. A successful proposal might provide for data collection and analysis to support the FSA national office disaster program provisions related to livestock and plant disease

F. Other Information

In evaluating applications and awarding cooperative agreements, priority will be afforded to applications that propose to meet both of the purposes: (1) to increase access to FSA programs and service; and (2) to improve technical assistance and financial education related to FSA farm and farm loan programs.

Additional application evaluation criteria includes the scope of the program (project description), program benefits to be accrued, program monitoring and accomplishment reporting to track performance, administrative and program delivery capabilities of the applicant, including detailed work plans and budget, and the qualifications of those performing tasks.

FSA will also evaluate the risks posed by applicants using a risk-based approach that considers financial stability, history of performance, and the applicant's ability to implement this RFA.

FSA will be substantially involved during the performance of the funded project through FSA National, State, and county offices. Potential types of substantial involvement may include, but are not limited to, the following activities:

- Collaborate with the awardee in assembling, reviewing, and approving FSA materials for producers.
- Collaborate with the awardee in reviewing and approving a promotional program for raising awareness for FSA and its farm loan and farm programs.
- Collaborate with the awardee on the delivery of education, technical assistance, tools or educational materials to producers. This will include:
 - reviewing and approving in advance all producer educational activities, technical assistance, tools and materials;
 - advising the Principal Investigator (PI) on technical issues related to education and information about FSA programs; and
 - assisting the PI in informing farmers and ranchers about educational activity plans and scheduled meetings.
- Collaborate with the awardee on the design and implementation of any analysis related to FSA program delivery
- Conduct an evaluation of the performance of the awardee in meeting the tasks of the project.

Applications that do not address substantial involvement by FSA will be rejected.

Prior to submitting applications, each applicant must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) with its application and Dun and Bradstreet number and must be registered in System for Awards Management (www.SAM.gov). No applicant can receive an award until the applicant has complied with all UEI and SAM requirements. If an applicant has not fully complied with all UEI and SAM requirements by the time an award may be made, FSA may determine the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making an award to another applicant.

Each application must continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times in which the applicant has its application under consideration, and if an award is made, during the entire time of the Federal award.

To the extent that funds are available for this purpose, FSA will award cooperative agreements for applications found to be meritorious based on recommendations from a review panel. There is no commitment by FSA to fund any application or to make a specific number of awards.

Award for individual applications will be limited to cooperative agreement periods lasting no longer than one (1) year with an option by FSA to extend for an additional one (1) year period subject to the availability of funds.

Individual cooperative agreements will be no more than \$99,999 and no less than \$20,000.

G. Authority

The authority to make cooperative agreements is section 607(b)(4) of the Rural Development Act of 1972 (7 U.S.C. 2204b(b)(4)).

II. Timetables, Eligibility, and Application Format Instructions

A. Timetables

Informational Session: FSA will conduct an information session for potential cooperators available either online or by conference call:

- On Monday, September 28, 2015, at 1:00 pm (Eastern)
- Online: Microsoft Meeting ID – FSAOUTREACH
- Conference Call: Call-in Number – 888-844-9904; Access Code is 4804675 #
- Additional Information: J. Latrice Hill, Director, Outreach Staff, 202-690-1000, Latrice.Hill@wdc.usda.gov

*--- **Due Dates:** Applications will be periodically reviewed by FSA according to this schedule:

| Key Date | Action |
|---|---|
| September 22, 2015 | RFA opens |
| September 28, 2015 | FSA conducts Informational Session |
| 4:00 pm (Eastern), November 20, 2015 | Applications submitted by this date will be considered during Evaluation Period 1 |
| 4:00 pm (Eastern), July 11, 2016 | Applications submitted by this date will be considered during Evaluation Period 2 |

Late Submission: Eligible applications submitted after the due date for Evaluation Period 1 will be considered for Evaluation Period 2. Applications that are not selected for Evaluation Period 1 will be considered for Evaluation Period 2; however, any applications submitted after July 11, 2016, will not be considered for funding. ---*

B. Eligibility – Who may Submit an Application

Only nonprofits having a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS, other than institutions of higher education, or public and State controlled institutions of higher education may apply for a cooperative agreement. Any applications received by an individual or entity that is not a nonprofit having a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS, other than institutions of higher education, or public and State controlled institutions of higher education will not be considered.

