USDA Agricultural Marketing Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

PROJECT NARRATIVE GUIDE

Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program

Instructions: This document is to be used as a guide to help prepare applications for the Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) or Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP). Submission of the Project Narrative template is **MANDATORY**. All sections in the Project Narrative template must be completed. Applicant must review the applicable Request for Applications (RFA's). The Project Narrative must comply with the specific instructions, format, and content defined in section 4.5 (all project types, except Turnkey) and 4.6 (Turnkey) of the RFA.

Page Limit: The completed Project Narrative must not exceed thirty-five (35) pages. For example, the form is 20 pages before you begin entering your project information, your form may be up to 35 pages in length when completed (20 original pages + 15 pages of applicant content). Applicants must submit the FMPP or LFPP Project Narrative form as a PDF, attached to the Grants.gov application package using the "Project Narrative Attachment Form" link in Grants.gov.

The completed FMPP or LFPP Turnkey Project Narrative must not exceed twenty-one (21) pages. For example, the form is 16 pages before you begin entering your project information, your form may be up to 21 pages in length when completed (16 original pages + 5 pages of applicant content). Applicants must submit the FMPP or LFPP Turnkey Project Narrative as a PDF, attached to the Grants.gov application package using the "Project Narrative Attachment Form" link in Grants.gov.

Do not use your own project narrative template. Handwritten applications will not be accepted.

1. **Applicant Organization**
   This section must be the same as Box 8 of the SF-424. This represents the legal name and information of the organization applying for the grant. Awards are made to organizations, institutions, or companies and not to individuals. Applicants must meet the eligibility requirements as described in section 3.0 of the RFA to receive an award.

2. **Authorized Organization Representative (AOR)**
   This section must match Box 21 of the SF-424. The AOR is the individual who is authorized to sign any document on behalf of the organization. This is the member of the organization that authorizes the submission of the application to Grants.gov on behalf of a company organization or institution. It is highly recommended that the AOR be different from the project coordinator or person designated by the organization to direct the project or activities being supported by the grant.

3. **Applicant Entity Type**
   Select the entity type that best represents the applicant organization. Section 2.1 of the RFA describes each entity type. If your organization is a State Agency with a Regional Farmers Market Authority, you must provide the regulatory statute(s) that identify your organization as that entity type.

4. **Project Activity Category**
   Select all the activity categories that apply to the activities you are proposing for your project. If an activity is not listed, you may add it under other. Project activities for Turnkey Projects are preselected.

5. **Project Title**
   Provide a descriptive title. This section must match Box 15 of the SF-424. A good project title summarizes the main idea(s) of your project. The title should be concise and clearly describe the content and purpose of your project. If selected for funding, the title of your project and the executive summary will be made publicly available on our website. The title should be limited to 200 characters.

6. **Grant Application Project Type**
   Only <u>one</u> project type must be selected. Applicants must review section 3.3 of the respective RFA (FMPP or LFPP) to understand the difference between the two program components and their respective project types. Also, you can review the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document for more information. In the circumstance that a project has activities that fit both programs, the applicant should select the program and project type for which they will be conducting the majority of the activities.

7. **Requested FMPP or LFPP Funds**
   This section must match Line 18a of the SF-424. This is the amount of total federal funds the applicant is requesting. The amount of funds requested must not be less than the minimum amount or exceed the maximum award amount. See section 3.3 on the RFA.

8. **Cost Share Funds**

This section must match Line 18b of the SF-424. This is the amount of funds the applicant is required to contribute as a condition for receiving an award. The cost share amount must be calculated based on the overall percentage of the total federal portion of the grant. See section 2.4 on the RFA for more information on the required cost sharing. The cost share can be in the form of cash or in-kind contribution. If cost share contribution exceeds the required amount applicants will be voluntarily committing to it. The excess amount will need to be documented and provided if the project is awarded. Review the Frequently Ask Questions (FAQs) document for more information.

