Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Grant Frequently Asked Questions GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. Q. Who is administering this grant?

A. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has approved \$7.3 million in funds to be administered by the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) to distribute to eligible entities. Applicants will apply directly through the WSDA for this grant. This program is federally funded, therefore some requirements and timelines will differ from other statefunded grant opportunities.

2. Q. Which activities are included in the "middle-of-the-supply-chain"?

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

Enhancing worker safety, education, modernizing, developing, or expanding equipment or facilities used for processing, aggregation, or distribution activities are also considered to be "middle-of-the-supply-chain" activities for the purposes of this program.

3. Q. Which activities are NOT included in the "middle-of-the-supply-chain"?

A. Activities related to production or to retail sales are <u>not</u> part of the middle-of-the-supply-chain. In addition, costs and activities related to farm production such as farm equipment, tools, seeds or starts, or production related labor, training, or infrastructure, are considered ineligible. Costs and activities related to markets and consumers such as expanding sales staff for a farm store, renovation of retail space, including additional refrigeration, marketing and promotion, are also ineligible.

4. Q. How does an applicant determine if a project is appropriate for the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure (RFSI) Program?

A. All projects must support the middle-of-the-food-supply-chain, meet one or more of the program priorities as described in the Request for Applications (RFA), and be able to achieve one or more performance measures during the grant duration to be eligible for this program. In addition, all applicant businesses and organizations must be domestically owned and applicants' facilities must be physically located within Washington state.

5. Q. Will the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) provide assistance with the application process?

A. WSDA will host several webinars providing an overview of the program, eligibility requirements, program priorities, and the application process. WSDA will also hold bi-weekly office hours during the application period. For more information on webinars and office hours, or to register, please visit the RFSI website (LINK).

WSDA has also partnered with the Washington Small Business Development Center (SBDC) to provide applicant technical support services via telephone, virtual, and/or email in both English and Spanish. Contact the SBDC (https://wsbdc.org/) online, by phone or by email:

SBDC online: https://wsbdc.org/
Email: washington@wsbdc.org

Phone: 833-492-7232

6. Q. How can applicants submit questions during the application period?

A. WSDA will publish applicable responses to questions submitted about the application process on our website. Email all questions about the solicitation process to RFSI@agr.wa.gov. Questions received during webinars and office hours will also be included in the published Q&A. The deadline to submit questions is July 8th, 2024, by 8:00 a.m. PT.

7. Q. Will WSDA provide answers to specific questions regarding the eligibility of projects or assist applicants in completing their applications?

A. WSDA will conduct bi-weekly office hours to assist applicants with specific questions regarding their application process. Office hours will continue throughout the duration of the application period. In addition, WSDA recommends all applicants attend at least one office hour session, attend a SBDC webinar and/or review the published FAQs.

8. Q. Is technical assistance available after the RFSI award is made?

A. WSDA will partner with a local organization to provide technical assistance for applicants that are selected for funding. Technical assistance may be available for entering into a grant agreement and executing the grant, including record-keeping requirements and reporting.

9. Q. How does USDA define underserved farmers for this grant program?

A. USDA defines underserved farmers as a member of a group whose members have been subject to discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and, where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program.

10. Q. What is a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and is it required to submit an application?

A. Entities doing business with the federal government must obtain a UEI through <u>SAM.gov.</u> Active registrants will have their UEI assigned and viewable within <u>SAM.gov.</u> Contact the SBDC to learn more about this process (<u>LINK</u>: https://wsbdc.org/).

11. Q. What range of awards are being offered for the RFSI infrastructure grant?

A. The minimum award amount for a single RFSI grant is \$100,000 and the maximum award amount is \$3,000,000. The \$3,000,000 award cap does not include the in-kind/matching funds from the grant recipient. A grant applicant can apply for up to \$3,000,000 of RFSI funding and will be required to provide the appropriate matching funds. Visit the "Budget Worksheet" to learn more about match-requirements [LINK].

12. Q. What is the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and how does it apply to this grant program?

A. The USDA requires that if there is site preparation within a federally funded grant, such as physical activities to prepare a location for construction, it must follow the NEPA process. Activities may include demolition of existing structures, clearing of vegetation, and soil disturbance, grading, excavation, trenching, etc. Learn more from the EPA here [LINK]. Get guidance from the USDA on how this may apply to the RFSI application here (LINK).