Eligible entities must include all proposed activity under a single application for a single purpose. If multiple applications are received for a single purpose from an applicant during an Evaluation Period, only one application will be approved for funding, as determined by FSA. The applicant

is the individual nonprofit having a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS, other than institutions of higher education, or public and State controlled institutions of higher education.

C. Incomplete Applications

Incomplete applications will not be considered for funding. However, if time permits, incomplete applications may be returned and may be resubmitted.

D. Application and Budget Content Instructions

1. Application Content Instructions. Each application must include:
 - a. SF-424 Short, Application for Federal Domestic Assistance – Short Organizational.
 - b. SF-424A, Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs.
 - c. Budget Narrative. Must show the total cost for the project. The budget narrative must provide enough detail for reviewers to easily understand how the costs were determined and how they relate to the tasks listed in the proposal. There must be a direct relationship between work planned and performed to the costs incurred. Include any gross income incidental to the accomplishment of the approved purposes and received by the cooperator directly generated by cooperative agreement supported activity or earned only as a result of the cooperative agreement during the performance period.
 - d. Project Abstract.
 - e. Project Narrative. Include objectives and tasks to be accomplished, the amount of funding requested, how the work will be performed, whether organizational staff, consultants or contractors will be used, and whether other resources will be used. Also, describe FSA substantial involvement. This section may not exceed 10 pages.
 - f. Other Attachments.
 - i. Work Plan. Applications must discuss how cooperative agreement funds will be used to facilitate specific tasks associated with the eligible entity. The work plan should address the tasks necessary for the covered purpose (i.e., (1) to increase access to FSA programs and services with a particular emphasis on local services provided by employees in FSA county offices; and (2) to improve technical assistance and financial education related to FSA farm and farm loan programs); identification of additional staff and key personnel to be involved with administration of the cooperative agreement, and the evaluation methods to be used to determine the success of the project, in general, and those specific tasks and overall objectives associated with the cooperative agreement.
 - ii. Performance evaluation criteria. Applications should discuss how the eligible entity will measure and monitor accomplishments associated with cooperative agreement funds and meet the stated goals, including but not limited to covered purpose, outreach, and cost-effectiveness.
 - iii. Qualifications of personnel. Applicants must describe the knowledge, skills, and abilities of key personnel engaged in the delivery of the cooperative agreement that qualifies them to be able to provide sound, technical recommendations and other information for the covered purpose and ability of the eligible entity to perform tasks described in the application, and whether program delivery providers are to be full- or part-time employees or contract personnel.
 - iv. Other similar efforts. The applicant must describe its previous accomplishments and outcomes in similar activities, if any.

- v. Risk-Based Criteria. In addition to the information contained in paragraphs iii. and iv., describe the applicant's financial stability as a measure to assure the Government the applicant has the ability to perform the agreement.
2. Funding Restrictions. FSA cooperative agreement funds may not be used to:
 - a. plan, repair, rehabilitate, acquire, or construct a building or facility including a processing facility;
 - b. purchase, rent, or install fixed equipment;
 - c. purchase portable equipment or supplies (such as laptops, I-pads, cell phones, projectors or similar items. Rental or lease fees are payable from FSA funds for such items in lieu of purchase.)
 - d. repair or maintain privately owned vehicles;
 - e. pay for the preparation of the cooperative agreement application;
 - f. fund political activities;
 - g. purchase alcohol, food, beverage, give-away promotional items, or entertainment;
 - h. lend money to support farming or agricultural business operation or expansion;
 - i. pay costs incurred prior to receiving a cooperative agreement;
 - j. pay entrance fees, conference registration fees, or other expenses to conferences or similar activities for any person **not** on the agenda or **not** working at an event booth promoting FSA programs or the FSA funded project. These expenses will not be paid for the awardee's Board of Directors, family members or similar entities. These fees will not be paid for the awardee to attend personal development training in order to train producers;
 - k. pay costs associated 501(c) applications; and
 - l. fund any activities prohibited in 2 CFR Parts 200 and 400, as applicable.
 3. Limitation on Use of Project Funds for Salaries and Benefits. The reasonableness of the total costs for salary and benefits allowed for projects under this RFA will be reviewed and considered by FSA as part of the application review process. Applications for which FSA does not consider the salary and benefits reasonable for the proposed work will be rejected, or will only be offered a cooperative agreement upon the condition of changing the salary and benefits structure to one deemed appropriate by FSA.
 5. Indirect Cost Rates. Indirect costs allowed for projects submitted under this RFA will subject to the regulations at 2 CFR § 200.414.