Applicants must provide cost sharing in an amount equal to 25% of the total federal portion of the grant. Please see RFA for more details.
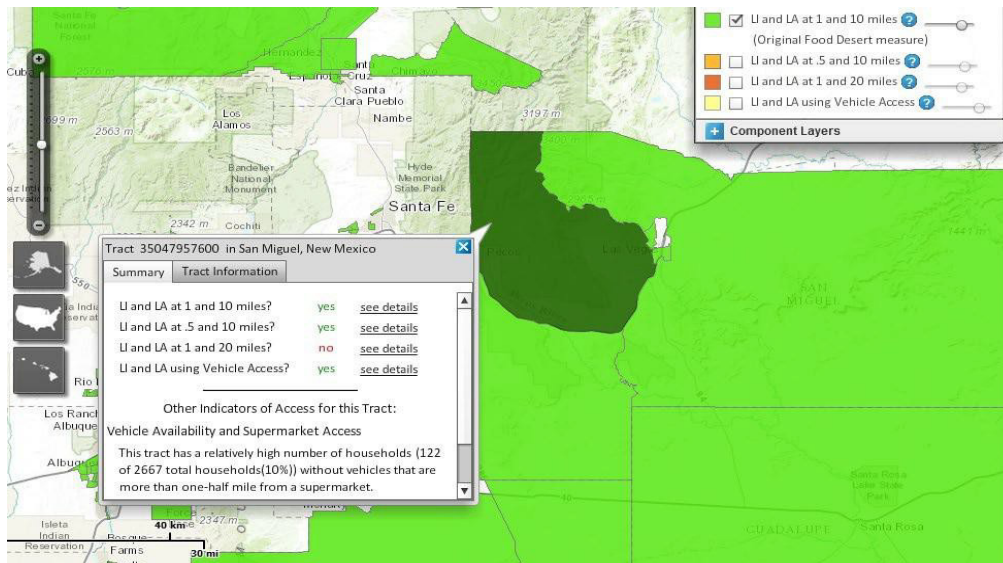
9. **Does the proposal address a Priority Area as described in Section 3.4 of the RFA?**

Please review section 3.4 of the RFA's. If requesting low income/low food access priority consideration answer "Yes". If not, answer "No".

10. **Project Implementation Physical Address**

Enter up to three addresses where this project will be implemented. Priority consideration is given to applicants that are implementing a project in low income/low food access areas. To confirm this, applicants must include the census tract for the location(s) they are implementing the project. Follow the instruction below to find if a project implementation location falls in a low income, low food access area.

1) Open the Food Access Research Atlas: http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research- atlas.aspx.

2) Enter the address (es) where project activities would occur.

3) Zoom in on the map to identify your community. Clicking on your targeted area will produce the census tract and additional information about the locale. In the example below, the dark green area qualifies as low income and low access, and the census tract would be 35047957600.

4) If the pop-up window shows "yes" as being low income, low access at any of the four levels, select "yes" in item #9 on the Project Narrative. If not, select "No".

Executive Summary

The executive summary is the first impression of the project. It is the opportunity to capture the reviewer's attention. It must describe the project's needs, purpose, goals, and expected outcomes. The executive summary must: 1) be no more than 250 words 2) be written in plain language for the general public to understand and 3) use sentences; no bullets 4) briefly describe intended beneficiaries 5) briefly describe any subaward. We recommend writing the summary after the rest of the proposal has been completed or close to being done. The executive summary will be published on our website for public view. This summary should be the same as the one provided on the Project Abstract Summary form.

ALIGNMENT AND INTENT

Clearly and concisely describe the specific issue, problem, or need that the project will address in relation to the grant program Statutory Language found in section 3.1 of the RFA. Answering this question should justify the project's objectives and approach, and not just provide the associated statistics. You must articulate the reason behind the selected local or regional food system development effort. The project must demonstrate how it will develop, coordinate, and expand market opportunities. This section should align with the activities described in the work plan, technical merit section.

The objectives must address the issue(s), problem(s), or need(s) mentioned above and related to the project's approach and work plan. The objectives should be realistic and clearly describe what your organization hopes to accomplish with the project. Applicants can add additional objectives as necessary. The number of objectives must be realistic for the length of the grant period.

Applicants must include a detailed description of how the proposed project will address the needs and concerns of the community they plan on impacting. This section should include all groups and individuals that your project is targeting, including those from underserved communities.

Specifically, the project should focus on the benefits to farm and ranch operations serving local markets.

The Alignment and Intent section does not appear in the Turnkey Project Narratives.

