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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement

[FOA No.: OPPE-014 & OPPE-016]

Funding Opportunity Announcement: Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) No.: 10.443 – Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers

AGENCY: Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement (OPPE), Agriculture (USDA).

ACTION: Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) for Fiscal Years 2020 and FY 2021.

SUMMARY: This notice announces the availability of funds for two fiscal years (FY 2020 and FY2021) and solicits applications from community-based and non-profit organizations, institutions of higher education, and Tribal entities to compete for financial assistance through the Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Program (hereinafter referred to as the “2501 Program”).

DATES: Only one project proposal may be submitted per eligible entity. Proposals must be submitted through <http://www.grants.gov> and received by [INSERT DATE 60 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER], at 11:59 p.m. EST. Proposals submitted after this deadline will not be considered for funding.

The OPPE will host at least two (2) teleconferences during the open period of this announcement as provided below. Additional sessions may be necessary to answer questions and clarify requirements. There is no registration required to participate.

- July 14, 2020 at 2:00pm EST
Telephone Number: (877) 692-8955
Passcode: 4438047
- July 28, 2020 at 2:00pm EST
Telephone Number: (877) 692-8955
Passcode: 6433267

ADDRESSES:

Filing a Complaint of Discrimination

To file a program discrimination complaint, you may obtain a complaint form by sending an email to cr-info@ascr.usda.gov. You or your authorized representative must sign the complaint form. You are not required to use the complaint form. You may write a letter instead. If you write a letter, it must contain all the information requested in the form and be signed by you or

your authorized representative. Incomplete information will delay the processing of your complaint. Employment civil rights complaints will not be accepted through this email address.

Send your completed complaint form or letter to USDA by mail, fax, or email:

Mail: U. S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410.

Fax: (202) 690-7442.

E-mail: program.intake@usda.gov.

For Further Information, or for Programmatic Complaints, Please Contact: U. S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement, Attn: 2501 Program Director, Jamie L. Whitten Building, Room 520-A, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250; Phone: (202) 720-6350; Fax: (202) 720-7704; E-mail: 2501grants@usda.gov.

Persons with Disabilities: Persons who require alternative means for communication (Braille large print, audiotape, etc.), should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). Additionally, alternative means for submissions due to disability status will be approved on a case-by-case basis.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The overall goal of the 2501 Program is to encourage and assist socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, veteran farmers and ranchers, and beginning farmers and ranchers with owning and operating farms and ranches and in participating equitably in the full range of agricultural, forestry, and related programs offered by USDA. In partnership with the OPPE, eligible entities may compete for funding on projects that provide education and training in agriculture, agribusiness, forestry, agriculturally related services, and USDA programs and to conduct outreach initiatives designed to accomplish those goals. This partnership includes working closely with USDA Liaisons to coordinate outreach and training initiatives, attend OPPE-led events in your proposed service territory, and collaborate with your State Food and Agriculture Council (Farm Service Agency, Natural Resource Conservation Service, and Rural Development).

Funding/Awards: The total funding provided in the 2018 Farm Bill for this competitive program is approximately \$15 million. The OPPE will award grants from this announcement, subject to availability of funds and the quality of applications received. All applicants will compete based on their organization's entity type (e.g., nonprofit organization or higher education institution), as described below. The maximum project period is three (3) years. The maximum amount of requested federal funding for projects shall not exceed \$450,000 over the 3-year period. Additionally, the maximum award per year is \$150,000. Projects that are part of multi-year initiatives will be funded in accordance with the approved statement of work and the OPPE Guidelines. Additionally, USDA has the discretion to fund multi-year projects to maximize outreach, education and technical assistance ensuring geographical distribution of funds as required in section 7 U.S.C. 2279(c)(4)(G).

Funds will be awarded to eligible entities that have documented knowledge of and experience with USDA programs and experience in providing agricultural education or other agriculturally related services to socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers or veteran farmers and ranchers during the 3-year period preceding the submission of an application. The Secretary shall give priority to nongovernmental and community-based organizations (see Section V. Application Review Information).

An applicant **MUST** be an entity or organization. “Individuals” do not meet the eligibility criteria.

Funds under this program may not be used for the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of a building or facility. Program funds may not be used for start-up or financing costs for businesses or for an organization’s capacity building. Program funds may also not be used as small agricultural loans for individual farmers or used to incentivize individuals to attend an event.

Eligible entities may receive subsequent years funding provided that:

- a) Activities and associated costs do not overlap with projects awarded in previous years; and
- b) Recipients are current and compliant with existing financial and progress reporting. The progress of existing projects, along with the percentage of funds used to date, may impact funding decisions.

The OPPE reserves the right to approve one-year no cost extensions (no additional funds) for one-year projects.

Funding will be awarded based on peer competition within the three categories described below along with the amount of anticipated funding for each category. The OPPE reserves the right to allocate funding between the three categories based upon the number and quality of applications received. There is **no commitment** by the OPPE to fund any particular application or to select a specific number of recipients within each category.

Category #1: Eligible entities described in Sections III.A.2, III.A.3, and III.A.4 (1890 Land Grant colleges and universities, 1994 Tribal Land-Grant, Alaska Native and American Indian Tribal colleges and universities, and Hispanic-Serving Institutions of higher education).