III. Application Delivery/Submission Instructions and Deliverables

A. Preparing and Submitting an Application via www.Grants.gov

All applications must be submitted online via the www.Grants.gov web site by the closing date and time in Part II above.

Please note that the electronic submission system is relatively complex for first-time users and involves several preliminary registration steps to be taken before the application can be submitted (go to www.Grants.gov and click on the "Get Registered" link in the red Applicants section on the left side of the page).

It is virtually impossible to begin the process of electronic submission for the first time if you start just a few days before the due date.

If you have completed a prior application, you may already have completed the registration process. Please allow sufficient time for the application to be submitted electronically and allow time for possible computer delays.

An application received after Evaluation Period 1, 2, or 3 in Part II will be deferred to the next Evaluation Period. An application received after the closing date and time will not be considered for award.

For registered applicants, to submit a cooperative agreement application:

- Go to www.Grants.gov (applications will ONLY be accepted from this site). Information about submitting an application using www.Grants.gov can be found on the www.Grants.gov site with supplementary materials.
- Go to the “Apply for Grants” heading on the left side of page.
- Click on “Download a Grant Application Package.”
- Search for the application using any of the CFDA numbers under **CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE (CFDA) NUMBER**.

B. SF-424 Short Instructions

All new and continuation/revision applications must contain the completed form SF-424 Short, SF-424A, and related documents.

Note: The person who electronically submits form SF-424 Short must have the authority to bind the eligible entity to the terms of the assistance award.

IV. Application Review

A. General

Evaluated applications will be ranked based on merit. Each application will be evaluated in a two-part process:

1. Each application will be screened to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements as set forth in this RFA; and
2. Applications that meet these administrative requirements will be evaluated by a review panel.

The review panel will conduct a merit review based on the evaluation criteria. The views of the individual reviewers will be used by FSA to determine which applications will be recommended for funding. Final approval of applications recommended for award will be made by the FSA Associate Administrator for Policy and Programs.

Interagency reviewers will be selected based upon knowledge, skills, training, and experience in relevant fields.

B. Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria noted below will be used in reviewing applications submitted in response to this RFA.

1. Incomplete or non-responsive applications will not be evaluated. Applicants may revise their applications and re-submit them prior to the published deadline if there is sufficient time to do so.
2. Applications for cooperative agreements will be evaluated and scored using the following uniform evaluation plan:
 - (a) Benefits. The application will be evaluated to determine whether and to what extent the project's anticipated outcomes will meet the project's purpose (0-30 points).
 - (b) Project description, feasibility, and work plan. The application will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which the applicant demonstrates a reasonable approach to meeting the project's purpose. Proposals that address producers who are ethnic minorities, women, new and beginning, veterans, urban, or who grow non-commodity crops (e.g., fruits and vegetables or specialty crops) will result in a higher score. The work plan will be reviewed for detailed actions and an accompanying timetable for implementing the components of the application. Clear, logical, realistic, and efficient plans will result in a higher score. (0-20 points).
 - (c) Budget and cost effectiveness. Budgets will be reviewed for completeness and whether and to what extent additional resources were committed by Federal, State, or tribal government, or private resources. The application will be evaluated on the relative cost effectiveness of the proposal in terms of the anticipated benefit and number of farmers and ranchers to be assisted. (0-20 points).
 - (d) Performance evaluation criteria. The application will be evaluated to determine whether the applicant has included outcome-based performance measures, and the extent to which those measures are meaningful and reflect the intended project outcomes. (0-10 points).
 - (e) Partnerships. While there are no matching resource commitment requirements, partnerships with entities that are suitable and appropriate to the performance of the project's purpose are important to overall success. The extent to which the applicant has identified and established relationships with the partners necessary to achieve the project's goals will be evaluated. Applications that demonstrate additional resources will receive more points, all else being equal, than those that do not. (0-10 points).
 - (f) Risk. The application will be evaluated to determine whether the applicant has a track record of administering the project or, in the absence of a track record, the capacity to administer the project. Applicants that have demonstrated capable financial systems and audit controls, personnel and program administration performance measures, and clear rules of governance will receive more points than those not evidencing this capacity. The application will be reviewed to determine that key personnel, such as principal investigator, project manager, program instructors, fiscal officer and/or federal aid coordinator, collectively have the appropriate knowledge, skills, and abilities with respect to the project's purpose, funds control, cooperative agreement management, performance

