USDA Agricultural Marketing Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) and Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

[Program Information](#)

[Eligibility Information](#)

[Application Process](#)

[Grants.gov Information](#)

[SAM Registration](#)

[Cost Share Information](#)

[Review Process and Applicant Notifications](#)

[Allowable/Unallowable Costs](#)

[Reviewers](#)

Program Information

Question: What is the Local Agriculture Market (LAMP) Program?
Answer: LAMP is authorized through the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (Farm Bill) (Pub. L. No. 115— 343), which joined local and regional food systems programs under the umbrella program: the Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP), Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP), Regional Food System Partnerships (RFSP) Program and the Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG). LAMP helps coordinate local and regional food systems funding across agencies, and maintain the core mission, priorities, and activities of each program.

Question: What is the difference between the Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) and the Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP)?
Answer: FMPP promotes direct-to-consumer activities (including direct producer-to-retail, direct producer-to- restaurant, and direct producer-to-institutional market). LFPP promotes intermediary supply chain activities (activities that move products from the producer to markets, but the activities do not involve selling directly to the consumer such as processing, aggregation, distribution, and storage of local and regional food products). Please refer to the corresponding Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for more information about each program.

Question: What is the definition of a local or regional food business enterprise?
Answer: An organization or business entity that functions as an intermediary between producers (farmers or growers) and buyers by carrying out one or more of the following local or regional food supply chain activities—including aggregating, storing, processing, and/or distributing locally or regionally produced food products—to meet local and regional market demand.

Question: What is the project duration for FMPP and LFPP projects?
Answer: Project duration is determined by the program project type for each program component (FMPP or LFPP). Please refer to the corresponding NOFO for more information.

Eligibility Information

Question: Who can apply for an FMPP and LFPP grant?
Answer: All applicants must be domestic entities (organizations) owned, operated, and located within the 50 United States and U.S. territories. Individuals are not eligible to apply. A list of eligible entities with their definitions can be found in section 2.1 of the NOFO.

Question: Can a sole proprietorship apply for an FMPP or LFPP grant?
Answer: Yes, the project must show evidence of existing community support and engagement and benefit more than one agricultural producer (farmer or rancher) or food business who sell their agricultural products or services. The applicant would use his/her Internal Revenue Service (IRS) registered Tax Identification Number to register with Unique Entity identifier (UEI)/ System for Award Management (SAM).

Question: Do I have to be a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit to be eligible?
Answer: No, you can still apply without being a 501 (c)(3) organization. See section 2.1 of the NOFO for more information on eligible applicant entities.

Question: What is a fiscal sponsor? How can I apply using a fiscal sponsor?
Answer: Fiscal sponsorship is a formal arrangement in which an organization (normally with 501 (c)(3) status) sponsor another organization (normally newly formed) that may lack exempt status or the capacity to perform administrative functions. Applicants may apply directly and establish a contract with a fiscal sponsor or use a fiscal sponsor to apply on behalf of the applicant. Please refer to section 2.3.1 in the corresponding NOFOs for more information.

Note: An applicant organization cannot accept an award and later transfer the award to another organization (including a fiscal sponsor/agent).

Application Process

Question: When is the deadline to apply?
Answer: Refer to the corresponding NOFO to determine the application due date. You are encouraged to budget ample time to complete all registrations as well as the required application components described in the NOFO.

Question: Can I submit my application by fax, email, postal mail, or hand delivered?
Answer: No. AMS will NOT accept applications submitted by fax, paper, email, postal mail, or hand delivered. All applications must be submitted electronically through the Grants.gov. Please refer to the corresponding NOFO and AMS Late and/or Nonresponsive Applications policy for more information.

Question: Can I edit the FMPP and LFPP Project Narrative?
Answer: No. The FMPP and LFPP Project Narrative template cannot be changed (text, tables or pages cannot be deleted nor margins adjusted). Changes to the Project Narrative template may result in the application being removed from consideration, or an application receiving a reduced score.