Category #2: Eligible entities described in Sections III.A.1 and III.A.6 (i.e., nonprofit organizations, community-based organizations, including a network or a coalition of community-based organizations, Indian Tribes (as defined in 25 U.S.C. § 450b), and National Tribal organizations).

Category #3: Eligible entities described in Sections III.A.5 and III.A.7 (i.e., all other institutions of higher education including 1862 colleges, nonprofit organizations without a 501(c)(3) status certification from the IRS, and other organizations or institutions, including those that received funding under this program before January 1, 1996).

Contents of this Announcement:

- I. Funding Opportunity Description
- II. Award Information
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- VI. Award Administration Information

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Background

The OPPE is committed to ensuring that socially disadvantaged and veteran farmers and ranchers are able to equitably participate in USDA programs. Differences in demographics, culture, economics, and other factors preclude a single approach to identifying solutions that can benefit our underserved farmers and ranchers. Community-based and non-profit organizations, higher education institutions, and eligible Tribal entities with an expertise in working with socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers or veteran farmers and ranchers can play a critical role in addressing the unique difficulties they face and can help improve their ability to start and maintain successful agricultural businesses. With 2501 Program funding, organizations can provide agricultural education and training and extend our outreach efforts to connect with and assist local socially disadvantaged and veteran farmers and ranchers to provide them with information on available USDA resources.

1. The 2501 Program was authorized by the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990. The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 expanded the authority of the Secretary of Agriculture (the Secretary) to provide awards under the program and transferred the administrative authority to the OPPE. The Agricultural Act of 2014 further expanded the program to include outreach and assistance to veterans. The 2501 Program extends USDA's capacity to work with members of farming and ranching communities by funding projects that enhance the equitable participation of socially disadvantaged and veteran farmers and ranchers in USDA programs. It is the OPPE's intention to build lasting relationships between USDA, recipient organizations, and socially disadvantaged and veteran farmers and ranchers.
2. **Only one proposal will be accepted from each organization.** This does not apply to applicants in the State of Massachusetts. The State fiscal transfer agent may submit multiple proposals ensuring that only one proposal is submitted on behalf of each of its individual fiscally sponsored organizations.

B. Scope of Work

The 2501 Program provides funding to eligible organizations with at least 3 years of documented history working with socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers or veteran farmers or ranchers for projects designed to provide education and training in agriculture and to assist socially disadvantaged or veteran farmers and ranchers in owning and operating viable agricultural enterprises. This is a non-construction grant. Proposals must be consistent with requirements stated in 7 U.S.C. 2279(c)(3). Under this statute, the education, training and outreach program funds shall be used exclusively:

1. To enhance coordination of the outreach, education, and training efforts authorized under agriculture programs;
2. To assist the Secretary of Agriculture in:
 - a. reaching current and prospective socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers or veteran farmers or ranchers in a linguistically appropriate manner; and
 - b. improving the participation of those farmers and ranchers in USDA programs.

There are five priority areas that support the goals of the 2501 Program. Proposals from eligible entities must address **at least two** of the five following priority areas:

1. Assist socially disadvantaged or veteran farmers and ranchers in owning and operating successful farms and ranches;
2. Improve participation among socially disadvantaged or veteran farmers and ranchers in USDA programs;
3. Build relationships between current and prospective farmers and ranchers who are socially disadvantaged or veterans and USDA's local, state, regional, and National offices;
4. Introduce agriculture-related information to socially disadvantaged or veteran farmers and ranchers through innovative training and technical assistance techniques; and
5. Introduce agricultural education targeting youth and beginning socially disadvantaged and veteran farmers and ranchers in rural and persistent poverty communities.

The OPPE is required to seek input from stakeholders providing education and training under this grant program at least annually. This is to ensure that the program is responsive to the concerns of entities providing assistance (7 U.S.C. 2279(c)(4)(J)). To fulfill this obligation, the OPPE may require Project Directors to attend an Annual Partnership Symposium that can be expensed with awarded grant funds not to exceed \$1,000 per award year. The symposium will allow participants, USDA officials, and other agriculture-related industry participants to network, encourage partnerships, share best practices, discuss programmatic requirements, share information on new and enhanced USDA programs and services, and obtain programmatic stakeholder feedback.

Stakeholder input will also be accepted by those unable to attend the annual symposium in person by September 30th of each fiscal year at: 2501grants@usda.gov.

C. Anticipated Outputs (activities), Outcomes (results), and Performance Measures

1. **Outputs (Activities).** The term “output” means an outreach, educational component, or assistance activity, task, or associated work product related to improving the ability of socially disadvantaged or veteran farmers and ranchers to own and operate farms and ranches, assistance with agriculture related activities, or guidance for participation in USDA programs. Outputs may be quantitative or qualitative but must be measurable during the period of performance.

Examples of outputs from the projects to be funded under this announcement may describe an organization’s activities and their participants such as: number of workshops or meetings held and number of participants attending (including a list of participants with contact information); frequency of services or training delivered and to whom; development of products, curriculum, or resources provided. Other examples include but are not limited to the following:

- a. number of socially disadvantaged and/or veteran farmers or ranchers served;
- b. number of conferences or training sessions held and number of socially disadvantaged and/or veteran farmers and ranchers that attended;
- c. type and topic of educational materials distributed at outreach events;
- d. creation of a program to enhance the operational viability of socially disadvantaged and/or veteran farmers and ranchers;
- e. number of applications completed by socially disadvantaged and/or veteran farmers or ranchers submitted for consideration for USDA programs; or
- f. activity that supports increased participation of socially disadvantaged farmers and/or ranchers and/or veteran farmers and ranchers in USDA programs.