13. Q. What if RFSI funds are used for a portion of a project that doesn't require NEPA compliance?

A. NEPA is required if the project relies on site preparation happening independently from, or for the sole purpose of, the RFSI project.

14. Q. Are there different levels of NEPA compliance?

A. Yes. Find USDA's NEPA guidance here (LINK).

15. Q. What is Build America, Buy America Act (BABA) and how does it relate to RFSI grants?

A. The Build America, Buy America Act (BABA) requires that federal money used to purchase goods, products and materials for any form of construction, alteration, maintenance, or repair of infrastructure must follow the BABA Act's provisions. Specifically, grant money used to buy iron, steel, manufacturing products and construction material must be bought from a United States manufacturer.

16. Q. Does everyone have to abide by the Build America, Buy America requirements?

A. No, for-profit entities do not need to follow the BABA requirements.

17. Q. Are there exemptions to BABA compliance?

A. The USDA has a grant threshold waiver, which is currently set at \$250,000. If necessary, RFSI award recipients may apply for an additional waiver from the BABA requirements. Please find guidance on the USDA website to learn more (LINK).

18. Q. What are the requirements for documenting BABA? Is an email from a lumberyard saying their wood is American grown and milled sufficient? (New 6/24/24)

A. If you are not a For-profit business and your project is more than \$250,000 you must comply with BABA regulations. Suggested templates may be found on the supporting documents section of the WSDA RFSI page.

19. Q. Are RFSI grants taxed by the IRS?

A. The IRS treats most federal grants as income. However, it is important to speak with a financial advisor or accountant to understand how this may impact one's taxes.

20. **Q. Will projects be partially funded?**

A. If a portion of a RFSI proposed project is disallowed, a partial award may be offered. If the applicant agrees to the proposed project budget(s), the application process may continue. If the project is not feasible with a reduced funding amount, then the application cannot proceed.

ELIGIBILITY

1. Q. Who is eligible to apply for RFSI funding?

A. Agricultural producers or processors; groups of agricultural producers and processors; forprofit entities operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities whose activities are primarily focused for the benefit of local and regional producers; nonprofit organizations, local governments and Tribal governments operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities may apply. Institutions such as schools, universities, or hospitals bringing producers together to establish cooperative or shared infrastructure are also eligible to apply.

2. Q. Does the size of my business matter when applying for a RFSI grant?

A. Yes. The USDA requires that only small and midsized business are allowed to apply for funding. There are different standards for different types of businesses. Applicants can learn if they are eligible based on size using the Small Business Administration's size standards tool here: LINK.

3. Q. Are cooperatives bound by the same small or mid size business size limitations? (New 6/10/24)

A. Yes. For-profit business shall conform to the SBA Small Business Size Standards.

4. Q. What is an "Agricultural Producer or Processor"?

A. Agricultural Producer: Farmers, ranchers, growers or anyone that shares the risk of producing a crop (or food) and is entitled a share of the produced crop.

5. Q. Are applicants allowed to submit multiple applications to RFSI?

A. Applicants may only submit one application. A group of agricultural producers may only submit one application. Members of an agricultural group that are submitting a project together shall not submit separate individual projects on their own behalf.

6. Q. Are applicants allowed to submit multiple applications to RFSI? If a Food Hub applies for this grant for delivery trucks and a food hub member also applies for a wash/pack station, are both applications ineligible? (New 6/24/24)

A. As noted in Eligibility FAQ # 5, "members of an agricultural group that are submitting a project together shall not submit separate individual projects on their own behalf." The nature of membership and organizational structure in agricultural groups varies; each applicant must determine if they are submitting a project together with an agricultural group as a member (decision making member) and if so, then they should not submit a separate individual project proposal on their own behalf. During the initial administrative review to determine whether each proposal has met the proposal requirements (RFA page 23 Review Process), WSDA staff will screen for duplicate applications from a group of agricultural producers and individual proposals from entities within that group and may request additional information to determine if or which application(s) is ineligible.