Question: If I cannot open the FMPP and LFPP Project Narrative or the Turnkey Project Narrative template, can I submit my own Project Narrative?
Answer: No. Applicants are required to submit the Project Narratives template specified in the NOFO. Project Narrative templates are linked in the NOFO and are available on the programs' website.

Question: Does the supporting documentation count toward the FMPP and LFPP Project Narrative page limit?
Answer: No. The supporting documentation does not count towards the page limit specified in the NOFO. Examples of supporting documents are partner/collaborators letters, cost share letters, and critical infrastructure letters. Exceeding the page limit may disqualify your application.

Question: Do proposed projects have to address all outcomeslisted in the Project Narrative template?
Answer: No. Applicants are required to complete all outcomes and related indicators that are relevant (apply) to the project with benchmark and/or estimated (target) numbers.

Question: Can I apply for both FMPP and LFPP grants?
Answer: Yes. Note that applicants are limited to receiving **one** LFPP award and **one** FMPP award in a given fiscal year. Applicants must demonstrate the capacity to manage and meet Federal grants management requirements to manage multiple awards. See section 2.3 in the NOFO for more information.

Question: Can I apply if I already have another FMPP or LFPP grant?
Answer: To be eligible to apply for another award under the same program component for which an applicant has an open award, an applicant must submit all required close-out documentation related to the open award by the application due date specified in the NOFO.

Question: Can I receive an FMPP or LFPP grant and a grant from a different USDA agency (VAPG, Farm to School, RFSP, etc.)?
Answer: Yes, if the projects have specifically different objectives, you may receive both an FMPP or LFPP grant and a grant from a different USDA agency. Please check with the other federal program to ensure that such activity does not violate the terms and conditions of the applicable grant program.

Question: Can I submit the same proposal to both FMPP and LFPP?
Answer: You must submit different proposals to each program. Each proposal should be for different project activities and meet the specific purposes of the program.

Question: What is a Turnkey Marketing and Promotion Application?
Answer: It is a type of application that offers a streamline approach for Project Narrative completion. Applicants are provided with pre-defined activities to select from.

- Identify and analyze new or improved market opportunities.
- Develop or revise a marketing plan.
- Design or purchase marketing and promotion media.
- Implement a marketing plan.
- Evaluate marketing and promotional activities.

Applicants applying to the Turnkey project type must conduct a minimum of 3 of the pre-defined activities.

Question: What is a Turnkey Recruitment and Training Application?
Answer: It is a type of application that offers a streamline approach for Project Narrative completion. Applicants are provided with pre-defined activities to select from.

- Identify and analyze new or improved strategies for vendor and producer recruitment, training, or both.
- Develop or revise strategies or plans for vendor and producer recruitment, training, or both.
- Design materials for vendor and producer recruitment, training, or both.
- Implement plans for vendor and producer recruitment, training, or both.
- Evaluate outcomes related to vendor and producer recruitment, training, or both.

Applicants applying to the Turnkey project type must conduct a minimum of 3 of the specific pre-defined activities.

Question: Can I submit a Turnkey Applications and add additional objectives and/or activities?
Answer: No. Applicants applying to the Turnkey project types should not propose any additional activities beyond the pre-defined list provided on the NOFOs. Doing so may disqualify the application from consideration.

Question: Can I edit the Turnkey Project Narrative template to make it applicable to other project categories that are not Marketing and Promotion or Recruitment and Training related?
Answer: No. Turnkey Marketing and Promotion Project Narrative and Turnkey Recruitment and Training Project Narrative are exclusively designed for these project types. The Project Narrative templates cannot be changed (text, tables, or pages cannot be deleted nor margins adjusted). Changes to the Project Narrative template may result in the application being removed from consideration, or an application receiving a reduced score.

Question: Does the supporting documentation count toward the Turnkey Project Narrative page limit?
Answer: No. The supporting documentation does not count towards the page limit specified in the NOFO. Examples of supporting documents are partner/collaborators letters, cost share letters, and critical infrastructure letters. Exceeding the page limit may disqualify your application.