TECHNICAL MERIT

Work Plan

Describe the activities and timeline associated with each project objective mentioned in the Alignment and Intent section. Include the following information:

A timeline for each planned activity and major output including the anticipated date of completion; how and where the activities will take place; required resources; milestone(s) for assessing progress and success; who is responsible for completing the activity, including collaborative arrangements or subcontractors; if conducting training and technical assistance, how participants will be recruited and how you will help guide program development and delivery.

Applicants must complete the work plan table to fully describe how the scope of the work will be implemented to achieve the objectives and outcomes. The activities listed must clearly describe what you are trying to do. The anticipated completion dates must be within the period of performance of your project (within 3 years – or 2 years for Turnkey and LFPP planning grants). The individuals who will perform the activities must be listed as part of the key staff included in the Expertise and Partners section.

Have you received a past FMPP or LFPP grant award?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Have you submitted this project to another federal grant program?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Are you a current Regional Food System Partnership (RFSP) recipient?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If your answer is yes to any of the above questions, provide the information in the appropriate table. Provide AMS agreement number for grants received in the past five (5) years. Describe how the project is/was underlined different from previous grants or how it supplements the proposed activities; and the results of

the current project (if applicable). Include lessons learned, what can be improved, and how these lessons and improvements will be incorporated into this application to meet program goals effectively and successfully. Projects that are duplicates of a previous grant will not be selected for funding.

ACHIEVABILITY

Applicants must complete all applicable project Outcomes and Indicators with baseline and/or estimated but realistic target numbers. If an outcome indicator does not apply, check N/A (Not Applicable).

Outcome Indicator Measurement

For each completed outcome indicator, describe how you derived the numbers, how you intend to measure and achieve each relevant outcome and indicator, and any potential challenges you foresee to achieving the estimated targets and action steps for addressing them.

Please refer to the FMPP and LFPP Performance Measures Data Collection Guide for information on how to collect data on the outcomes and indicators. Applicants selected for funding will be required to provide updates on the target numbers as their project progresses. Outcome and indicators data are used to evaluate overall program impact.

The Outcome Indicator Measurement section does not appear in the Turnkey Project Narratives.

Potential Adaptation of Project by Others

Discuss if and how this project can be adapted to other regions, communities, and/or agricultural systems. Describe what benefits and actions others may take in response to the expected project results.

The Potential Adaptation of Project by Others section does not appear in the Turnkey Project Narratives.

Dissemination of Project Results

Describe how the project's results (positive and negative) will be shared with similar organizations, stakeholders, and others that may be interested in the project's results or implementing a similar project. Describe the planned method(s) and formats that will be used (in-person, electronically, etc.).

The Dissemination of Project Results section does not appear in the Turnkey Project Narratives.

EXPERTISE AND PARTNERS

Key Staff (Applicant Personnel and External Partner/Collaborators)

List all key project staff, including applicant personnel and external project partners and collaborators (see section 2.2 in the RFA for definitions) that comprise the Project Team, their role in the project, their relevant experience, qualifications, expertise, and past successes in developing and operating projects similar to those to be conducted under this project. Applicant must include Letters of Commitment from Partner and Collaborator Organizations to demonstrate the commitment and support the information (see section 4.8 in the RFA).

Project Management Plan

Describe the management plan for coordination, communication, and data sharing and reporting among members of the Project Team and stakeholder groups, including both internal applicant personnel **and** external partners and collaborators. Applicants should include a clear delineation of the roles and responsibilities of project staff, consultants, and partner organizations, and how they will contribute to achieving the project's objectives and outcomes. It should describe who would have day-to-day responsibility for key tasks such as: leadership of the project; monitoring the project's ongoing progress, preparation of reports; communications with other partners. It should also describe the approach that will be used to monitor and track progress on the project's tasks and objectives.

Project Sustainability

Describe how the project, and its partnerships and collaborations, will be sustained beyond the project's period of performance (without grant funds). Applicants should include a detailed discussion of the applicant's ability to continue efforts to impact the local food community. This could include but is not limited to, continued collaboration with partners, the implementation of new practices, and commitment to continue to identify and address issues in the community.

The Project Sustainability section does not appear in the Turnkey Project Narratives.

FISCAL PLAN AND RESOURCES

Applicants must complete the Budget and Justification. Evidence of critical infrastructure (see section 4.9 in the RFA) is required if a project is dependent on land, infrastructure, building permits, facilities not already secured, or other resources that are essential for the execution of the proposed project activities.