7. Q. Which commodities are eligible for RFSI funding?

A. Eligible commodities include specialty crops, dairy, grain, aquaculture, eggs, and other products, as long as the products are meant only for human consumption and are not an ineligible product. Eligible specialty crops include fruit, vegetables, dried fruits, tree nuts, horticultural products such as tea or honey, and culinary herbs and spices.

8. Q. Which commodities are ineligible for RFSI funding?

A. Ineligible commodities include some specialty crops, such as floriculture and ornamental trees not intended for human consumption. Ineligible products as determined by the USDA include: meat, poultry, wild-caught seafood, animal feed and forage, fiber, landscaping products, tobacco, cannabis, hemp and dietary supplements.

9. Q. What are "dietary supplements"?

A. Dietary supplements are products that can be taken in various forms. This includes pill capsules, tablets, powders or liquids with the intent to supplement a person's diet. They may contain vitamins, minerals, herbs, proteins, or other compounds. These supplements are marketed to provide nutrients and health benefits.

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

A. Projects exclusively within the meat and poultry industries are funded through other USDA grant programs. However, egg production and aquaculture <u>is</u> allowable. Further, an entity that works with eligible and ineligible products may still apply for a RFSI grant, as long as the project only supports eligible activities.

11. Q. Is a project eligible if it includes a multi-purpose piece of equipment?

A. Projects can still qualify if they demonstrate robust tracking mechanisms to ensure that RFSI funds are only used to support eligible products and activities, even if a piece of equipment supports multiple activities.

12. Q. Are individual producers and sole proprietors eligible to apply?

A. Yes, individual producers and sole proprietors are eligible to apply. However, those entities should be able to demonstrate that their proposal provides a broader benefit to local and regional producers, markets, stakeholders and the community.

13. Q. How are "project beneficiaries" defined in the application?

A. Project beneficiaries are the local and/or regional producers, markets, stakeholders, and communities, including the applicant organization that will directly benefit from a project. The number cited in the Project Beneficiaries response should be a reasonable estimate that can be documented and reported throughout the duration of the grant, if selected for funding. Stating a project will benefit an entire industry or region is not an appropriate response.

14. Q. Is there any criteria for who can be named as Project Director(s), Project Manager(s) and/or collaborators who will directly manage activities funded through RFSI?

A. USDA does not stipulate standard requirements for position titles. The applicant shall determine the individual(s) best suited and appropriately qualified for the project. In some cases, the same person will be named for all three positions. Please note that if at any time there is a staffing change after funds are awarded, the grant contract must be updated with the Washington State Department of Agriculture.

15. Q. Are projects required to last the full grant duration?

A. Projects selected for funding will begin as soon as the subrecipient has been notified, after the execution of a grant agreement, which is estimated to be in Fall 2024. The project must be completed by May 15, 2027. Please note that no-cost extension requests will not be considered beyond this date. As long as projects do not start before September 1, 2024, or end after May 15, 2027, any duration is allowed.

APPLICATION PROCESS

1. Q. Where is the RFSI application located and how can it be submitted?

A. All RFSI applications must be submitted using the WizeHive online platform. Links can be found on the WSDA RFSI website here (LINK). Applications must be submitted online and only through the WizeHive portal located on the WSDA website.

2. Q. The application requires the applicant select their "entity type". What if the applicant falls under more than one category?

A. The applicant must select the entity that best describes their business. For a for-profit Agricultural Producer, select both "Agricultural Producer" and "For-Profit Entity." For a non-profit Agricultural Producer, select "Agricultural Producer" and "Non-Profit Entity".

3. Q. Is a Federal Tax ID (EIN) required prior to submitting an application?

A. Applicants must have a legal business name, a federal tax ID (EIN) and a UEI number (www.sam.gov) in order to submit an application. Applicants may start an application in WizeHive, however the numbers are required to submit an application. Visit the IRS to learn more: [LINK]

4. Q. Are there any other pertinent numbers my organization must have?

A. Applicants must have a Washington State Department of Revenue business license number (UBI). Registration can be found here: (LINK). This number is required by the time the contract agreement is in place. If awarded funds, a Washington Statewide Vendor Number is also required to receive funds. More information can be found here (LINK).