Progress and Financial Reports will be required, as specified in Section VI, Subsection C, “Reporting Requirement.”

2. **Outcomes (Results).** The term “outcome” means the difference or effect that has occurred as a result from carrying out an activity, workshop, meeting, or from delivery of services related to a programmatic goal or objective. Outcomes refer to the final impact, change, or result that occurs as a direct result of the activities performed in accomplishing the objectives and goals of your project. Outcomes may refer to results that are agricultural, behavioral, social, or economic in nature. Outcomes may reflect an increase in knowledge or skills, a greater awareness of available resources or programs, or actions taken by stakeholders as a result of learning. Specifically, outcomes must be quantitative as it relates to the project goals and objectives.

Project Directors will be required to document anticipated outcomes that are funded under this announcement including, but not limited to the following:

- a. Documenting the number of new farmers and/or ranchers your organization assisted as a result of your project and the type of assistance;
 - b. Documenting race, sex, national origin, disability and number of socially disadvantaged and/or veteran farmers or ranchers applying for USDA programs and services by program area;
 - c. Documenting race, sex, national origin, disability and number of USDA program applications approved for funding, by program area, for socially disadvantaged or veteran farmers or ranchers as a result of your activities;
 - d. Documenting the number of socially disadvantaged or veteran farmers and/or ranchers that have better access to USDA Programs as a result of your outreach and/or training efforts;
 - e. Documenting the enhanced sustainability and retention of farming operations among socially disadvantaged or veteran farmers or ranchers;
 - f. Documenting higher profitability and economic stability among socially disadvantaged or veteran farmers or ranchers resulting from increased access to marketing and enhanced sales opportunities for their products; and
 - g. Documenting an increase in the number and types of USDA programs and services utilized as a result of your project.
3. Performance Measures. Performance measures are tied to the goals or objectives of each activity and ultimately the overall purpose of the project. They provide insight into the effectiveness of proposed activities by indicating areas where a project may need adjustments. Applicants must develop performance measure expectations which will occur as a result of their proposed activities. These expectations will be used as a mechanism to track the progress and success of a project. Project performance measures should include statements such as: whether workshops or technical assistance will meet the needs of farmers or ranchers in the service area and why; how much time will be spent in group training or individual hands-on training of farmers and ranchers; or whether activities will meet the demands of stakeholders. Project performance measures must include the assumptions used to make those estimates.

Consider the following questions when developing performance measurement statements:

- What is the measurable short-term and long-term impact our project will have on serving the needs of our stakeholders?

- How will my organization measure the effectiveness and efficiency of our proposed activities to meet the overall goals and objectives for this project?

II. Award Information

A. Statutory Authority

The statutory authority for this action is 7 U.S.C. 2279(c), which authorizes award funding for projects designed to provide outreach and assistance to socially disadvantaged or veteran farmers or ranchers.

B. Expected Amount of Funding

The total estimated funding expected to be available for awards in fiscal years 2020 and 2021 under this competitive opportunity is approximately \$15 million.

C. Project Period

The performance period for projects selected from this solicitation will not begin prior to the effective award date listed in the grant agreement. The maximum project period is three (3) years.

D. Award Type

Funding for selected projects will be in the form of a grant agreement which must be fully executed no later than September 30 annually. The anticipated Federal involvement will be limited to the following activities:

1. Approval of recipients' final budget and Project Narrative or statement of work accompanying the grant agreement;
2. Monitoring of recipients' performance through quarterly, annual (for multi-year projects) and final financial and performance reports; and
3. Evaluation of recipients' use of federal funds through desk audits and on-site visits.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Entities

1. Any non-profit, community-based organizations, networks, or a coalition of community-based organizations with at least 3 years of documented expertise in working with socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers or veteran farmers or ranchers that:
 - demonstrates experience in providing agricultural education or other agriculturally related services on USDA programs and services to socially disadvantaged or veteran farmers or ranchers;
 - provides documentary evidence of work with, and on behalf of, socially disadvantaged or veteran farmers or ranchers during the 3-year period preceding the submission of a proposal for assistance under this program; and
 - does not or has not engaged in activities prohibited under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.
2. An 1890 or 1994 institution of higher education (as defined in 7 U.S.C. 7601).
3. An American Indian Tribal community college or an Alaska Native cooperative college.
4. A Hispanic-Serving Institution of higher education (as defined in 7 U.S.C. 3103).
5. Any other institution of higher education (as defined in 20 U.S.C. 1001) that has demonstrated experience in providing agricultural education or other agricultural-related services to socially disadvantaged or veteran farmers or ranchers.
6. An Indian Tribe (as defined in 25 U.S.C. 5304) or a national tribal organization that has demonstrated experience in providing agricultural education or other agriculturally related services to socially disadvantaged or veteran farmers or ranchers.
7. All other organizations or institutions that received funding under this program before January 1, 1996, but only with respect to projects that the Secretary considers similar to projects previously carried out by the entity under this program.

B. Cost-Sharing or Matching

There are no cost-sharing nor matching requirements associated with this program. Applicants may charge their negotiated indirect cost rate or 10 percent, whichever is lower. Indirect cost rates exceeding 10 percent will not be permitted.

