

RFSI Infrastructure Grant Program Overview

The purpose of the RFSI Program is to expand capacity and infrastructure for the aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, and distribution of locally and regionally produced food products, including specialty crops, dairy, grains for human consumption, aquaculture, and other food products.

Infrastructure Grants must expand middle of the food supply chain capacity for locally and regionally produced foods and offer more and better market opportunities 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.

The food supply chain describes the process of getting food from the farm to end consumers. According to the USDA, it involves the following stages: 1. Production, 2. Processing, 3. Aggregation/Distribution, and 4. Markets/Consumers. For the purposes of the RFSI program, “middle-of-the-supply-chain” or “middle of the food supply chain” refers to: 2. Processing and 3. Aggregation/Distribution.

The Infrastructure Grant review process will prioritize projects that:

- Benefit underserved farmers and ranchers; new and beginning farmers or ranchers; veteran producers; processors and other middle-of-the-supply-chain businesses owned by socially disadvantaged individuals, as defined by the Small Business Administration.
- Focus on family-supporting job quality and treatment/safety of workers.
- Focus on small and medium-sized enterprises that add options and choices for consumers and producers (emphasis on value-added).
- Demonstrate local support for the project.
- Support underserved communities.
- Are submitted by farmer-owned or worker-owned cooperatives/enterprises.

All applicant businesses and organizations must be domestically owned, and the applicants' facilities must be physically located within the State of Wisconsin.

The following are not eligible for funding:

- Acquiring real property (including land purchases).
- Marketing or marketing-related activities.
- Harvest and/or production-related activities.
- Research.
- Expenses that are incurred before the signed project contract start-date.
- Expenses that have been, or will be, reimbursed under any Federal, State, or local government funding.
- Supplanting or duplicating ongoing activities: projects with funding from another federal grant or subaward may not receive funding for the same activities through an Infrastructure Grant. *However, Infrastructure Grants may build on the successes of prior/current funding.*
- Projects focused on ineligible products. Products ineligible for funding: meat, poultry, wild caught seafood, animal feed/forage products, fiber, landscaping products, tobacco, or dietary supplements.

Infrastructure Grant Match Requirement:

Infrastructure Grant recipients are required to contribute 50% of the total proposed project cost as a match to federal funding. Match is the portion of project costs not paid by the federal funds, which could be 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, including direct and indirect costs.

Other Federal funds cannot be used as match. All matching contributions must be committed or secured at the time an applicant is recommended for an award and must be allowable costs/eligible expenses incurred during the active project contract period. Each application must include the total amount of match, and how it will specifically align with their requested funding. Match can be provided by the applicant, project partners or a combination of both.

The total project cost = the requested amount + the matched amount. This equates to a 1:1 match requirement. For example: if an applicant requests \$750,000, then \$750,000 must be provided in match for a total project cost of \$1,500,000.

For historically underserved farmers and ranchers, or for other businesses that qualify under SBA categories of small disadvantaged business, women-owned small business, or veteran-owned small business, the required match funding contribution or cost share is reduced to 25% of the total project cost. Qualifying applicants will self-certify their eligibility for the 25% reduced match. For example: if an applicant requests \$750,000, then \$250,000 must be provided in match, for a total project cost of \$1,000,000.