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION (New 6/10/24)

1. Q. Can RFSI funds be used for improvements to leased space? (New 6/10/24)

A. Yes, if applicant provides a valid Critical Resources and Infrastructure letter. Keep in mind the Review Panel will consider if a project is the best use of RFSI funds. Length of lease, terms of the lease, as well as the percentage of RFSI funds that benefit the Applicants business vs the lessor's property may be considered.

2. Q. Can you provide guidance on correctly completing the budget template? (New 6/24/24)

A. As the application is currently open, WSDA cannot give applicant specific guidance. Generally you should download the budget template and enter values into the white fields. The fields

that have color will calculate automatically. Consistent with the RFA only costs after harvest and pre market are allowable if the commodity is eligible and regional.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

3. Q. Where can applicants find additional information about the application's requirements on performance measures?

a. The RFSI application's performance measures are detailed in the RFSI RFA (LINK). RFSI projects must achieve all selected performance measures and associated indicators during the grant duration. Grantees may request an amendment to performance measures and/or indicators during the grant period if it becomes clear they will not be met as described in the project application and grant agreement.

4. Q. Do projects that address more than one performance measure receive a higher priority for funding?

A. The number of performance measures a project will address is not a factor in the scoring of proposals. Projects are not required to select more than one performance measure and indicator. Performance measures are meant to be quantifiable and reported in the required annual report. Therefore, they must be reasonably achievable.

5. Q. If an applicant selects more than one performance measure and/or indicator, do they all have to be achievable within the grant duration?

A. All selected performance measures and associated indicators must be achievable and trackable for the duration of the grant.

BUDGET

1. Q. What are indirect costs?

A. Indirect costs refer to expenses that aren't directly tied to the specific activities on the RFSI project. This may include administrative salaries, information technology services, rent, utilities and general use office supplies. They are 10% of a project's expenditures on MDTCs (Modified Total Direct Costs).

2. Q. What are Modified Total Direct Costs (MTDC)? (NEW 7/9/2024)

A. Modified Total Direct Costs (MTDC) is defined in Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations, also known as 2 C.F.R. § 200.1, and is the primary regulation governing grants and cooperative agreements issued by the U.S. government (LINK). A few examples of MTDCs

include contractual services, personnel services, fringe benefits and travel. MTDC may not exceed \$25,000 as it pertains to indirect costs.

3. Q. Is there a maximum rate for indirect costs?

A. RFSI Grant recipients with a Federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) can request indirect costs up to the amount of their NICRA rate. A copy of the NICRA must be submitted with the RFSI application. Applicants without a NICRA may elect to charge a *de minimis* rate of 10 percent of Modified Total Direct Costs (MTDC).

4. Q. What are fringe benefits?

A. Fringe benefits are allowances and services provided by employers to their employees as compensation, in addition to regular salaries and wages. Fringe benefits should follow an organization's established policy and may include, but are not limited to, the costs of leave (vacation, family-related, sick, or military), employee insurance, pensions, and unemployment benefit plans. Please refer to 2 CFR 200.431 (LINK) for more information.

5. Q. Does the RFSI impose a maximum fringe benefit rate?

A. There is no maximum fringe benefit rate and applicants should follow their organization's established policies. However, fringe benefit rates greater than 50 percent may require additional information before a budget is approved by the USDA.

6. Q. What is the General Schedule 15 (GS-15), Step 10?

A. The GS-15, Step 10 is the maximum pay allowed annually and hourly for contractors and consultants by the federal government. Applicants should use the GS-15, Step 10 rate for their area when developing contractual cost estimates to ensure rates are reasonable and consistent with fees in the marketplace for similar services. Contractor costs exceeding the GS-15, Step 10 rate must be paid from a source other than RFSI funds unless a justification is provided and approved by USDA. To access the GS-15 step 10 rate, reference the <u>U.S. Office of Personnel Pay and Leave website</u> (LINK) and click on "GS Pay Tables" under "General Schedule and Locality Pay Tables."