C. Threshold Eligibility Criteria

Applications from eligible entities that meet all criteria will be evaluated as follows:

1. Proposals must comply with the submission instructions and requirements set forth in Section IV of this announcement. Pages in excess of the page limitation will not be considered.
2. Proposals must be received through Grants.gov as specified in Section IV of this announcement on or before the proposal submission deadline. Applicants will receive an electronic confirmation receipt of their proposal from Grants.gov.
3. Proposals received after the submission deadline will not be considered. **Please note that in order to submit proposals, organizations must create accounts in Grants.gov and in the System for Awards Management (www.SAM.gov); both of which could take several weeks.** Therefore, it is strongly suggested that organizations begin this process immediately. Registering early could prevent unforeseen delays in submitting your proposal.
4. Proposals must address a minimum of two priority areas to provide outreach and assistance to socially disadvantaged or veteran farmers or ranchers as stated in Section I, Part B, Scope of Work.
5. Recipients of a 2501 Grant with a Period of Performance that extends beyond 90 days of the current fiscal year are not eligible to apply. For example, current 2501 Grant recipients must complete their projects by December 31, 2020, to be eligible to apply. Organizations that were awarded a 2501 Grant in FY2019 whose Period of Performance extends beyond this date are ineligible.
6. Incomplete or partial applications will not be eligible for consideration.

IV. Proposal and Submission Information

A. Data Universal Numbering System

In accordance with the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) and the USDA implementation, all applicants must obtain and provide an identifying number from Dun and Bradstreet's (D&B) Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS). Applicants can receive a DUNS number, at no cost, by calling the toll-free DUNS number request line at (866) 705-5711 or visiting the D&B website at www.dnb.com.

B. System for Award Management (SAM)

It is a requirement to register for SAM (<http://www.sam.gov>). There is NO fee to register for this site. This registration must be maintained and updated annually. Applicants can register or update their profile, at no cost, by visiting the SAM website at www.sam.gov.

This is a requirement to registering for Grants.gov where all organizations must submit their application.

Per 2 CFR part 200, applicants are required to: 1) be registered in SAM **prior to** submitting an application; 2) provide a valid unique entity identifier in the application; and 3) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which the organization has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency. The OPPE may not make a Federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements. If an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time the OPPE is ready to make a Federal award, the OPPE may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant.

SAM contains the publicly available data for all active exclusion records entered by the Federal Government identifying those parties excluded from receiving Federal contracts, certain subcontracts, and certain types of Federal financial and non-financial assistance and benefits. All applicant organizations and their key personnel will be vetted through SAM to ensure they are in compliance with this requirement and not on the Excluded Parties List. Organizations identified as having delinquent Federal debt may contact the Treasury Offset Program at (800) 304-3107 for instructions on resolution but will not be awarded a 2501 Program grant prior to resolution.

Should an applicant be awarded a grant, ezFedGrants (USDA's financial grants management system) is linked with SAM to ensure funding payments are directed properly as entities must enter their banking information through SAM; as a result, Federal agencies cannot award funding to any organization not properly/fully registered in SAM.

C. Obtain Proposal Package from Grants.gov (www.grants.gov)

All applicants must register for an account on Grants.gov to submit their application. There is no cost for registration. All applications must be submitted through Grants.gov. This website is managed by the Department of Health and Human Services, not the OPPE. Many Federal agencies use this website to post Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOA). Please click on the "Support" tab to contact their customer support personnel if you need help with submitting your application.

Applicants may download individual grant proposal forms from Grants.gov. For assistance with Grants.gov, please consult the Applicant User Guide at <http://grants.gov/assets/ApplicantUserGuide.pdf>.

Applicants are required to submit proposals through Grants.gov. Applicants will be required to register with Grants.gov to begin the proposal submission process. We strongly suggest you initiate this process immediately to avoid processing delays due to registration requirements.

Federal agencies post funding opportunities on Grants.gov. The OPPE is not responsible for submission issues associated with Grants.gov. If you experience submission issues, please contact Grants.gov support staff for assistance.

Proposals must be submitted by [INSERT DATE 60 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER], via Grants.gov at 11:59 p.m. EST. Proposals submitted after this deadline will not be considered.

D. Content of Proposal Package Submission

All submissions must contain completed and electronically signed original application forms, as well as a Project Narrative and a Budget Narrative as described below:

1. Forms, documents, and attachments. The forms listed below can be found in the proposal package at Grants.gov and must be submitted with all applications. Required forms are provided in the package as fillable forms. Applicants must download and complete these forms and submit them in the application submission portal at Grants.gov. PDF documents listed below are documents the applicant must create and submit in PDF format. Please use the checklist of documents below to submit your application through Grants.gov:

- Standard Form (SF) 424, Application for Federal Assistance
- Project/Performance Site Location(s)
- Project Abstract Summary
- Project Narrative File (this is **where you will attach your Project Narrative in PDF format**)
- Standard Form (SF) 424A, Budget Information–Non-Construction Programs
- Budget Narrative File (this is **where you will attach your Budget Narrative in PDF format**)
- Standard Form (SF) 424B, Assurances - Non-Construction Programs
- Key Contacts Form (please provide first, middle, and last names)
- Form AD-1047 Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension, and Other Responsibility Matters (Primary Covered Transactions)
- Form AD-1048 Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension, Ineligibility and Voluntary Exclusion (lower Tier Covered Transactions)
- Form AD-1049 Certification Regarding Drug-Free Workplace Requirements (Grants)
- Form AD-3030 Representations Regarding Felony Conviction and Tax Delinquent Status for Corporate Applicants
- Form AD-3031, Assurance Regarding Felony Conviction or Tax Delinquent Status for Corporate Applicants
- Attachments Form (**where you may place all your appendices**)

Please note, additional required forms from organizations being awarded 2501 Grant funds will be provided for execution upon grant approval.