Applicants are required to submit the SF-424A Budget information For Non-Construction Programs form along with completing the budget section of the Project Narrative. The cost categories should be the same on both documents.

BUDGET AND JUSTIFICATION

The budget must show the total cost for the project and describe how category costs listed in the budget are derived. The budget justification must provide **enough detail** for reviewers to easily understand how costs were determined and how they relate to the project objectives and expected outcomes. The budget must show a relationship between work planned and performed to the costs incurred.

Refer to section 8.2 Allowable and Unallowable Costs[1] and Activities of AMS' General Terms and Conditions for more information on allowable and unallowable expenses.

Applicants must account for both federal funds and cost share, specifying the amounts for each expense category (personnel, fringe, travel, etc.). Each expense category table's subtotals must align with the expense category amounts in the budget summary table. The cost share amounts listed in the budget summary table must align with the amounts described in the "Letters of Verifications for Cost Sharing

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[1] All costs must be allowable (2 CFR 200.403), allocable (2 CFR 200.405), necessary and reasonable (2 CFR 200.404).

Funds" (AMS has posted a letter template on the grant program's website.). The total budget amounts of the budget summary table must match the "Requested FMPP or LFPP Funds" and "Cost Share funds" amounts listed on page 2 of the Project Narrative.

Examples of Specific Allowable and Unallowable Costs

Allowable	Unallowable
Rental cost of building space	Building and construction
Food for display, tastings, or cooking demos	Contribution/ Donations (e.g., purchase of food to donate or resale)
Marketing and advertising/promotion (to promote products but not the image of an organization)	Development of advisory councils
Special purpose equipment (maximum of $6,500 for food safety equipment)	Production related cost (e.g., farming, gardening, farm tools and supplies, production training)
Entertainment (as long as it is directly related and reasonable to the planned project activities and to meet the program purpose)	Fundraising activities
Food Assistance Programs (SNAP, WIC) advertising/promotion	Food Assistance Programs (SNAP, WIC) enrollment/expansion

Personnel

List each person from the applicant organization who has a substantive role or will perform work directly for the project and the amount of the request and/ or the value of his or her match. Personnel salaries should be reasonable for the services rendered, conform to the established written policy of your organization, and consistently apply to both federal and non-federal activities. Personnel costs do not include the cost for the services of consultants and contractors. Those should be listed in the contractual section. Personnel salaries are considered reasonable to the extent that is consistent with what is paid for similar work within the organization or comparable to the labor market in which the organization competes for the kind of employees involved. The U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics contains wage data available by area and occupation that can be used as the basis for your personnel salary. Refer to 2 CFR § 200.430 for more information.

Fringe Benefits

The fringe benefits are allowances and services provided by employers to their employees as compensation in addition to regular salaries and wages. Fringe benefits include, but are not limited to the cost of leave, employee insurance, pension, and unemployment benefits. Provide the fringe benefit rates for each of the project's salaried employees listed above. The costs of fringe benefits should be reasonable and in line with the established policies of your organization. If the fringe is higher than 35% you must provide a justification. Refer to 2 CFR § 200.431 for more information.

Travel

Travel costs are the expenses for transportation, lodging, subsistence, and related items incurred by employees who are in travel status on official business of the non-federal entity. Such costs may be charged on an actual cost basis, on a per diem or mileage basis in lieu of actual costs incurred, or on a combination of the two, provided the method used is applied to an entire trip and not to selected days of the trip and results in charges consistent with those normally allowed in like circumstances in accordance with non-federal entity's written travel reimbursement policies. Travel must be integral to the purpose of the project, necessary for the individual(s) from the applicant organization participating in the project and cost must be reasonable and consistent with the organization's travel policies.

Explain the purpose of each trip requested. Travel costs do not include the cost for travel of consultants or contractors, which should be included in the contractual category. Please note that travel costs are limited to those allowed by formal organizational policy and for employees working directly on the project and in the case of air travel, project participants must use the lowest reasonable commercial airfares. For recipient organizations that have no formal travel policy and for-profit recipients, allowable travel costs may not exceed those established by the Federal Travel Regulations, issued by GSA, including the maximum per diem and subsistence rates prescribed in those regulations. This information is available at gsa.gov.

Refer to 2 CFR § 200.475 for more information.