7. **Q.** Can my time as the owner(s) be considered a contribution of in-kind funds? (New 6/10/24)

A. Yes, only your percentage of time spent exclusively on the RFSI project. The GS-9, Step 10 is the recommended maximum hourly pay accepted for a for-profit entity which is not consultant based. Please refer to the above question for contractual labor. To access the GS-9 step 10 rate, reference the <u>U.S. Office of Personnel Pay and Leave website</u> (LINK) and click on "GS Pay Tables" under "General Schedule and Locality Pay Tables."

8. **Q.** Can I include employee salaries? (New 6/24/24)

A. Operational costs are not allowed. The applicant defines the RFSI project and then the date by which the project will be complete. All defined project expenses associated with building infrastructure in the middle of the supply chain will also be complete by that date. Salaries for project managers, contractors, consultants, training and temporary positions associated with the implementation of the RFSI project is acceptable if it follows the GS scales mentioned in Budget FAQ # 6,7.

9. Q. What is the difference between "special purpose" and "general purpose" equipment? Is there a minimum or maximum cost limit for special purpose equipment?

A. Both "special purpose" and "general purpose" equipment refer to tangible personal property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost that equals or exceeds \$5,000 net per unit. Purchasing "special purpose" equipment used only for technical activities is allowable under the conditions outlined in the RFSI RFA (LINK). "General purpose" equipment is used for purposes other than technical activities. Purchasing general purpose equipment is allowable as supplies.

10. Q. Do equipment purchases need supporting documentation?

A. Yes. The applicant must provide a quote from the intended seller of the equipment. The quote may include tax and shipping. The quote may <u>not</u> include an allowance for inflation. Be aware that equipment line items must total the amount on the provided quotes. <u>Do not round up, use the exact cost</u>. Matching funds may be used to accommodate fluctuations in estimates and buffers should be planned for accordingly.

MATCHING FUNDS

1. Q. Are matching funds a requirement of the RFSI?

A. USDA requires RFSI Grant recipients to contribute 50 percent of the total proposed project cost as a match to federal funding. Match may consist of cash match, in-kind contributions, or any combination thereof. Funds from other federal grant programs may <u>not</u> be used as match for this cooperative agreement. Funds from state or local grants may be used as match, if the source of those funds does not restrict it. The 50 percent match requirement can also be thought of as a "one-to-one" ratio, where the applicant is required to provide funding for the exact amount they are requesting from the USDA.

2. Q. Is a reduced match requirement available?

A. Historically underserved farmers and ranchers, disadvantaged small businesses, women-

owned small businesses and veteran-owned small businesses are eligible for a reduced match of 25 percent for RFSI Grants. Applicants must self-certify in their Infrastructure Grant applications as being eligible for this reduced match.

Example: For a \$100,000 RFSI total project, the reduced match requirement for the grantee would be \$25,000.

3. Q. I am an immigrant, the historically underserved farmer or rancher only speaks to a few ethnicities. Do I qualify as an underserved farmer if I am not one of the listed ethnicities? (New 6/24/24)

A. WSDA would encourage people to self certify for the reduced match if they consider themselves any of the following:

- Beginning Farmer or Rancher
- Veteran Farmer or Rancher
- Limited Resource Farmer of Rancher
- Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher
- Small Disadvantaged Business
- Women Owned Small Business
- Historically Underserved Farmer and Rancher

A historically underserved farmer is an Individual or entity who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group. A socially disadvantaged group is a group whose members have been subject to racial or ethnic prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities.

- 4. Q. The reduced match seems to speak to for-profit orgs. For non-profits, what is the criteria? (New (6/10/24)
 - A. Nonprofits can qualify for reduced match based on the composition of their board. To be eligible, the majority (51% or more) of the board's members must be eligible for reduced match under one or more of the qualifying categories. Eligibility for reduced match is **not** based on the population(s) the organization serves.
 - For example, a nonprofit may qualify for reduced match under the women-owned business category if 51% or more of their voting board members are women, or it may qualify for reduced match if its nine-member board is made up of four board members who are socially disadvantaged producers and two board members who are women (six out of nine members belong to a qualifying category).
- 5. Do LGBTQIA+ farms fall under the definition of historically underserved farmers? (New (6/10/24)

A. Yes, in order to qualify for reduced match of 25% (or 3:1 ratio), the applicant must self-certify that they meet the definition of an individual who is considered a historically underserved farmer or rancher (see General Question #9), a disadvantaged small business, a womenowned small business or a veteran-owned small business. For the purpose of the RFSI grant, LGBTQIA+ owned businesses qualify for reduced match.