monitoring and evaluation, and other activities relevant to the success of the proposed project (0-10 points).

3. After all applications have been evaluated using the evaluation criteria and scored in accordance with the point allocation specified in the RFA, a list of all applications in ranked order, together with funding level recommendations, will be submitted to the Associate Administrator for Policy and Programs, FSA.

C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality

During the interagency review process, care will be taken to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may affect review or evaluation.

Names of an individual entity submitting an application, application content, and interagency review evaluations will be kept confidential, except to those involved in the review process, to the extent permitted by law. In addition, the identities of the interagency reviewers will remain confidential throughout the entire review process. Therefore, the names of the reviewers will not be released to applicants.

D. Access to Review Information

Copies of an individual applicant's reviews, not including the identity of reviewers, and a summary of the panel comments will be available to the applicant after the review process has been completed.

V. Cooperator Responsibilities

Before receiving cooperative agreement funding, the cooperator will be required to sign an agreement. In addition to responsibilities articulated in the proposal and any final negotiations, as determined by FSA, the cooperative agreement will require the cooperator to commit to do all of the following:

- Collaborate with FSA regarding the development and implementation of the tasks associated with the project purpose;
- Provide performance and outcome measurement data to FSA on a regular basis; and
- Provide an accounting for the cooperative funding received by the Cooperator.

Cooperators will be required to monitor funds or services as specified in the next paragraph of this section, and must agree to that monitoring before cooperative agreement funds are awarded.

The cooperator must certify that the cooperative agreement funds and services will not be used for ineligible purposes. See Part II, paragraph D.2., for funding restrictions.

Failure of the cooperator to execute a cooperative agreement in a timely fashion, as determined by FSA, will be construed to be a withdrawal from further consideration.

VI. Award Administration and Information

A. Award Administration Information

1. General

Within the limit of funds available, FSA will make cooperative agreements to those responsible eligible applicants whose applications are judged most meritorious under the procedures set forth in this RFA. Payments will be provided on a reimbursable basis.

The effective date of the cooperative agreement shall be no later than September 30 of the Federal fiscal year in which a project is approved for support and funds are available for such purpose. However, FSA's intention is to award cooperative agreements as soon as possible. It should be noted that the project need not be initiated on the cooperative agreement effective date, but as soon thereafter as practical so that project goals may be attained within the funded project period.

All funds made available under this RFA shall be expended solely for the purpose for which the funds are provided in accordance with the approved application and budget, the regulations at 2 CFR Subtitle A and Chapter IV of Subtitle B, and the terms and conditions of the award.

Award recipients are responsible for managing the day-to-day operations of the agreement and supported activities to assure compliance with applicable Federal requirements, and that performance goals are being achieved. Recipient monitoring must cover each program, function or activity.

Upon notification of selection, cooperators will be notified of documentation required for receipt of award.

