

Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program

Frequently Asked Questions

GENERAL

Q. What is the definition of “middle-of-the-supply-chain”?

- A. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines “middle-of-the-supply-chain” activities as activities in the Processing and/or Aggregation and Distribution stages of the food supply chain. As an example, Processing activities may include processing, packaging, or preserving crops; extracting products from crops; and/or creating value-added products from crops. Aggregation and Distribution activities may include storing, tracking, distributing, and/or delivering crops. Similar activities not listed here may also be included.

Enhancing worker safety and/or education and/or modernizing, developing, or expanding equipment or facilities used for Processing, Aggregation, or Distribution activities are also considered to be “middle-of-the-supply-chain” activities for the purposes of this program.

Q. Which activities are NOT included in the “middle-of-the-supply-chain”?

- A. Activities related to production or to markets and consumers are **not** part of the middle-of-the-supply-chain. Costs and/or activities related to farm production are not eligible and may include farm equipment, tools, seeds or starts, or production related labor, training, or infrastructure. However, costs related to on-farm, post-harvest processing, preservation, and/or storage would be considered middle-of-the-supply-chain activities.

Costs and/or activities related to markets and consumers that are not eligible include expanding sales staff for a farm store; renovation of retail space, including additional refrigeration; marketing and promotion, etc.

Q. Will the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets provide assistance with the application process?

- A. AGM, together with program partners will host several webinars providing an overview of the program, eligibility requirements, program priorities, and the application process.

A formal Question and Answer period will be open with the release of the

Request for Proposals to address general questions about the proposal process. Questions received during webinars and office hours will also be included in the published Q&A. The deadline to submit questions will be posted with the Request for Proposals.

Q. Is technical assistance available?

- A. AGM and program partners will provide technical assistance for applicants that are selected for funding. Technical assistance will be available for entering into a grant agreement and executing the project, including record-keeping requirements, preparing for an audit, reporting, etc.

Q. What is the definition of underserved farmers?

- A. Four groups are defined by USDA as “Historically Underserved,” including farmers or ranchers who are: Beginning; Socially Disadvantaged; Veterans; and Limited Resource as described at ["Historically Underserved Farmers and Ranchers" | Natural Resources Conservation Service \(usda.gov\)](#)

Q. What is the difference between Infrastructure Grants and Equipment-Only Grants?

- A. Infrastructure Grants will fund projects that expand capacity and infrastructure for the aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, or distribution of targeted agricultural products and projects that offer more and better market opportunities and new streams of revenue to small and mid-sized agricultural producers, including those who may not have access to value-added opportunities or processing to meet market demand for premium or value-added products, such as underserved producers. This grant type is subject to match requirements. Infrastructure grants must serve more than one producer or entity.

Equipment-Only Grants are “Fixed Price” grants, meaning they will fund only equipment purchases (and not associated facility upgrades, staffing, or other costs). No match is required for this grant type. Equipment-Only Grants are expected to be released in October 2025.

Q. What are the award limits for Infrastructure Grants and Equipment-Only Grants?

- A. The minimum award amount for the Infrastructure Grants is \$100,000 and

the maximum award amount is \$3,000,000. The \$3,000,000 award cap does not include the in-kind/matching funds.

The minimum award amount for the Equipment-Only Project grants is \$10,000 and the maximum award amount is \$100,000.

Q. Who is eligible to apply for RFSI funding?

A. The following entities are eligible to apply:

1. Agricultural producers or processors, or groups of agricultural producers and processors.
2. Nonprofit organizations operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, distribution of targeted agricultural products.
3. For-profit entities operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, or distribution of targeted agricultural products, whose activities are primarily focused for the benefit of local and regional producers, and that meet the eligibility requirements of the SBA small business size standards are eligible.
4. Local government entities operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, distribution of targeted agricultural products.
5. Tribal governments operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, distribution of targeted agricultural products.
6. Institutions such as schools, universities, or hospitals bringing producers together to establish cooperative or shared infrastructure or invest in equipment that will benefit multiple producers middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, distribution of targeted agricultural product. These include organizations such schools (K-12; colleges/universities), hospitals, food banks, gleaners, food rescue, workplace cafeterias, prisons, and care centers (senior, preschools).

Q. Are applicants allowed to submit multiple proposals to RFSI?

A. Applicants may only submit one application for the Infrastructure Grants. Applicants not selected for an infrastructure award may apply for an Equipment Grant.

Q. Which commodities are eligible for RFSI funding?

A. Eligible commodities include specialty crops, dairy, grain, aquaculture, and other sectors, given that the products are meant for human consumption. Eligible specialty crops include fruit, vegetables, dried fruits, tree nuts, horticultural products such as tea or honey, and culinary and medicinal herbs

and spices. Note that some specialty crops, such as floriculture or ornamental trees, are not intended for human consumption and therefore not eligible for RFSI funding. Cannabis is also not eligible.

Q. Is a project eligible if it includes meat and/or poultry?

A. Projects exclusively supporting meat and poultry are not eligible. If, for example, a food hub processes eligible crops as well as meat and/or poultry, the proposal should demonstrate that robust tracking mechanisms are in place to ensure that RFSI funds are not used to support ineligible commodities. However, note that aquaculture is an eligible activity, given the project meets the other requirements of the RFSI.

Q. Are individual producers and/or sole owners eligible to apply?

A. Individual producers and sole owners are eligible to apply. However, those entities must be able to demonstrate that their proposal provides benefits to multiple producers and/or markets.

Q. Will I need to get a Unique Entity ID (UEI) from the System of Award Management in Sam.gov?

A. Yes, all subrecipients are required to obtain a UEI in SAM.gov prior to completing their application. This process can take multiple weeks in some instances. For information on how to register with SAM.gov and get a UEI number, visit SAM.gov | Entity Registrations. It is free to register in SAM.gov.

Q. Do I need to be in “Good Standing with the State of New York” to receive funding?

A. Yes.

Q. Should the Distressed Community Index (DCI) be where the facility/farm is located? Or, should it be the population who may benefit from the project?

A. The counties used within the DCI tool should be for the New York county(ies) benefiting from the project. If the population is outside of New York, list the counties.

ELIGIBLE OR INELIGIBLE PROJECTS

Q. Can the Infrastructure grant pay for employee housing?

A. Employee housing is ineligible.

Q. Are transportation costs allowed?

A. Costs related to middle-of-the-supply-chain are eligible (B2B), such as transporting products from farms to a processor/distributor. The transportation of products to retail outlets is not allowed.

Q. Can I use funds to purchase land, or existing buildings?

A. No. It is unallowable to use grant funds for the acquisition of buildings, facilities, or land.

Q. Are wineries/distilleries/breweries eligible?

A. Licensed NYS Farm wineries, breweries and distilleries are eligible for Equipment-only grants. They are not eligible for infrastructure grants.

Q. Is Software Technology an eligible RFSI expense?

A. Per AMS General Terms and Conditions, software purchases are not allowable. However, the RFSI Program Scope and Requirements does allow for the funding of projects aimed at modernizing via information technology systems. Specifically, for RFSI, software purchases that align with the intent of the grant are allowable. Infrastructure Grants will fund projects that expand capacity and infrastructure for the aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, or distribution of targeted agricultural products. Please note, direct sales to the consumer (end of the supply chain) does not align with the RFSI middle of the supply chain allowable activities, however connecting producers to buyers or new market opportunities would align.

FEDERAL COMPLIANCE

Q. If I am applying for a construction project, do I need to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)?

A. RFSI requires that all funded activities must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and related applicable agency regulations and instructions, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), the Endangered Species Act (ESA), other laws and regulations as outlined therein, and any applicable state, local, or tribal laws.

Applicants are not required to prepare environmental review prior to submitting an

application. In order for an environmental review to take place, applicants are required to complete the NEPA form within the application.

Q. Can I receive a NEPA Waiver?

A. No.

Q. Are construction projects subject to the Davis-Bacon Act?

A. No.

Q. Will my project need to comply with the Buy America Sourcing requirements outlined in the Build America, Buy America (BABA) provisions of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act?

A. BABA is not applicable to for-profit entities. All other Infrastructure Grant entities that surpass a \$250,000 threshold of applicable procurement costs must adhere to BABA. 2 CFR Part 184 - BUY AMERICA PREFERENCES FOR INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS: <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/part-184>

BABA is not applicable to Equipment-Only Grants as they are capped at \$99,999 and do not surpass a threshold of \$250,000

BUDGET

Q. Are matching funds required under the RFSI grant program?

A. Infrastructure Grant recipients are required to contribute 50 percent of the total proposed project cost as a match to federal funding. Match may consist of cash match, in-kind contributions, or any combination thereof. Funds from other federal grant programs may not be used as match for this cooperative agreement. Funds from state grants, including AGM grants, may be used as matching funds, so long as those costs do not originate from a federal pass-through grant, are not committed elsewhere as matching funds, and the source of those funds does not prohibit those funds from being used as match. Equipment-Only Grants do not require matching funds.

Historically underserved farmers and ranchers, disadvantaged small businesses, women-owned small businesses, and/or veteran-owned small businesses are eligible for a reduced match of 25 percent for Infrastructure Grants. Applicants must self-certify in their Infrastructure Grant applications as being eligible for this reduced match.

Only costs allowable under the federal cost principles, 2 CFR 200 Subpart E (<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200/subpart-E>), and the program terms and conditions may be used as matching funds. For example, acquired real property, including land, is an unallowable cost and therefore cannot be used to meet the match requirement, while rental costs are an allowable cost and, thus, may be used to meet match requirements.

Q. Are in-kind contributions eligible for match?

- A. In-kind contributions are eligible and may include the value of goods or services donated to the project such as staff time, volunteer time, supplies, or the use of equipment or facilities. Note that in-kind costs must be reasonable. For example, if personnel time is used as match, the time must match the actual time spent working on the project (e.g., 20 percent full time equivalent), must be what that individual would normally earn for similar work, and must be reasonable according to standard personnel rates for similar positions in the geographic locality where the work is performed.