2. Below is further guidance, where needed, for completing the forms, documents, and attachment forms listed above.

SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance

Complete all highlighted areas on this form. Please pay particular attention to block 18a of the SF-424. This is the amount of Federal funding you are requesting under the 2501 Program. This form is the official requesting document and the amount that will be considered if you should have any discrepancies between this form and your Budget Information Form, SF-424A. Ensure this form is completed with accuracy; particularly email addresses and phone numbers. The OPPE may not be able to reach you if your information is incorrect.

Project/Performance Site Location(s)

Complete all highlighted areas on this form. Add additional locations if your project will be carried out at additional sites.

Project Abstract Summary

A Project Abstract Summary is a concise summary about your project. No points will be given or subtracted for the Project Summary Page as it will be used only for informational purposes. It may be used in its entirety or in part for media purposes to include press releases, informational emails to potential stakeholders or partners, to provide upper echelons of government with a snapshot of an organization, and for demographic purposes. **Please do not restate the objectives of the 2501 Program** (i.e. “to provide outreach and assistance for socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers and veterans farmers and ranchers”); the Project Abstract Summary should reflect the goal of your specific project. Please limit your Project Abstract Summary to 250 words and include the following:

- Your organization’s name;
- Name of your project;
- Three or four sentences describing your project;
- The primary populations/communities you serve;
- The project’s geographic service area (counties, state(s), etc.); and
- Project Director’s name, email address, and telephone number.

Project Narrative (not to exceed 30 double-spaced pages)

The Project Narrative is a document that you create. It must include a timeline of proposed activities. Formatting requirements for Project Narratives are 1-inch margins and 12-point font, Number each page of the Project Narrative to indicate the total number of pages (i.e., 1 of 30, 2 of 30, etc.). **To ensure fairness and uniformity for all applicants, Project Narratives not conforming to this stipulation may not be considered.**

- Project proposals should include a well-conceived strategy for addressing the priority areas stated in Section I, Part B, Scope of Work. Organizations should state which priority areas will be addressed. Additionally, proposals must: 1) define and establish the existence of the needs of socially

disadvantaged farmers or ranchers or veteran farmers or ranchers, or both; 2) identify the geographic area of service; and 3) discuss the potential impact of the project; and 4) clearly document how you plan to fulfill the requirement to coordinate efforts with the USDA Liaisons and SFAC in your service territory.

- **Programmatic Capability:** Project proposals must: 1) identify the experience of the organization(s) taking part in the project (past successes); 2) identify the names of organizations that will be your partners in the project if any; (3) identify the qualifications, relevant experience, education, and publications of each Project Director or collaborator; (4) specifically address the work to be completed by key personnel and their roles and responsibilities within the scope of the proposed project. This includes partnering scenarios whereas each partners' roles and responsibilities must be defined.
- **Financial Management Experience:** Document a demonstrated ability to successfully manage and complete your project by including details of past successfully completed projects and financial management experiences.
- **Tracking and Measuring:** Clearly document a detailed plan for tracking and measuring the progress and results of the project in terms of achieving expected project outputs and outcomes as stated in Section I, Part C, Performance Measures.
- In an organized format, create a timeline for each task to be accomplished during the period of performance timeframe. Relate each task to one of the five priority areas in Section I, Part B. The timeline is part of the 20-page limit but can be as simple as a one-page description of tasks. The timeline may be in a table format.

Please attach your Project Narrative in PDF format to the Mandatory Project Narrative form in your Grants.gov package.

SF-424A, Budget Information–Non-Construction Programs

Please provide as much information as possible on the SF-424A; particularly for multi-year projects. For example, on page 1 of SF-424A, line 1 across may indicate year one of your project, line 2 across may indicate year two of your project, and line 3 across may indicate year three of your project. On page 1A of SF-424A, columns 1 through 3 may represent each year of your project. All cost categories on page 1A of this form are considered direct costs. Please remember that your indirect cost rate may not exceed the 10 percent statutory limitation on indirect costs found in 7 U.S.C. 2279(l)(7).

Budget Narrative (not to exceed 5 pages)

The Budget Narrative is a document that you create. It must be no more than five pages. It does NOT have to be double spaced. You may use tables. The Budget

Narrative should identify and describe the costs associated with the proposed project, including sub-awards or contracts and indirect costs. These costs should be very detailed and descriptive as to their purpose. Please review 2 CFR part 200, subpart E, to ensure your project is not planned with unallowable costs. Applicants may charge their negotiated indirect cost rate or 10 percent, whichever is lower. **Indirect cost rates exceeding 10 percent will not be permitted.** Other funding sources may also be identified in the Budget Narrative. Each cost indicated must be reasonable, allocable, necessary, and allowable under Federal Cost Principles (2 CFR part 200, subpart E–Cost Principles) in order to be funded.