Question: Can I submit an FMPP or LFPP Application and a FMPP Turnkey or LFPP Turnkey Application?
Answer: Yes. You can submit both applications. However, section 2.3 Limit on the Number of Awards is applicable.

Question: Can AMS staff member review a draft of my application prior to submission?
Answer: AMS cannot review draft applications before they are submitted through Grants.gov. However, if you have specific questions about allowable costs and activities, you are welcome to reach out to us via email at FMLFPPgrants@usda.gov.

Question: Is it required that the critical resources and infrastructure be in place at the time of the application submission?
Answer: Yes, if your project depends on critical resources and/or infrastructure for its start-up, implementation, and completion of the project, those critical resources and/or infrastructure must be in place and in working condition at the time the application is submitted. For example, land, structures, shared-use kitchen (with all permits) and/or other resources must be in place and committed prior to applying. A building which is under construction at the time an application is submitted is not considered to be in working condition. Not having proof of critical resources may disqualify you for funding. Refer to section 4.9 of the NOFO for more information.

Question: If a lease is one year at a time. Is it acceptable to indicate, “Year 1 is secured in the Critical Infrastructure letter, with years 2 and 3 likely happening, or another equal space will be located”?
Answer: If the success of the market is contingent upon the location of the market, then you must show that the market location is secured for the duration of the project.

Question: Are we required to partner with another organization or entity to apply and if so, are letters of commitment from partner organizations required?
Answer: Yes, applicants must have at least one partner and/or collaborator and letters of commitment must be provided for each partner/collaborator. Applicants must demonstrate that their project is benefiting more than one agricultural producer or food business and that they are not the sole beneficiary of the award. In addition, applicants are required to show evidence of existing community support and engagement.

Grants.gov Information

Question: What does AOR stand for?
Answer: AOR is the Authorized Organization Representative, which is the person who has the authority to sign and submit grant applications on behalf of the company, organization, institution, or government. AOR's are authorized by their EBiz POC (E-Business Point of Contact) so they can submit applications on behalf of their organization.

Question: How do you become or register to be an AOR?
Answer: You would first register as an applicant on Grants.gov. Once you have a UEI and your organization has an active SAM account, your EBiz POC will receive an email notifying them that you have registered and need to be authorized.

Question: What is EIN?
Answer: The EIN is the Employer Identification Number. This number is assigned by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

Question: How do I know if my application was submitted on time?
Answer: After you submit your application to Grants.gov, you (the AOR) will receive an automatic notification of receipt from the system that contains a Grants.gov tracking number and official date/time stamp of application submission. This notification ONLY indicates receipt by Grants.gov and does not indicate receipt by AMS. Grants.gov may also send you an error message if your application is not submitted correctly. If application submission passes Grants.gov validation, AOR will receive a second electronic acknowledgment of receipt. Once USDA-AMS has retrieved application from Grants.gov, AOR will receive a third email notification. Lastly, if AMS assigns its own agency tracking number/notes a fourth email is sent to AOR.

Question: How are attachments uploaded in Grants.gov?
Answer: The FMPP and LFPP project narrative form must be attached to the "Project Narrative Attachment Form" on the application package. All other attachments must be attached to the Grants.gov application package using the "Add Attachments" button under Form SF-424 item #15. When uploading attachments, click the "Add Attachments" button (do NOT use the "paperclip" icon in Adobe Reader). If you use the "paperclip" icon in Adobe Reader the attachments will not be received with the application package.

Question: Can we apply before having the Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and SAM.gov registration?
Answer: No, you must first have your UEI number to register in SAM.gov. To apply as an organization, you must have an active SAM account.

Question: Do I have to register before I can see the requirements of the grant application?
Answer: No, you do not have to register in Grants.gov to view the opportunity and download it. Also, you can access the Request for Application, and the required documents on the program website, under the "How to apply" tab. However, you must be registered with Grants.gov to apply.