Equipment

Describe and justify any general or special purpose equipment to be rented or purchased under the grant. ''Special purpose equipment'' is tangible, nonexpendable, personal property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost that equals or exceeds $10,000 per unit and is used only for research, medical, scientific, or other technical activities. Purchase of general-purpose equipment is not allowable under this grant, but you may rent. The rental of "general purpose equipment'' must also be described in this section as long as grant funds will be used to rent an equipment. Equipment must be used for project-related functions. If funded, applicants must maintain records and perform a physical inventory every two years of the equipment acquired with grant funds. The equipment also includes accessories necessary to make the equipment operational. Items with a unit cost of less than $10,000 should be categorized as supplies, pursuant to 2 CFR Part 200. Refer to 2 CFR § 200.313 for more information.

Supplies

Supplies mean all tangible personal property other than those listed under the equipment section. List the materials, supplies, and fabricated parts costing less than $10,000 per unit and describe concisely how they will support the purpose and goal of the proposal. Refer to 2 CFR § 200.314 for more information.

Contractual

Contractual and subaward services are to be carried out by an individual or organization, other than the applicant, in the form of a procurement relationship. This includes contractual, consultant, and subaward agreements that are an integral part of the completion of the project. Contractual/consultant costs are expenses associated with purchasing goods and/or procuring services. The applicant should provide a preference for acquisition of goods, products, and services produced in the United States, per 2 CFR § 200.322. A subaward is an award provided by the non –federal entity to a subrecipient for the subrecipient to carry out part of a federal award received by the non-federal entity. If there is more than one contractor or consultant or subaward, each must be described separately. Applicant must provide a concise description of the scope of work or services to be provided. If awarded, copies of all the contracts will be required. The organization must award contracts or subawards only to responsible contractors or individuals that can perform successfully under the terms and conditions of the proposed agreement. The applicant and NOT AMS is responsible for the settlement of all contractual or subaward issues such as disputed, protests, and claims unless it is primarily a federal concern. AMS reserves the right to request organization procurements policies and final executed contracts at any time. Refer to 2 CFR§ 200.317 through 2 CFR § 200.327 for more information.

Other

Include any expenses not covered in any of the previous budget categories. Be sure to break down costs into cost/unit. Expenses in this section include but are not limited to, meetings and conferences, communications, advertisements, publication costs, participant support costs, and data collection. Applicant must describe how the items listed fit the project activities.

Indirect

Indirect costs (also known as "facilities and administrative costs"—defined at 2 CFR §200.1) represent the expenses of doing business that is not readily identified with a particular grant, contract, or project function or activity, but is necessary for the general operation of the organization and the conduct of activities it performs. For the indirect cost formula and additional information, refer to "Indirect Cost" section of the RFA. If no indirect cost is requested leave blank. The full amount or a portion of the indirect cost can be used as match or cost sharing, for additional information refer to "Using Indirect Costs for Cost Sharing or Matching" section of the RFA. Refer to 2 CFR § 200.414 for more information.

Applicants who have a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate (NICRA) must submit a copy of its approved NICRA with their application. If an applicant does not have a current negotiated rate (including provisional) they may elect to use the de minimis rate of 15% of the modified total direct cost (MTDC). Applicants must exclude the following cost in their calculations when determining MTDC:
- Equipment
- Capital expenditures
- Charges of patient care
- Rental costs
- Tuition remission
- Scholarships and fellowships
- Participant support costs
- The portion of each subaward in excess of $50,000

Program Income

Program income is gross income earned by a recipient or subrecipient under a grant—directly generated by the grant-supported activity or earned only because of the grant agreement during the grant period of performance. Program income includes, but is not limited to, income from fees for services performed; the sale of commodities or items fabricated under an award (this includes items sold at cost if the cost of producing the item was funded in whole or partially with grant funds); registration fees for conferences, etc. AMS authorizes the use of program income through the additive method as described in 2 CFR § 200.307(e)(2). Any program income generated during the grant period must be used to further the objectives of the project. If the project is expected to generate income as part of the grant activities, you must include the estimated amount and explain how it will be reinvested in the project. If awarded, you will have to record any program income and report to AMS using the Federal Financial Report (SF-425). Program Income cannot be used to meet the match or cost sharing requirements. Refer to 2 CFR § 200.307 for more information.