It is important to note to qualify for reduced match, the majority owner and operator of the entity must self-certify as such. If an entity is only 50% owned and operated by an individual meeting the definition of "historically underserved", then the applicant must match 50% (1:1 ratio).

Please refer to General Questions #9 for the USDA definition of underserved farmers.

6. Q. What is the difference between cash match and in-kind contributions?

A. Cash match refers to a dollar amount committed to a project from a source other than the USDA. In-kind contribution is the estimated dollar value of any time, services, property rental, or supplies for a project.

7. Q. What qualifies as in-kind contributions for matching funds?

A. In-kind contributions may include the value of goods or services for the project such as staff time, supplies, or the rental of equipment or facilities already owned. Note that in-kind costs must be reasonable to be allowed by the USDA.

8. Q. I don't understand match verification letters, do I need them? (New 7/01/24)

A. Yes. The applicant will be required to show that all matching contributions are committed or secured at the time the application is submitted. If funds are committed from a 3rd party, that entity will provide a match verification letter. Examples may include a bank loan, or a partnership that has committed funds to the applicant for the RFSI project. If the applicant is committing cash match, cash must be secured at the time of the application (they cannot be a projection of income) the applicant's bank will provide a match verification letter in this instance. Please refer to 2 C.F.R. § 200.1 defining "Program Income." Federal Cost Principles regarding match is found here 2 CFR 200.306

9. Q. Can I apply future income my entity will make during the grant period as match? (New 7/01/24)

A. No. Cash must be secured at the time of the application. Projected income would not be eligible and would also not be guaranteed, making it ineligible to meet the match requirements. Federal Cost Principles regarding match is found here <u>2 CFR 200.306</u>

10. Q. Can unallowable costs be used as matching funds?

A. Only costs allowable under the federal cost principles, 2 CFR 200 Subpart E (LINK) and the program terms and conditions may be used as matching funds. For example, acquiring real property, including land, is <u>not</u> an allowable cost and therefore cannot be used to meet the

match requirement. However, rental costs <u>are</u> an allowable cost and may be used to meet match requirements.

11.Q. When are recipients required to report matching funds?

A. Recipients are required to report matching funds on monthly invoices and annual reports, including the SF-425 Federal Financial Report (LINK). Match reported on invoices must align with the match requirement set forth in the grant agreement and be proportional to the amount of federal funds being requested. Backup documentation for matching funds will be subject to the same requirements as federal funds. At a minimum, backup documentation should demonstrate the source and amount of the matching funds as well as how those funds directly relate to overall project costs.

12.Q. Can a project provide more than the minimum required matching funds?

A. Yes, grant recipients can provide more than the required match. However, this will not provide any advantage during the Technical Review of the applications. Any amount exceeding the required match will be considered "Voluntary Committed Cost Share" and may be necessary for the success of the project outcome.

REVIEW PROCESS

1. Q. What is the Technical Review Committee (TRC) and how does the review process work?

A. The TRC is a group of individuals with specialized knowledge and varied perspectives and expertise related to infrastructure, food safety, and the needs of middle-of-the-supply-chain producers within the Washington State agricultural sector and food system. The reviewers evaluate and score applications individually and collaboratively based on pre-determined scoring criteria and WSDA staff uses those scores to recommend the most competitive and viable projects for the Director's approval.

2. Q. How does the review process work between WSDA and USDA for projects that receive funding?

A. Once WSDA's Director approves the proposed slate of Apparent Successful Grantees, the finalists are notified, and invited to submit final USDA application forms. WSDA will then submit each apparently successful project to the USDA for final approval before initiating negotiation and execution of a grant agreement. WSDA will work closely with the USDA to ensure the awarded projects meet the requirements of the grant program, which may require WSDA to ask for additional information from the applicants during that review process. The USDA may also reject the project completely if it deems it ineligible.