Question: Is the EBiz POC someone in my organization or a federal employee?
Answer: The EBiz POC is a member of your organization and is often the person that oversees business operations. The EBiz POC is the one that registers the organization in SAM. EBiz POC is responsible for affiliating and assigning roles to all applicants registered in Grants.gov on behalf of the organization.

Question: Can the EBiz POC and AOR be the same person?
Answer: Yes. In that case, you'd need two accounts/log-ins. One to serve in each capacity.

Question: Can an organization have multiple EBiz POC's?
Answer: No, you can only have one EBiz POC but may have multiple AOR's.

Question: How do I contact Grants.gov if there is an issue with my registration?
Answer: You may contact the Customer Contact center by either e-mail support@grants.gov or phone 1-800- 518-4726. You can also use the Self Help link https://grants-portal.psc.gov to find answers to common questions.

SAM Registration

Question: If we already have a UEI, can we go straight to SAM.gov?
Answer: Yes. SAM registration can take up to 2 weeks, and often longer, to complete so register early. Check the SAM.gov website for additional login procedures.

Question: If I have already had a SAM.gov account, do I have to do anything else?
Answer: Yes, you must be sure that your SAM.gov account is up to date. If the account expires, you must renew your account before applying.

Question: Do I have to pay to activate a SAM.gov account?
Answer: No, registering and renewing a SAM.gov account is completely free. If you received notification on having to pay to renew your account beware that it is likely a SCAM and should be reported to the appropriated authorities.

Question: Do I need to have an active SAM.gov registration to receive payments?
Answer: Yes. You must have an active SAM registration for the agency to process your claims/payments. If the UEI is showing inactive in the Payment Management System (PMS), the payment will not be processed. It is the responsibility of the organization to contact SAM.gov to renew the registration annually.

Cost Share Information

Question: What is cost sharing?
Answer: Cost sharing means the portion of project costs not paid by Federal funds or contributions. This term includes matching, which refers to required levels of cost share that must be provided. The portion of project costs not paid by the Federal funds can be in the form of cash and/or in-kind contributions. Cash can be a financial outlay, or cash donations from non-Federal third parties. In-kind can be the value of non-cash contributions typically in the form of value of personnel, goods, and services. Other Federal funds cannot be used as a source of cost share. (See 2 CFR §200.1 and §200.306)

Question: Do both programs (FMPP and LFPP) require cost sharing?
Answer: Yes. Both FMPP and LFPP require cost sharing in the amount of 25% of the FEDERAL portion of the project.

Question: Can unallowable costs be brought as an in-kind cost share?
Answer: No. Only costs allowable under Subpart E of the Cost Principles can be brought as cost share. The basis for determining the value of cash and in-kind contributions must be in accordance with 2 CFR § 200.306.

Question: Can land or buildings count as in-kind cost share?
Answer: No, land and/or buildings cannot be used as an in-kind cost share. Costs that are unallowable for federal funds under the program are unallowable as a source of cost share. See the Allowable/Unallowable Costs section below for more information.

Question: Can labor (personnel costs) count as in-kind cost share?
Answer: Yes, labor from personnel may be used as in-kind cost share, but only for the portion of time the individual works on the project. For example, if someone is spending 15% of the time working on the project, then you can only bring that 15% to the project as a cost share. Also, you must ensure that what you would normally pay that individual is reasonable according to standard personnel rates for similar positions in your geographic locality.

Question: Can unrecovered indirect cost be used as part of the cost share?
Answer: Applicants that elect to use the De minimis indirect cost rate may not use indirect costs as cost share. This noted, if an applicant has a valid Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) may use all or a portion of the indirect cost as cost share, consistent with 2 CFR 200.306 (c).Unrecovered indirect cost means the difference between the amount charged to the Federal award and the amount that could have been charged to the Federal award under the applicant's NICRA.