2. Changes in Project Plans

- a) The permissible changes by the Cooperator in the approved project shall be limited to changes in methodology, techniques, or other similar aspects of the project to expedite achievement of the project's approved goals. If the cooperator is uncertain as to whether a change complies with this provision, the question must be referred to FSA for a final determination.
- b) Changes in approved goals or objectives shall be requested by the cooperator and approved in writing by the FSA prior to effecting such changes. In no event shall requests for such changes be approved if they are outside the scope of the original approved project.
- c) Changes in project leadership or the replacement or reassignment of other key project personnel shall be forwarded by the cooperator to FSA.
- d) Transfers of actual performance of the substantive programmatic work in whole or in part and provisions for payment of funds, whether or not Federal funds are involved, shall be requested by the cooperator and approved in writing by FSA prior to effecting such transfers, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of the cooperative agreement.

- e) **Changes in Project Period:** Project periods are for one year. However, the project period may be extended by FSA without additional financial support, for such additional period(s) as FSA determines may be necessary to complete or fulfill the purposes of an approved project, but in no case shall the total project period exceed two years. Any extension of time shall be conditioned upon prior request by the cooperator and approval in writing by the FSA, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of the cooperative agreement.
- f) **Changes in Approved Budget:** Unless stated otherwise in the terms and conditions of award, changes in an approved budget must be requested by the cooperator and approved in writing by FSA prior to instituting such changes if the revision will involve transfers or expenditures of amounts requiring prior approval as set forth in the applicable Federal cost principles, Departmental regulations, or award.

B. Reports

Cooperators must provide the following to FSA:

- i) A “Financial Status Report” listing expenditures according to agreed-upon budget categories as specified in the cooperative agreement.
- ii) Quarterly performance reports that compare accomplishments to the objectives stated in the application, and that must also:
 - a) Identify all tasks completed to date and provide documentation supporting the reported results;
 - b) If the original schedule provided in the work plan is not being met, discuss the problems or delays that may affect completion of the project;
 - i) List objectives for the next reporting period; and
 - ii) Discuss compliance with any special conditions on the use of award funds. Reports are due as provided in [Section B of this Part], below.
 - c) Final project performance reports, inclusive of supporting documentation. The final performance report is due within 45 days of the completion of the project.
 - d) All reports submitted to the Agency will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law.

This table summarizes the reports and due dates required from all award recipients:

| Report | Due Date |
|---|---|
| Form SF-425, Federal Financial Report (Quarterly) | 45 calendar days after the end of each Federal fiscal quarter or: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • November 15; • February 15; • May 15; • August 15; and • Completion date. |

| Report | Due Date |
|---|---|
| Performance Reports (Quarterly) | 45 calendar days after the end of each Federal fiscal quarter or: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • November 15; • February 15; • May 15; • August 15; and • Completion date. |
| Form SF-425, Federal Financial Report (Final) | 45 calendar days after completion date. |

1. Cash Management and Financial Reporting Requirements

- a) Form SF-425 is required quarterly and is due 45 days after the end of each fiscal quarter until the final Federal Financial Report is submitted. Instructions for submitting SF-425 can be found at [SF-425 Instructions](#).

Within 45 calendar days after the end of each Federal fiscal quarter, the SF-425 must be submitted by mail to the ADO at the address in Part VIII.

If after 45 calendar days, recipient has not submitted a report, the account will be placed in a manual review status. Funds may be withheld for accounts with delinquent reports.

Report unused cooperative agreement funds and interest earned using Section 12 of the SF-425.

- b) The cooperator will submit a final SF-425 no later than 90 calendar days after the cooperative agreement completion date and promptly return any unobligated federal cash advances.
- c) Revision to the final SF-425 will be considered only when the revision results in a balance due to the Government, the cooperator must submit a revised final SF-425 and refund the excess payment whenever the overcharge is discovered, no matter how long the lapse of time since the original due date of the report.

2. Performance Reports

Quarterly and upon cooperative agreement completion, recipients of awards under this program are responsible for managing and monitoring the project, program, sub-award, function, or activity supported by the award. Performance reports must generally contain brief information that compares accomplishments to the objectives stated in the application, and that also:

- a) Identify all tasks completed to date of report and provide documentation supporting the reported results;
- b) If the original schedule provided in the work plan is not being met, the report must discuss the problems or delays that may affect completion of the project;
- c) List objectives for the next reporting period; and
- d) Discuss compliance with any special conditions on the use of award funds.