Special notes when creating your budget:

1. 2501 Program funds may not be used for the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of a building or facility. Program funds may not be used for start-up or financing costs for businesses or for capacity building. Program funds may also not be used as small agricultural loans for individual farmers or used to incentivize individuals to attend an event
2. Costs must be deemed reasonable. This includes salaries for key personnel which may not exceed the prevailing wage rates established by the Department of Labor by occupation and geographical area (see 2 CFR 200.404 and appendix II(D)).
3. Food for conferences may not exceed \$10 per person. Additionally, cattle for demonstration projects only, may not exceed \$4000, which includes any transportation costs, feed/feeding lot, etc.). Grant funds may NOT be used to pay attendees as an incentive for participation in conferences nor be advertised as such. For a list of unallowable costs, please see 2 CFR part 200, subpart E.

Please attach your Budget Narrative in PDF format to the Mandatory Budget Narrative form in your Grants.gov package.

SF 424B, Assurances - Non-Construction Programs

Please review, complete, and submit this form as required.

Key Contacts Form

Provide first, middle, and last names of all key personnel that will be working on the proposed project. All organizations should submit at least a Project Director or Manager and a Financial Representative. Additional Key Contacts Forms may be used as necessary. **Please ensure this form is completed with accuracy.**

Individuals not listed on an applicants' Key Contacts Form will not receive information about or access to data that concerns the applicant organization.

Form AD-1047 Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension, and Other Responsibility Matters (Primary Covered Transactions)

Please review, complete, and submit this form as required.

Form AD-1048 Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension, Ineligibility and Voluntary Exclusion (lower Tier Covered Transactions)

Please review, complete, and submit this form as required.

Form AD-1049 Certification Regarding Drug-Free Workplace Requirements (Grants)

Please review, complete, and submit this form as required.

Form AD-3030 Representations Regarding Felony Conviction and Tax Delinquent Status for Corporate Applicants

Please review, complete, and submit this form as required.

Form AD-3031, Assurance Regarding Felony Conviction or Tax Delinquent Status for Corporate Applicants

Please review, complete, and submit this form as required.

Attachments Form for Appendices

Organizations may submit abbreviated Articles of Incorporation for recently established organizations (must have been established at least 3 years prior to this application); résumés for key personnel; Letters of Commitment; Letters of Intent, Partnership Agreements, or Memoranda of Understanding with partner organizations; Letters of Support; 501(c)(3) certification from the IRS (if applicable), or other supporting documentation which is encouraged but not required. Using this form in your Grants.gov application package, applicants can consolidate all supplemental materials into one attachment or attach appendices documents individually. Do not include documents from other sections as an Appendix.

DO NOT PASSWORD PROTECT ANY OF YOUR SUBMITTED DOCUMENTS OR FORMS. Password protected documents cannot be viewed by the OPPE or the Peer Review Panel.

E. Sub-awards and Partnerships

Funding may be used to provide sub-awards, which includes using sub-awards to fund partnerships; however, the recipient must utilize at least 50 percent of the total funds awarded, and no more than three sub-awards will be permitted. All sub-awardees must comply with applicable requirements for sub-awards. Applicants must provide documentation of a competitive bidding process for services, contracts, and products, including consultants and contractors, and conduct cost and price analyses to the extent required by applicable procurement regulations.

The OPPE awards funds to one eligible applicant as the lead award recipient. Please indicate a lead applicant as the responsible party if other organizations are named as partners or co-applicants or members of a coalition or consortium. The lead award recipient will be held accountable to the OPPE for the proper administrative requirements and expenditure of all funds.

F. Submission Dates and Times

The closing date and time for receipt of proposal submissions is [INSERT DATE 60 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER], at 11:59 p.m., EST, via Grants.gov. Proposals received after the submission deadline will be considered late without further consideration. Proposals must be submitted through Grants.gov without exception. Additionally, organizations must also be registered in the System of Awards Management (SAM) at www.sam.gov.

Creating an account for both websites can take several weeks to receive account verification and/or PIN numbers. Please allow sufficient time to complete access requirements for these websites. Grants.gov supports many Federal granting agencies and their applicants. Delaying the submission of your application until the last day could be result in your application not being received on time due to issues pertaining to a high volume of users, system maintenance, issues with registration, having a pending registration because of a backlogged system, and expired SAM.gov registrations.

The proposal submission deadline is firm.

G. Confidential Information

In accordance with 2 CFR part 200, the names of entities submitting proposals, as well as proposal contents and evaluations, will be kept confidential to the extent permissible by law. Any information that the applicant wishes to have considered as confidential, privileged, or proprietary should be clearly marked as such in the proposal. If an applicant chooses to include confidential or proprietary information in the proposal, it will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law.

H. Pre-Submission Proposal Assistance

- 1. The OPPE may not assist individual applicants by reviewing draft proposals or providing advice on how to respond to evaluation criteria.** However, the OPPE will respond to questions from individual applicants regarding eligibility criteria, administrative issues related to the submission of the proposal, and requests for clarification regarding the announcement. Any questions should be submitted to 2501grants@usda.gov. Additionally, the OPPE will host public teleconferences to address questions and clarify requirements during the open period of this solicitation. Dates, time, and phone numbers are provided on Page 1 of this announcement.
2. The OPPE will post questions and answers relating to this funding opportunity during its open period on the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) section of our website: <http://www.outreach.usda.gov/grants/>. Reviewing this section of our website will likely save you valuable time. The OPPE will update the FAQs on a weekly basis and conduct teleconferences on an as-needed basis.
3. Please visit our website: <https://www.outreach.usda.gov/grants/index.htm> to review the most recent Terms and Conditions for administering our grants. This version is subject to change upon new program requirements.
4. Applicants selected for funding must inform their participants that USDA, or any of its third-party representatives, may contact them for quality assurance.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

Only eligible entities whose proposals meet the threshold criteria in Section III of this announcement will be reviewed according to the evaluation criteria set forth below. Applicants should explicitly and fully address these criteria as part of their proposal package. Each proposal will be evaluated under the regulations established under 2 CFR part 200.

An External Peer Review Panel (Panel) will use a point system to rate each proposal, awarding a maximum of 105 points for nonprofit and community-based organizations (75 points, plus an additional 30 discretionary points for secretarial priorities) and 100 points for all other applicants (70 points, plus an additional 30 discretionary points for secretarial priorities). Each proposal will be reviewed by at least two members of the Peer Review Panel. Panel members will review, and score all submitted applications. The Panel will numerically score and rank each application and funding will be awarded within the three funding categories. Funding decisions will be based on the Panel's recommendations. Final funding decisions will be made by the designated approving official and are not appealable.

Please be patient as processing all submitted applications, vetting key personnel, proposal reviews, approval process, and agreement creation is a lengthy process that takes approximately two to three months. All applicants will be notified electronically of their application status when final selections have been made and will be provided an opportunity for application feedback as provided within the correspondence.

B. Evaluation Criteria for New Grants Proposals

Criteria	Maximum Points
<p>1. <i>Project Narrative:</i> Under this criterion, your proposal must address <u>at least two</u> of the five priority areas identified in Section I, Part B, Scope of Work and will be evaluated to the extent to which the narrative includes a well-conceived strategy for addressing those requirements and objectives (see Section IV, Part D.2. Project Narrative, for additional information). Please note that applicants may assist <u>either</u> socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, or veteran farmers and ranchers, or both groups in the proposal. There are no additional points for addressing both of these groups. Conversely, there are <u>no points deducted</u> if your proposal addresses only one of these groups.</p> <p>In addition, the OPPE may award up to 30 discretionary points (six (5) points for each bullet shown below) for the following (see Section I, Part B, Scope of Work):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nongovernmental and community-based organizations with a documented history working with socially disadvantaged and/or veteran farmers or ranchers (2018 Farm Bill provision). • Projects that are carried out in states or communities identified as Opportunity Zones (https://www.cdfifund.gov/Pages/Opportunity-Zones.aspx) • Projects located in rural (https://eligibility.sc.egov.usda.gov/eligibility/welcomeAction.do) or persistent poverty communities (https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/county-typology-codes.aspx) that address the following five (5) priorities: e-Connectivity, Economic Development, Innovation and Technology, Workforce Development, and Quality of Life (such as reducing recidivism, access to mental health programs, etc.). See the USDA Rural Task Force Report (https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/rural-prosperity-report.pdf); • Projects designed to assist socially disadvantaged beginning and/or youth farmers and/or ranchers (as defined in 7 U.S.C. 2279); 	<p style="text-align: center;">30</p> <p style="text-align: center;">30</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects with an emphasis on partnering and leveraging funding with other organizations, entities or programs to maximize areas of coverage in conducting training and outreach services (i.e., nonprofits, for profits, Federal, state, tribal and local entities, higher education institutions, etc.). Partners’ roles and responsibilities must be defined to determine the involvement and efforts to increase training and outreach to socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers to qualify for these points. • Projects with a focus on socially disadvantaged and veteran heirs’ property issues/resolution; financial literacy; and increased profitability of agricultural operations of socially disadvantaged and veteran farmers and ranchers through effective and proven marketing opportunities to increase access to capital and markets. 	
<p>2. Programmatic Capability: Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project considering the applicant’s: organizational experience, staff expertise and qualifications, and the organization’s resources (see Section IV, Part D, 2. Programmatic Capability). The organization must also clearly document its historical successes and future plans to continue assisting socially disadvantaged and veteran farmers and ranchers.</p>	10
<p>3. Financial Management Experience: Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their demonstrated ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project considering the applicants’ past performance in successfully completing and managing prior funding agreements (see Section IV, Part D, 2. Financial Management Experience). Past performance documentation on successfully completed projects may be at the Federal, state, or local community level. Per 2 CFR 200.205, if an applicant is a prior recipient of Federal awards, their record in managing that award will be reviewed, including timeliness of compliance with applicable reporting requirements and conformance to the terms and conditions of previous Federal awards.</p>	5
<p>4. Tracking and Measuring: Under this criterion, the applicant’s proposal will be evaluated based upon clearly documenting a detailed plan for tracking and measuring their progress toward achieving the expected project outputs (see Section I, Part C, 1. Outputs Activities). Applicants should indicate how they intend to clearly document the effectiveness of their project in achieving proposed thresholds or benchmarks in relation to stated goals and objectives (see Section I, Part C, 2 Outcomes Results). For</p>	