Question: Does the non-federal cost share have to be confirmed at the time of proposal submission, or can it be lined up by the time an award is made?
Answer: All cost share contributions must be committed or in place when the proposal is submitted to AMS. Additional anticipated cost share funds not in place by the time the project commences cannot be counted toward the cost sharing requirement. Cost share verification letters are required to be submitted with the application. AMS has posted a Letter of Verification for Cost Sharing Funds template on the grant program's website.

Question: How many cost share verifications letters do I submit?
Answer: An applicant must submit one letter verifying the cost share for EACH cash and/or in-kind resource signed by the organization providing the resource. Letters may be submitted in either PDF or MS Word formatting.

Question: Can I use pre-award costs to count towards the cost share requirement at time of application?
Answer: No, only costs that are incurred within the period of performance can be used as a source of cost sharing.

Question: Can the cost sharing requirement be waived?
Answer: No. The cost sharing requirement was established in the 2018 Farm Bill legislation, and USDA cannot waive a statutory requirement.

Question: Can I provide more than the 25 percent cost share requirement?
Answer: Yes. You can provide more than the required 25% cost share. However, this will not provide any advantage during the Technical Review of the applications. Any amount exceeding the required cost share will be considered "Voluntary Committed Cost Share" as defined in 2 CFR §200.1 and 2 CFR §200.306. The excess amount will be considered **mandatory** and must be documented and provided to the project if awarded.

Review Process and Applicant Notifications

Question: What is the likelihood my organization will be selected for funding?
Answer: FMPP and LFPP are a very competitive grant programs. Applicants must develop high quality applications to have higher probability of being selected for funding.

Question: What are the evaluation criteria used to evaluate applications?
Answer: The NOFOs outline the five evaluation criteria used by external reviewers to evaluate applications. (See section 6.2 of the NOFO.)

Question: How and when should I hear back whether my application was funded?
Answer: All applicants will be notified via email if they were selected for funding or not. Under normal circumstances it can take up to six months from the application due date for applicants to be notified.

Question: How can I find out about awarded or completed FMPP and/or LFPP projects?
Answer: You may view the list of awarded projects and final reports on the FMPP and LFPP websites: www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants. Click on the applicable grant program website (FMPP or LFPP), then click on "Awarded Grants".

Allowable/Unallowable Costs

Question: Where can I find information on Allowable/Costs and activities?
Answer: Section 8.2 of AMS' General Terms and Conditions include extensive information on Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities.

Question: Can funds be used for agricultural production related activities?
Answer: No, funds cannot be used for any type of agricultural production activities including purchase of farm equipment, tools, supplies, gardening. Such unallowable activities include training related to agricultural production.

Question: Can funds be used to purchase food or produce?
Answer: No. Project funds cannot be used to purchase produce or food, including catering for events.

Question: Can funds be used to purchase food for voucher/reimbursement programs or for food pantry donations?
Answer: No, it is unallowable to use project funds for costs of coupon/incentive redemptions or price discounts. Project funds cannot be used to purchase food for voucher/reimbursement programs, to purchase food for donations or to purchase food for resale.

Question: Can funds be used for micro-loans or be re-granted?
Answer: No. Project funds may not be used for awarding micro-loans or for re-granting.

Question: Can I use funds to purchase land or buildings?
Answer: No. It is unallowable to use project funds for the acquisition of buildings, facilities, or land or to make additions, improvements, modifications, replacements, rearrangements, reinstallations, renovations or alterations of an existing building or facility (including site grading and improvement, and architecture fees). This includes construction and construction-related materials, which may include, but are not limited to the purchase of building materials such as wood, nails, concrete, asphalt, roofing, gravel, sand, paint, insulation, drywall, or plumbing. You may rent land or a building with grant funds. However, lease-to-own agreements are not allowable.

Question: Can funds be used to purchase vehicles?
Answer: 'General Purpose' vehicles may not be purchased and may only be leased with prior written approval (and only if specific to fulfilling the purpose of the grant). However, lease agreements to own (i.e., lease-to-own or rent-to-own) for 'General Purpose' vehicles are not allowable. The lease or rental agreement must terminate at the end of the grant cycle. A signed copy of the lease agreement will be required prior to related payment approval.

Specific vehicles or trailers, such as refrigerated vans that will not be used as personal vehicles, may be considered 'Special Purpose' equipment that may be allowable when provided in the approved budget or with prior written approval. Refer to section 8.2 of AMS' General Terms and Conditions for additional information.

Question: Can funds be used to repair and/or upgrade existing equipment?
Answer: Yes. Project funds may be used to modify equipment that is not already available and readily usable in its current format. Examples include specialized equipment for mobile markets, mobile slaughter unit components, and trailers to be retrofitted.

Question: Can funds be used to purchase Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) machines that provide access point for low-income residents?
Answer: No, project funds cannot be used for the purchase, lease or upgrade of systems or equipment, including EBT equipment, that is used to process or implement Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) benefits, or other nutrition incentive programs. The USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) offers funding to expand the availability of SNAP EBT equipment and services at farmers markets through the National Association of Farmers Market Nutrition Programs (marketlink) and State SNAP agencies. Additional information can be found at https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/farmer- producer/farmers-market-grant-program.

Question: Can funds be used to educate and enroll customers into Food Assistance Program (Ex. SNAP, WIC, Senior programs, etc.)?
Answer: No. Project funds cannot be used to register, train, and/or educate customers on Food Assistance Programs such as SNAP, WIC, etc.

Question: Can funds be used to educate and train vendors on the acceptance of Food Assistance Program (Ex. SNAP, WIC, Senior programs, etc.) at their market?
Answer: Yes. project funds can be used to educate vendors about the eligibility requirements and the process for participating in or applying to accept SNAP, WIC, Senior Farmers Market Nutrition program benefits, or other (state or local or nonprofit) benefit programs at farmers markets.

Question: Can I use project funds for construction?
Answer: LAMP's authorizing statute (7 U.S.C. 1627c) does not allow grant funds to be used for any type of construction activities. This also includes construction and construction-related materials, which may include, but are not limited to, the purchase of building materials such as wood, nails, concrete, asphalt, roofing, gravel, sand, paint, insulation, drywall, or plumbing.

Question: What is an example of a "non-construction/infrastructure improvements" that fall under allowable costs and activities?
Answer: "Non-construction" would be renting a larger space and adding the equipment needed for the expansion (cold storage, kitchen equipment, pre-made shelves, pallets, pallet lifters, etc.).

Question: What is the 2018 Farm Bill Authority limiting expenses related to food safety costs?
Answer: The $6,500 expense limitation is *specifically* for costs related *to the purchase or upgrades to equipment* to improve food safety. This limit does not apply to applicants that want to obtain food safety certification assistance. In other words, projects that are requesting expenses related for food safety certifications don't have this amount limit. Also, there is no limitation on food practices such as employee training on food safety, storage and handling, waste handling practices, pest control, facilities designed and others.

Question: In selecting a contractor, do we need to go through a procurement/bid process, or could we select one of the contractors we have used in the past?
Answer: This is entirely up to the applicant. However, each state has different procurement rules that you must follow. AMS highly recommends using a competitive bid process (with at least 3 bids) for any procurements under the FMPP or LFPP award. If the applicant chooses to forego that process, they must still provide justification on the application for selecting that contractor through a noncompetitive process. See 2 CFR Part 200 Subpart D - Procurement Standards for more information.

Reviewers

Question: If my organization submits a proposal to LFPP, can I serve as a reviewer for FMPP or vice versa?
Answer: Yes, if your organization submits an LFPP or FMPP proposal you may serve as a reviewer for the program to which you have not applied.

Question: How can I become a reviewer for the programs?
Answer: To become a reviewer, you must register online during the active grant cycle. Refer to our How to Become an Application Reviewer website for more information.

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