All reports submitted to FSA will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law.

VII. General Provisions

A. Applicable OMB Circulars

The grant is subject to the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards at 2 CFR part 200, as adopted and amended by 2 CFR part 400, which are incorporated herein by reference.

B. Method of Payment

The cooperative agreement will be disbursed by reimbursement by FSA using electronic funds transfer to the recipient's bank account. The cooperative agreement recipient must complete form SF-3881, ACH Vendor/Miscellaneous Payment Enrollment Form, and return the form to FSA before a cooperative agreement will be approved.

C. Requirement to Assure Compliance with Federal Civil Rights Laws

Awardees and all partners/collaborators of all cooperative agreements funded as a result of this notice are required to know and abide by Federal civil rights laws, which include, but are not limited to, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. § 2000d et. seq.), and 7 CFR part 15. USDA Form AD-475, USDA Civil Rights Poster, must be displayed by the Cooperator

D. Audit Requirements

Applicants awarded cooperative partnership agreements are subject to audit at any time in the present or future.

E. Prohibitions and Requirements Regarding Lobbying

All cooperative agreements will be subject to the requirements of the regulations at 2 CFR parts 200 and 418, "Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards" and "New Restrictions on Lobbying," respectively. A signed copy of the certification and disclosure forms must be submitted with the application and are available at the address and telephone number listed in Section VII, Agency Contact.

The regulations at 2 CFR part 418 imposes prohibitions and requirements for disclosure and certification related to lobbying on awardees of Federal contracts, grants, cooperative agreements and loans. It provides exemptions for Indian Tribes and tribal organizations. Current and prospective awardees, and any subcontractors, are prohibited from using Federal funds, other than profits from a Federal contract, for lobbying Congress or any Federal agency in connection with the award of a contract, grant, cooperative partnership agreement or loan.

F. Required Registration with the System for Award Management (SAM) for Submission of Proposals

Under the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, the applicant must comply with the additional requirements set forth in Attachment A regarding the Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System (DUNS) Requirements and the SAM Requirements found at 2 CFR part 25. For the purposes of this RFA, the term "you" in Attachment A will mean

“applicant.” The applicant will comply with the additional requirements set forth in Attachment B regarding Subawards and Executive Compensation.

For the purpose of this RFA, the term "you" in Attachment B will mean "applicant." SAM (www.SAM.gov) is a database that serves as the primary Government repository for contractor information required for the conduct of business with the Government. This database will also be used as a central location for maintaining organizational information for organizations seeking and receiving grants from the Government. Such organizations must register in SAM prior to the submission of applications. A DUNS number is needed for SAM registration. For information about how to register in SAM, access www.SAM.gov. Allow a minimum of 5 business days to complete the SAM registration.

G. Additional General Terms and Conditions and Definitions

Audit

Cooperators must comply with the audit requirements of 2 CFR subpart F. The audit requirements apply to the years in which cooperator agreement funds are received and years in which work is accomplished using cooperative agreement funds.

Authorized Departmental Officer or ADO means FSA’s official delegated authority to negotiate, award, administer, suspend, and terminate non-assistance cooperative agreements.

Authorized Departmental Officer Designated Representative or ADODR means a FSA employee has a limited delegation of authority to represent FSA throughout the agreements process. The ADODR is FSA’s technical representative who oversees the specific work to be performed.

Availability of USDA Information

Should the availability of USDA information, FSA and the Cooperator will enter into a supplemental agreement regarding protection of producer information.

Civil Rights

FSA prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. The RFA will also be administered in accordance with all other applicable civil rights law.

Close-out Procedure

Upon submittal of the final SF-425 to FSA, close-out procedures will be initiated for the agreement. Each agreement is a separate action and will be closed out in accordance with the applicable general provisions.