<p>example, state how your organization plans to connect socially disadvantaged or veteran farmers or ranchers with USDA agricultural programs. Specifically, how many new or existing farmers and ranchers were assisted in <u>applying</u> for USDA’s programs and services, versus the number of farmers and ranchers <u>approved</u>. Applicants must clearly demonstrate how they will ensure timely and successful completion of the project with a reasonable time schedule for execution of the tasks associated with the project. This criterion should clearly address how you will quantify the tracking of your progress and measuring the success of your planned project (see Section I, Part C, 3. Performance Measures).</p>	<p>15</p>
<p>5. Budget: Under this criterion, your proposed project budget will be evaluated to determine whether costs are reasonable, allowable, allocable, and necessary to accomplish the proposed goals and objectives (see 2 CFR 200.404 and appendix II-D). The proposed budget must provide a detailed breakdown of the approximate funding used for each major activity (see Section IV, Part D.2. Budget Narrative). Additionally, indirect costs (10 percent maximum) must be appropriately applied. For a list of unallowable costs, please see 2 CFR part 200, subpart E.</p>	<p>10</p>

C. Selection of Reviewers

All applications will be reviewed by the Panel. Panel members are selected based upon training and experience in assisting socially disadvantaged and veteran farmers and ranchers. This assistance includes, but is not limited to, bringing increased awareness of USDA’s programs and services in underserved communities, outreach, technical assistance, cooperative extension services, civil rights, education, statistical and ethnographic data collection and analysis, and agricultural programs, and are drawn from a diverse group of experts, including applicant peers, to create a balanced panel.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Proposal Notifications and Feedback

1. Successful applicants will be notified by the OPPE via telephone, email, and/or postal mail that its proposed project has been recommended for award. **The notification will be sent to the Project Manager listed on the SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance.** Project Managers should be the Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) and authorized to sign on behalf of the organization. It is imperative that this individual is responsive to notifications by the OPPE. If the individual is no longer in the position, please notify the OPPE immediately to submit

the new contact for the application by updating your organization's Key Contacts form and forwarding a résumé of the new key personnel. The grant agreement will be forwarded to the recipient for execution and must be returned to the OPPE Director, who is the authorizing official. Once grant documents are executed by all parties, authorization to begin work will be given. At a minimum, this process can take up to 30 days from the date of notification.

2. Within 10 days of award status notification, unsuccessful applicants may request feedback on their application. Feedback will be provided as expeditiously as possible. Feedback sessions will be scheduled contingent upon the number of requests and in accordance with 7 CFR 2500.026.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

All awards resulting from this solicitation will be administered in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards codified at 2 CFR part 200, as supplemented by USDA implementing regulations at 2 CFR parts 400 and 415, and the OPPE Federal Financial Assistance Programs—General Award Administrative Procedures, 7 CFR part 2500. In compliance with its obligations under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Executive Order 13166, it is the policy of the OPPE to provide timely and meaningful access for persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) to projects, programs, and activities administered by Federal grant recipients. Recipient organizations must comply with these obligations upon acceptance of grant agreements as written in the OPPE's Terms and Conditions. Following these guidelines is essential to the success of our mission to improve access to USDA programs for socially disadvantaged and veteran farmers and ranchers.

C. Reporting Requirement

Your approved statement of work, timeline, and budget are your guiding documents in carrying out the activities of your project and for your reporting requirements. Please familiarize yourself with USDA's grants management system called ezFedGrants: <https://www.nfc.usda.gov/FSS/ClientServices/ezFedGrants/>. In accordance with 2 CFR part 200, the following reporting requirements will apply to awards provided under this FOA. The OPPE reserves the right to revise the schedule and format of reporting requirements as necessary in the award agreement.

1. Quarterly Progress Reports and Financial Reports will be required as follows:

- *Quarterly Progress Reports.* The recipient is required to provide a detailed narrative of project performance and activities as described in the award agreement. Quarterly progress reports must be submitted to the designated OPPE official via ezFedGrants within 30 days after the end of each calendar quarter. This includes, but is not limited to, activities completed, events held, and the release of sign-in sheets with participants' contact information.

- Quarterly Financial Reports. The recipient must submit SF 425, Federal Financial Report to the designated OPPE official via ezFedGrants within 30 days after the end of each calendar quarter.
2. Annual reports may be required for multi-year projects.
 3. Final Progress and Financial Reports will be required upon project completion. The Final Progress Report must include a summary of the project or activity throughout the funding period, achievements of the project or activity, and a discussion of overall successes and issues experienced in conducting the project or project activities. It should convey the impact your project had on the communities you served and discuss the project's accomplishments in achieving expected outcomes. This requirement includes, but is not limited to, the number of new USDA applicants as a result of your award, the number of approved applicants for USDA programs and services, increased awareness of USDA programs and services, etc.
 4. The final Financial Report should consist of a complete SF-425 indicating the total costs of the project. Final Progress and Financial Reports must be submitted to the designated OPPE official via ezFedGrants within 90 days after the completion of the award period as follows:

Report	Performance Period	Due Date	Grace Period
Form SF-425, Federal Financial Report and Progress Report (<i>Due Quarterly</i>)	1 October thru 31 December	12/31/2020	1/30/2021
	1 January thru 31 March	3/31/2021	4/30/2021
	1 April thru 30 June	6/30/2021	7/30/2021
	1 July thru 30 September	9/30/2021	10/30/2021
Annual (for multi-year project) and Final Progress and Financial Reports	Earlier of December 30, 2021, or 90 days after project completion.		

***Dates subject to change at the discretion of the OPPE.**

Signed this 23 day of June 2020.

Jacqueline Davis-Slay,

Deputy Director,

Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement.

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