Delegation of Fiscal Responsibility

Unless the terms and conditions of the cooperative agreement provide otherwise, the cooperator may not in whole or in part delegate or transfer to another person, institution, or organization the responsibility for use or expenditure of cooperative agreement funds.

Fiscal Integrity

The recipient will notify FSA of any significant problems relating to the administrative or financial aspects of the award, such as misappropriation of Federal funds.

Inspection

Cooperators must permit periodic inspection of the program operations by a FSA representative, as determined by FSA.

Modification Authority; Change in Scope or Objectives

The Cooperative Agreement may be modified in writing by mutual consent of FSA and the Cooperator. However, the Cooperator must obtain prior approval from FSA for any change to the scope or objectives of the approved project. Failure to obtain prior approval of changes to the scope of work or budget may result in suspension, termination, or recovery of cooperative agreement funds.

Principal Investigator / Project Director or PI / PD means the individual designated by the Cooperator who will perform or direct the Cooperator's effort under the agreement.

Program Income

Any program income will be deducted from total allowable costs to determine the net allowable costs before calculating the Government's share of reimbursable costs, as provided in 2 CFR § 200.80.

Prohibition Provision Against Entities Requiring Certain Internal Confidential Agreements

By submission of its proposal or application, the applicant represents that it does not require any of its employees, contractors, or subrecipients seeking to report fraud, waste, or abuse to sign or comply with internal confidentiality agreements or statements prohibiting or otherwise restricting those employees, contractors, or subrecipients from lawfully reporting that waste, fraud, or abuse to a designated investigative or law enforcement representative of a Federal department or agency authorized to receive such information. Note that: (1) the bases for this representation is a prohibition in sections 743, 744 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016, Pub. L. 114-113, (Division E, Title VII, General Provisions Government-wide) and any successor provisions of law on making funds available through grants and cooperative agreements to entities with certain internal confidentiality agreements or statements; and (2) section 744 states that it does not contravene requirements applicable to Standard Form 312, Form 4414, or any other form issued by a Federal department or agency governing the nondisclosure of classified information.

Publication Requirements

Publishing project accomplishments or any portion, thereof, are subject to prior review.

Appropriate credits to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency, must be in any formally published article(s) providing FSA does not otherwise feel it appropriate to issue a disclaimer.

Suspend, Terminate, or Require Refund

FSA may elect to suspend or terminate a cooperative agreement in whole or in part, or funding of a particular work plan activity, and require refund of part or all of the cooperative agreement, with interest, where FSA has determined:

1. That the cooperator or sub-recipient of cooperative agreement funds has demonstrated insufficient progress in complying with the terms of the cooperative agreement;
2. There is reasonable evidence that shows joint funding has not been or will not be forthcoming on a timely basis; or
3. Such other cause as FSA identifies in writing to the Cooperator based on reasonable evidence (including but not limited to the use of Federal cooperative agreement funds for ineligible purposes).

Underserved farmers and ranchers means new and beginning farmers, women, veterans, minority producers, and farmers and ranchers producing and marketing their products as part of a local or regional/urban food system.

VIII. Supplemental Information

A. Contacts

For questions specific to this funding opportunity and submission of performance reports, please contact the ADODR via:

- Name: J. Latrice Hill
- Email: Latrice.Hill@wdc.usda.gov
- Telephone: (202) 690-1700.

For questions related to cooperative agreements generally, submission of financial reports, and submission of final performance reports, please contact the ADO via:

- Name: Robert Stephenson
- Email: Robert.Stephenson@wdc.usda.gov
- Telephone: 202-720-4019

For questions related to www.Grants.gov, please:

- Email support@grants.gov or
- Telephone at (800) 518-4726.

B. Reference Links

For access to www.grants.gov application web site: www.grants.gov

For access to Grants.gov application guide: [Grants.gov Applicant User Guide](#)

For access to FSA's web site: www.fsa.usda.gov

To receive certain notifications from Grants.gov: [Grants.gov Manage Subscriptions](#)

Any inconsistency between the original printed document and the disk or electronic document shall be resolved by giving precedence to the printed document.

-- END OF PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT --